

Comment

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Event Name LPP2 Publicity Period Oct - Nov 2017

Comment by Group Against Reservoir Development (Dr Derek Stork)

Comment ID 334

Response Date 21/11/17 20:45

Status Submitted

Submission Type Web

Version 0.1

Q1 To which part of the Local Plan does this representation relate? Please state the paragraph or policy or policies map. Core Policy 14a

Q2 Do you consider the Local Plan is Legally Compliant? Yes

Q3 Do you consider the Local Plan is Sound? No

Q4 Do you consider the Local Plan complies with the Duty to Cooperate? Yes

Q5 Please provide details of why you consider the Local Plan is not legally compliant or is unsound or fails to comply with the duty to co-operate. Please be as precise as possible. If you wish to support the legal compliance or soundness of the Local Plan or its compliance with the duty to cooperate, please also use this box to set out your comments.

GARD is a Community-based organisation concerned with water resource provision in the Thames Water area and the South-east in general. As such, GARD has long been opposed to the construction of a huge (150M cu metres) reservoir on the site between East Hanney and Steventon. We note that our view was supported by the 2010 Public Inquiry into the previous plan to build this reservoir, at which the Inspector rejected Thames Water's plans. GARD believes, from our analysis, that a banded reservoir of the type proposed at the East Hanney - Steventon site (and previously at the Longworth

site as an alternative) is not a resilient, cost-effective, or environmentally acceptable solution to the water shortage problems of the 21st century. As such, we believe that the communities of the South Vale area should not be put under this continuing planning blight, and the proposal to do so is unsound. GARD believes that the reservoir would:

- pose a serious threat to the flood risk of the East Hanney - Steventon and South Abingdon areas by sealing over substantial (up to 1 square mile of flood-plain area) without an adequate solution as to the diversion or handling of the flood waters;
- remove substantial (several square miles) of Grade 2 (very good quality) or Grade 3a (good quality) farmland, when there are many alternative solutions to the water resource problem up to the mid-century and beyond (as evidenced in Thames Water's own 'Fine Screening Report of Options', published in September 2016).

We note also, that the less productive farmland areas covered by the potential reservoir reserved land are now the site of solar farms contributing to the sustainability of energy supplies, and that there are numerous footpaths and bridle paths and public space access, and these would shrink considerably if a reservoir were to be built.

We also support the points made by the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in response to the previous Local Plan Part 2 Options Consultation. The AONB gave their opinion that there has been a failure to take proper account of the likely impact of this huge development on the AONB and its setting. We believe that the AONB would indeed be harmed by the reservoir development (given the range of options that remain in the Thames Water shortlist).

For the above reasons, we would contend that this policy 14a is unsound.

Q6. Please set out what modification(s) you consider necessary to make the Local Plan legally compliant or sound, having regard to the matter you have identified at 5 above. (NB Please note that any non-compliance with the duty to cooperate is incapable of modification at examination). You will need to say why this modification will make the Local Plan legally compliant or sound. It will be helpful if you are able to put forward your suggested revised wording of any policy or text. Please be as precise as possible.

GARD advocates the alteration of Core Policy 14a to remove the area of land between East Hanney and Steventon previously safeguarded under Core Policy 14.

(Please note GARD supports the removal of the Longworth site as a reserved site.)

Please note the Inspector will determine the most appropriate procedure to adopt to hear those who have indicated that they wish to participate at the oral part of the examination.

Q7 If you wish to participate at the oral part of the examination, please outline why you consider this to be necessary:

GARD is not actively seeking participation in the oral examination, but as an organisation we are very happy to answer questions to clarify our stance. Our opposition to the reservoir and our long-standing concern over water resources can be viewed at our website www.abingdonreservoir.org.

Would you like to hear from us in the future?

I would like to be kept informed about the progress of the Local Plan