

Deputation: Tracey Viney

Re: Havant Thicket Reservoir Planning Application APP/20/00990

I previously worked on the reservoir project for 12 years, initially as Project Manager and later as Environment/Biodiversity Specialist. I support the plans for the reservoir and commend them to you. However, I ask that in the interests of the environment the committee request the following details be addressed before the planning permission and S106 agreement are signed, as permitted under recommendation 9A & B of the report (page 112).

I support the provision of a visitor centre (VC) but not the **Visitor Centre Location Zone (VCLZ) box** shown on the NW Corner Plan (page 195), as it would allow the VC to be located along way out into the wetland at the reserved matters stage, where the movement of people, noise and litter blow would cause disturbance to the wetland conservation area and reduce its value to wildlife. A pier extending into the wetland as illustrated with space for 50 people to eat outside would add to the disturbance and risk of antisocial behaviour (e.g. diving). The location of the VC should be restricted to the wetland edge, where with careful layout and design the impact on the wetland can be minimised, while maintaining stunning views over the water and providing excellent education opportunities. The applicants landscape architect previously demonstrated that a waters edge location can be accommodated along with the proposed car park and other facilities without having any impact on the adjacent woodland. A water edge location on land will be much easier to service and expand in the future if necessary.

The VCLZ box and maximum size of the building are fixed by this outline consent. Strong objections to the extent of the VCLZ box are not adequately covered in the committee report. Objections to the box extending out into the wetland conservation area were raised by local councillors, RCPC, Havant Climate Change Alliance and the public. Importantly wetland experts invited by Portsmouth Water to attend a specialist wetland stakeholder sub-group to develop the design for the wetland, **advised that locating the VC (honey pot for visitors/dogs where the greatest intensity of disturbance will occur) within the wetland was not appropriate, its location should be restricted to the NW shore.** Their responses to the LPA objecting to the VCLZ box extending out into the wetland conservation area were not included in the committee report. The Natural England (NE) wetland specialist on the sub-group, Wildlife Trust and water industry experts who run similar facilities **all advised that the visitor centre should be located on the wetland edge and not within the wetland**, this was supported by the wider reservoir Stakeholder Group.

To take account of the expert and stakeholder views **I would ask the committee to request the Head of Planning add additional text to Condition 7 to restrict the location of the VC and terrace to the reservoir shore, and for the applicant to have to specifically demonstrate at the reserved matters stage that the layout and design minimises the risk of disturbance to the wetland conservation area.**

Other issues that need to be specifically addressed by the LPA to protect the ecology at the site;

- Newts/frogs living in the Upper Lake should be translocated to nearby ponds before the habitat is removed (PW previous commitment). At present the Outline Biodiversity Mitigation & Compensation Strategy (OBMCS) only refers to translocating notable plants. **The LPA should ensure that translocation is included as a specific action.**

- Action is required in relation to loss of skylark territories. The OBMCS acknowledges that off-site mitigation will be needed as it is unlikely that the compensation grassland within the site will off-set losses. It proposed that be achieved through the Capital Grant Scheme, but that no longer starts until 2029 and the loss of skylark territories will be immediate. The **NE proposal on page 43 for a Skylark Conservation Plan should be required by the LPA.**
- The requirement for a **long-term Ecological Management Plan** requested by the County Ecologist, NE and HCC be specifically added to the list of issues to **be secured through the S106 legal agreement. The review/update period for the plan should also be stipulated by the LPA.**

Motorcycling is a major issue at the site. While I welcome the wording in Condition 18 there **needs to be a specific requirement in Condition 16 for a horse/cycle friendly motorcycle barrier with pedestrian kissing gate to be located at the entrance to bridleway 121 northeast of Swanmore Road asap**, where most motorcycle access to the site occurs. This is not currently included/proposed.