

Rowlands Castle Parish Council

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Havant Thicket Reservoir – Consultation Response

Rowlands Castle Parish Council (RCPC) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the proposed Havant Thicket Reservoir project. From attendance at previous Stakeholder Meetings and other information obtained, this is clearly a necessary project to deliver greater water resilience for the South of England and is fully supported. The attention to detail with respect to construction, environmental issues and the whole area development is commended. The following specific comments are offered for the Consultation.

- Northern Access route. If the Northern access route off the B2149 is constructed it will need to have an effective junction with that road where traffic in normal times is already high volume and will only increase as yet more housing is built in the area. At the very least a right-turn lane will be needed for traffic arriving from the Horndean direction to turn into the access road and for vehicles exiting the site there should be a right and left turn lane as well because traffic could be queuing for quite some time at busy periods. The preferred junction layout is a roundabout that will improve both access and egress and will also have the benefit of reducing speeding on the B2149. Highway assessments almost always underestimate the growth in traffic as local housing is increased and the B2149 is now a major cut through to the coastal strip from the A3(M) so a well-planned junction is very necessary.
- Southern Access route. It is noted that the southern access has more strengths and fewer weaknesses than the northern access making the southern route the preferred option if only one route is to be built. It also is close to regular bus services. The northern access route should only be built if the site really does required two access routes.
- Transport Assessment. A Transport Assessment must be submitted and it must consider not only the cumulative impact of committed developments but also those in the area which are awaiting decision and these include the Land East of Horndean (LEOH) East Hants District Council (EHDC) applications 55562/005, /006, /007 and /008. Permission given for application 55562/001 expired in February 2019, but the principle of development has been established and the site is allocated in the EHDC Local Plan (Policy HN1). The Transport Assessments for the four applications did not consider the impact of the proposed reservoir because no planning application had yet been submitted. In its comments on application 55562/005 on 24th January 2019, RCPC highlighted the large increase in traffic which would arise on the B2149 south of the LEOH site as a result of this development and also from the sites (e.g. the Southleigh Strategic Site) allocated in the emerging Havant Borough Local Plan 2036. This additional traffic would result in the capacity of the mini-roundabouts next to the pedestrian and bridleway access to the reservoir being exceeded.
- In addition to considering reservoir-related traffic along the B2149, the Transport Assessment should forecast the increase in traffic flows along Castle Road, Redhill Road and Whichers Gate Road (B2148) which will be used by visitors travelling from the east and south east. The capacity of the junctions of these roads with the B2149 should be assessed and mitigation measures required should be proposed.
- Consideration should be taken of the possibility that Blendworth Common to the north of Havant Thicket **may** be allocated for development in the emerging EHDC Local Plan. In the EHDC 'Large Sites Consultation' from 3rd September to 15th October 2019 this was referred to as 'Extension of Land East of Horndean (Hazelton Farm)'. It would provide about 1,000 new homes, an employment park, local centre and gypsy/traveller land very close to the northern boundary of Havant Thicket. There would be a new access road from the B2149 about 150 metres north of the possible access to the reservoir. There would be a consequent very significant but as yet unassessed increase in traffic on the B2149. This matter should be resolved shortly by EHDC.

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6. Other access routes to note. When evaluating a northern access to the reservoir from the B2149, it should be recognised that there would also be the following accesses to the B2149 south of the Dell Piece East roundabout, if the LEOH site were to be developed:

- a. Within about 1,200 metres south of the Dell Piece East roundabout, for vehicles:
 - i) Enlarged roundabout at Dell-Piece East with an additional access to the LEOH employment area to the west.
 - ii) Residential access to the western area of LEOH
 - iii) Roundabout providing access to both the western and eastern parts of LEOH, including residential, Local Centre and school areas
 - iv) Existing access to Pyle Lane to the east of the B2149
 - v) Another residential access to the western area of LEOH about 300 metres north of where a northern access to the reservoir would be(With the access to the reservoir, there would be 6 new accesses to the B2149. If the Blendworth Common site were to be developed, that would require a further access within this 1,200 metres)

- b. Between 1,200 metres and 3,000 metres south of the Dell Piece East Roundabout to the mini-roundabouts at Whichers Gate there are 3 further obvious access points:
 - i) The Forestry access route opposite the junction with Castle Road, suitable for pedestrians and bicycles
 - ii) The Forestry car park access opposite Mallard Road (which leads into a housing area of 160 properties with no other vehicle access).
 - iii) Bridleway and pedestrian access including a gateway feature (adjoining the mini-roundabouts at the junction of the B2149, B2148 and Redhill Road).The safety of pedestrians crossing the B2149 needs to be considered for all 3 access points, noting that any visitors arriving by train in Rowlands castle must cross the B-road at some point to access the reservoir area.

7. Bus service to Rowlands Castle. To reduce visitors' reliance on the private car and to encourage people to use public transport, a safe and convenient access to a public bus service should be ensured. The bridleway and pedestrian access adjacent to the mini-roundabouts at Whichers Gate is about 50m to the north of the bus stop on the western side of Durrants Road (B2149) that is used by the number 27 buses (the only bus service) travelling from Havant into Rowlands Castle. At the stop there is a very small tarmac area but there is no pavement leading northwards to the access to the reservoir, so it would be unsafe to walk from there to the access. Pedestrians would have to cross the road to the east side, walk up the road and then cross again. To reach the stop for buses travelling towards Havant, it is necessary to cross Durrants Road to the east side. The number 27 bus operates four times a day Monday to Friday three times on Saturday and not on Sundays or Bank Holidays. The service is supported by HCC and the frequency is barely adequate for the village let alone supporting many visitors to the reservoir area. At present there is no bus service travelling along the B2149 to/from Horndean.

8. Bridleway and Pedestrian Access adjoining the mini-roundabouts. This reservoir was not considered in the Havant Borough Council Local Plan Final Transport Assessment (February 2019), but the Assessment did identify this junction (56) as a 'Capacity Hotspot' requiring potential mitigation (see Table 8 on page 62, and page 76). In Table 16 it is proposed that it be converted into a fully signalised junction and in Appendix N there is a conceptual design of the proposed junction. It is not known if or when this conceptual design might be implemented but it could be beneficial to ensure that the design of the access to the reservoir would be compatible with that conceptual design, and that together they would provide suitable and safe access to the reservoir, including access to bus stops (see comment above). This could also facilitate access

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to the site that includes an education area by pupils from the Rowlands Castle St. John's Church of England Controlled Primary School which is about 150 metres away but across two very busy roads. If the access to the reservoir is constructed before this conceptual design is implemented, it should make it as safe as possible for pedestrians and users of public transport to get to and perhaps incorporate some features of the conceptual design.

9. Car Parks. Any charge for car parking should be very moderate otherwise visitors will seek free parking in neighbouring residential roads. Some parking has already been seen in the Kings Meadow Estate opposite Forestry England's car park off Manor Lodge Road while that car park was shut. The residential roads are quite narrow and not suitable for a large number of visitors to park in. We have no wish to resort to having double yellow lines as this will inconvenience residents when they have visitors so it is requested that the charge be low even for long periods. The Forestry car park needs to have the same low level of charge and, noting that it has been used for free by local residents in Rowlands Castle & Horndean for many years, perhaps there could be a low cost annual ticket made available to residents of these 2 settlements. It is assumed that horseboxes could use the car park on the west side as they can (max 3-4) use the Forestry car park. Can that be made clear in your information?

10. B2149 – roadside parking. There are a number of unofficial pull-ins on the Thicket side of the B2149 that need to be removed by placing fencing and/or hedging along the roadside so that no vehicle can pull off the road. This will need discussing with HCC Highways and Forestry England but these pull-ins are already used by quite a few vehicles/bikers accessing the woodland and rubbish is often left as a result. For much of its length along the B2149 the Thicket is vulnerable to vehicle incursion and a proper boundary fence/impenetrable hedgerow will be needed.

11. Access routes – additional comments. Because motor bikes remain a problem in the Thicket the access roads will need to have a substantial gate that prevent bikers getting their machines under or through them when they are closed and there will also need to be substantial fencing of some sort along the Northern access route in particular to stop bikers turning off into the wooded area. As already declared by PW, if both access routes are developed there must be no chance of drivers using them as a through route and measures to prevent this must be effective in operation.

12. Country side character. About half of the 160 Ha area of the reservoir would be within the 'Strategic Gap' between Rowlands Castle and Havant which is about 230 Ha in area, so it would occupy about 35% of the 'Strategic Gap'. EHDC JCS Policy CP23 'Gaps between Settlements' requires the character of the existing countryside area to be enhanced. This requirement should be considered when designing the buildings and other facilities (including solar panels) around the reservoir and when deciding how the water might be used for recreation purposes

13. Additional activities.

- a. RCPC does not wish to see the current peaceful environment of the Thicket changed too much by having too many visitors. This accords with EHDC JCS Policy CP 20 'Landscape' which requires new developments to protect and enhance local distinctiveness sense of place and *tranquility* and to protect and enhance land at the urban edge of settlements. The reservoir would adjoin the Rowlands Castle Settlement Policy Boundary.
- b. If some form of boating is permitted on the reservoir it should be a small operation with a limit to the number of boats that can be operated. The Havant Borough Core Strategy (2011) restricts the use of the water to activities such as canoeing and kayaking and should not include any motorised activities. Similarly, the Havant Borough Local Plan 2036 (Policy

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KP9) and the EHDC Draft Local Plan 2017-2036 (Policy S31) also restrict the use of the water.

- c. If it is planned to float solar panels on part of the surface of the reservoir they should be angled only as much as is needed to allow rainwater runoff. Solar panels will give rise to considerable glint on sunny days and while the value of solar generation is recognised to reduce fossil fuel use care needs to be taken with any such provision to avoid spoiling the overall look of the reservoir and its surroundings. The Havant Borough Local Plan 2036 (Policy KP9) when acknowledging the potential for renewable energy sources, requires that nature conservation and other site constraints should be considered. Such a constraint could be EHDC JCS Policy CP23 'Gaps between Settlements'.

Addendum

Local Plan Policies referred to in above comments

The text in ***bold italicised*** font is particularly relevant to the above comments

Havant Borough Core Strategy (March 2011)

Strategic Site Profile – Development Requirements – page 92

- ***The use of the water should be limited to supervised, water-based activities such as canoeing and kayaking***
- ***Recreational provision should be appropriate to the countryside location and should not include any motorised activities***

Havant Borough Local Plan 2036 (emerging)

Policy KP9 – 'Havant Thicket Reservoir':

Planning permission will be granted at Havant Thicket for a winter storage reservoir comprising recreational provision including a visitor centre where:

a. The development is sustainable, fully maintained, cost-effective and delivers environmental and community benefits;

c. Any recreational provision is appropriate to the countryside location and does not include any motorised activities acknowledging the site's primary use as a reservoir;

p. The proposal realises the potential for renewable energy while taking into account nature conservation and other site constraints;

East Hampshire District Council Joint Core Strategy (JCS) (June 2014)

Policy CP23 'Gaps between Settlements':

About half of the total 160 Ha area of the reservoir would be within the existing 'Strategic Gap' between Rowlands Castle and Havant which is about 230 Ha in area, so it would occupy about 35% of the 'Strategic Gap'. The policy states:

'The generally open and undeveloped nature of the following gaps between settlements will be protected to help prevent coalescence and retain their separate identity:

.....Rowlands Castle/Havant...

Development will only be permitted within gaps if:

- a) it would not undermine the physical and/or visual separation of settlements;

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- b) it would not compromise the integrity of the gap, either individually or cumulatively with other existing or proposed development; and
- c) it cannot be located elsewhere.'

Paragraph 7.30:

'Small scale developments, such as agricultural buildings and stables that are in keeping with the rural nature of the gaps, are not ruled out, providing they are appropriately sited and designed to minimise impact on the openness of the gap and subject to other planning policies. Gaps have another positive aspect - the open land adjacent to urban areas **can be used for recreation and other green infrastructure purposes.**

Paragraph 7.31:

It is recognised that the merging of villages comes about through a gradual process, so while one development of a particular site may not in itself result in merger, it may be a contributory factor. Precedents could easily be set for this, and therefore the gaps have always been seen as having a long-term importance. ***Their continuing value as open and predominately undeveloped countryside depends on retaining them and enhancing their character.***

Policy CP20 'Landscape':

'The special characteristics of the district's natural environment will be conserved and enhanced. New development will be required to:

- a) protect and enhance local distinctiveness sense of place and ***tranquility*** by applying the principles set out in the district's Landscape Character Assessments, including the Community/Parish Landscape Character Assessments;
- c) protect and enhance settlements in the wider landscape, ***land at the urban edge*** and green corridors extending into settlements;'

East Hampshire District Council Draft Local Plan (2017-2036)

Policy S31 'Havant Thicket Reservoir':

S31.1 Planning permission will be granted at Havant Thicket for a winter storage reservoir comprising recreational provision including visitor centre where:

.....

d. any recreational provision is appropriate to the countryside location and does not include any motorised activities acknowledging the site's primary use as a reservoir;

Response agreed at RCPC Mtg on 8 June 2020
Submitted by Clerk to RCPC on 9 June 2020