

## **Thames Water Response to Policy Omission Regarding Safeguarding of Longworth Upper Thames Reservoir Site and Policies Map Safeguarding Area for Reservoir**

### **Question 5 – Reason Why**

Thames Water wholly support the safeguarding of the reservoir site between the settlements of East Hanney and Steventon under Core Policy 14, subject to proposed amendments. Thames Water consider that the alternative shortlisted reservoir site at Longworth should be similarly safeguarded by a new Policy in the Local Plan and on the Policies Map.

In accordance with Section 37B of the Water Industry Act 1991, the water companies must review and update their Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP) that sets out how they will maintain a balance between the demand for water in their supply area against the available water supplies, while ensuring the environment is protected, every 5 years. In July 2014 Thames Water received approval from the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to publish their Water Resources Management Plan covering the 25-year period from 2015 to 2040, called WRMP14, in accordance with Regulation 6 of the Water Resources Management Plan Regulations 2007.

Thames Water's approved WRMP14 identifies the need for a large water supply scheme to supply London from the mid 2020s onwards. The preferred scheme included in the plan is a 150 Ml/d wastewater reuse scheme. However, the robustness and resilience of this chosen option for water supply has not been confirmed and there remain a number of uncertainties associated with the scheme which require further work and resolution over the next five years. Given these uncertainties, the WRMP14 identifies three potential water supply options (wastewater reuse scheme, inter basin raw water transfer scheme, reservoir storage option within the Thames catchment) to be subject to detailed further studies over the next 5 years to determine what represents the 'best value' water supply option for TW to promote in its next draft WRMP in Spring 2018.

Thames Water's work for WRMP14 short listed three potential sites in Oxfordshire that would be able to accommodate a new raw water storage reservoir. The Abingdon Reservoir site is on the area of land between Steventon, Drayton and East Hanney, to the south west of Abingdon which is safeguarded under Core Policy 14. The Abingdon site is the only one that can accommodate a raw water storage reservoir development greater than 100Mm<sup>3</sup> (> 275 Ml/d) and previous studies identified Abingdon as the preferred site on the basis of the size of reservoir that the site could accommodate and the forecast supply demand gap (need) at the time. However, if WRMP19 concludes that a smaller reservoir is the preferred option, following the further studies over the next 5 years, the work done to date has identified a reservoir at Longworth (up to 50Mm<sup>3</sup>), located in Vale of White Horse and Chinnor (up to 100Mm<sup>3</sup>), located within South Oxfordshire as possible alternative options. Based on experience at the Abingdon Reservoir site which has been subject to development pressure such as the Oxford Garden City and the granting of planning permission for solar farms, Thames Water consider it is important that the Longworth Reservoir site (and the Chinnor Reservoir site) is similarly safeguarded (in addition to the Abingdon Reservoir site) until the outcome of WRMP19.

Thames Water therefore consider that the Longworth Reservoir site, as identified on the attached plan, should be safeguarded in the same way as the Abingdon Reservoir site by the addition of an appropriate safeguarding policy and the associated identification of the site on the Policies Map. This will ensure that all of the reservoir storage options in the Vale of White Horse are treated in a consistent way and will prevent any of the options from being prejudiced by inappropriate development ahead of the completion of the studies to be undertaken over the next 5 years in accordance with WRMP14. An indicative layout plan for the Longworth Reservoir from the original site selection is also attached for information.

### **Question 6 – Proposed Changes**

#### **Policies Map & Appendix F**

The Policies Map and Appendix F should be amended to safeguard the proposed Longworth Reservoir site as identified on the attached plan, in addition to the Abingdon Reservoir site.

## Proposed New Policy and Supporting Text

### “Core Policy ??: Upper Thames Reservoir – Longworth Site

Land is safeguarded for a reservoir and ancillary works to the north of Longworth until Thames Water’s Water Resources Management Plan 2019 has been published following approval by the Secretary of State. Until or subject to that approval , development that might prejudice the implementation of the Upper Thames Reservoir will be refused.

The safeguarded area for the proposed reservoir is shown on the Adopted Policies Map.

The proposed reservoir, if included as a preferred option in an adopted Water Resources Management Plan, must be brought forward through a Masterplan, Development Brief and Design Statement following consultation on these documents by Thames Water with the community, the local authority, the local highway authority and the statutory utility provider.

Any proposal for a reservoir must be in accordance with the Masterplan, Development Brief and Design Statement consulted upon and must:

- i. mitigate the impact of construction on local people, the environment and roads
- ii. minimise the effects on the landscape of an embankment reservoir through its design, general configuration and the use of hard and soft landscaping
- iii. maximise the creation of wildlife habitats and biodiversity
- iv. promote the recreational uses of the reservoir consistent with the landscaping and biodiversity values of the proposal and having regard to the traffic impacts of such uses, and
- v. include measures to avoid and mitigate any other significant impacts identified through the environmental impact assessment of the proposal, including on the local and wider highway networks and on surface water and fluvial flooding.”

## Supporting Text

The text supporting Core Policy 14 at paragraphs 5.43 to 5.48 should be amended to also refer to the Longworth Reservoir site as follows:

“The Upper Thames Reservoir

5.43. Thames Water has identified the possible need for a major new reservoir in the district between the villages of East Hanney, Steventon and Marcham **or to the north of the village of Longworth** to help the statutory utility provider manage water supply and ensure current and future needs can be met.

5.44. The Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP) 2014, published by Thames Water, identifies three potential options to address its long term water resource management in the south east, including the development of a large storage reservoir.

5.45. Thames Water has confirmed that the Upper Thames Reservoir (UTR), proposed to be located within the Vale **at Abingdon**, remains their preferred option if a large storage reservoir solution were to be selected. **If a smaller reservoir is selected as the preferred option the reservoir site at Longworth is an alternative option.** A decision is expected on the preferred long term water resource option by 2019, when Thames Water’s Resources Management Plan 2019 is expected to be approved for publication by the Secretary of State.

5.46. As the Vale’s Local Plan 2031 Part 1 will be adopted ahead of the WRMP 2019, land will need to continue to be safeguarded until the future of the UTR is known in accordance with Core Policy 14 **and Core Policy ??.**

5.47. The **sites** will continue to be safeguarded until such time as **they are** ~~it is~~ no longer considered necessary, as set out in the approved WRMP 2019, or subsequent decisions made by Thames Water or the Secretary of State.

**5.48 The Upper Thames Reservoir proposal, if progressed, is likely to constitute a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project under the Planning Act 2008 and therefore an application for development consent is likely to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for determination.”**