South East Strategic Reservoir Option Consultation

Feedback Report

Produced by Ipsos for Thames Water Utilities Ltd

Contents

1. Executive Summary

1.1 The South East Strategic Reservoir Option (SESRO) public non-statutory consultation 2024

Thames Water Utilities Limited (TW) is proposing to build a new reservoir near Abingdon in Oxfordshire, known as the South East Strategic Reservoir Option (SESRO). The proposed new reservoir would play a crucial role in protecting local and regional public water supplies during drought. When there is plenty of water during the winter months, the reservoir would be filled from the River Thames. When river levels drop or demand for water increases, water would be released from the reservoir back into the river for re-abstraction downstream. The proposed new reservoir would supply water to local customers, as well as homes and businesses across London and the South East.

Although the core purpose for the reservoir is to secure future water supplies, Thames Water's ambition is to create a natural space which would be sensitively landscaped to fit in with the surrounding countryside, with new habitats to encourage greater biodiversity. There would be new green spaces for people to explore and enjoy, with accessible leisure and recreational facilities such as walking, nature trails, cycling, fishing, birdwatching and water sports.

Thames Water plans to submit an application for development consent in 2026, following a statutory public consultation in 2025. Should consent be granted, construction is expected to begin in 2029, with the reservoir being operational by 2040.

1.2 Public consultation and engagement

As part of the early stages of designing and developing SESRO, Thames Water undertook a non-statutory public consultation. The consultation launched on **5 June 2024** and ran for twelve weeks, closing on the evening of **28 August 2024**. The aim of the consultation process and wider stakeholder engagement was to seek feedback from a variety of stakeholders, including landowners, residents, businesses, local authorities and other statutory bodies who might be affected by or interested in SESRO.

Thames Water commissioned the independent research agency Ipsos to receive, analyse and report on the feedback received. This report provides a summary of the feedback received to the public consultation. In total, **1,598 consultees** provided their feedback throughout the consultation period. Thames Water publicised the consultation in a number of ways including in the local press, on its website, and through a number of public information events to provide details about SESRO.

1.3 Summary of the feedback received

The non-statutory consultation sought feedback on the option appraisal reports for the infrastructure to operate the reservoir, as well as draft design principles. A summary of the feedback received is provided in the following sections of this report.

1.3.1 Rail links to the site

The proposed reservoir requires connectivity to the railway for the delivery of stone, sand and gravel required to construct the reservoir. Five options[1] were assessed for the dedicated rail siding to import these materials. Thames Water's preferred Option 5 for the rail link received mixed feedback. While some supported its minimised impact on local wildlife sites, others expressed concerns about disruption, cost, and the perceived lack of need for the reservoir. Many consultees were opposed to any rail link, deeming it unnecessary infrastructure, and citing the potential for environmental damage. Suggestions included incorporating a Wantage/Grove station and utilising the Wilts & Berks Canal for transport.

1.3.2 Access and diversion roads

Thames Water is proposing to build a new access road to the site for construction vehicles, which could subsequently provide visitor access once the reservoir is operational. Four options (A-D) were assessed with Thames Water stating a preference for Option B. Option B for the main access road, connecting to the A415 near the Marcham Interchange, garnered support for its alignment with planned developments and potential recreational benefits. However, concerns were raised about increased congestion, particularly on the A34 and in Marcham.

In addition, several routes (Options A, B1, B2, C) have been considered to replace the existing road between East Hanney and Steventon. Thames Water has stated a preference for Option A. For the Steventon to East Hanney Road Diversion, Option A, following the southern reservoir embankment, was generally preferred for minimising disruption. However, concerns about construction traffic and lack of detailed information were prevalent. Suggestions included prioritising active travel.

1.3.3 Water treatment works

The proposed reservoir does not currently include treatment for potable water supply as part of the core project; however, the reservoir could provide water to Southern Water, Thames Water and South East Water customers via the Thames to Southern Transfer (T2ST). The T2ST project has identified a need for a Water Treatment Works (WTW) to be located at the SESRO reservoir site which will provide potable water for T2ST. Four options (Options 1-4) were identified for the location of the proposed WTW.

Options 2 and 4 for the WTW location, near the reservoir and site entrance respectively, received mixed responses. Option 2 was favoured for its proximity to existing infrastructure, while Option 4 was seen as less intrusive to recreational areas. However, concerns about environmental impact, particularly on biodiversity and visual aesthetics, were raised for both options. Many consultees opposed any WTW,

[1] Please refer to Chapter 5 for details about each Option.

questioning its necessity and citing concerns about environmental damage and proximity to residential areas.

1.3.4 Connectivity to the River Thames

Thames Water's preferred intake/outfall structure (Option B) received mixed feedback from consultees. Some consultees supported or agreed with Option B as the best available choice, while others raised concerns about recreation, water quality, environmental impact, and local community effects. Suggestions included enhancing canal linkages and improving resilience.

Consultees were also asked to provide their comments on the options for the emergency discharge infrastructure. Thames Water has stated a preference for Option C. Feedback on emergency discharge infrastructure options also received mixed views. Option C was seen favourably by some for flood risk mitigation, but faced opposition or disapproval due to concerns about being a tunnel rather than an open channel, perceived lack of local benefits, and safety issues. Option B, not preferred by Thames Water, was supported for its potential to enhance active travel, community benefits, and sustainability. Concerns included the project's conception, lack of information, and environmental risks to floodplain resilience and wildlife. Suggestions included integrating canal links, enhancing community benefits, and supporting recreation.

1.3.5 The process undertaken to identify infrastructure associated with the reservoir

Some consultees provided positive/receptive comments about the process undertaken to identify infrastructure associated with the reservoir. This included a view that it was a well thought out process, good quality of information provided, and the sufficiency of community consultation. However, most consultees voiced concerns, feeling local communities were overlooked and public opinions not fully considered. Additional concerns included a lack of credible options, complexity of the process, insufficient flood risk consideration, perceived profit motives, and biases. Recommendations focused on improving transparency, inclusivity, and addressing environmental concerns.

1.3.6 Draft design principles

Thames Water has stated that the proposed reservoir design principles are based on the NIC[2] themes of Safe and Well, Climate, People, Place, and Value. Consultees were asked for their comments on the draft design principles. Of those who provided positive comments, the main comments received were that consultees supported or approved of the draft design principles, that they were well thought out and planned for, that they looked good or were attractive, and that they would help secure future water supplies and help with drought planning and preparedness. However, many consultees raised concerns about the draft design principles. Such concerns included a view that the draft design principles were misleading or based on inaccurate information, that they were flawed or poorly thought out, lacking

[2] National Infrastructure Commission

information or details, concerns about safety issues, lack of consideration for local people and local communities, and flood risk issues.

1.3.7 Interim Master Plan

Thames Water has stated that the Interim Master Plan is an overall spatial layout of the proposed reservoir site, including wetlands for capturing flood water and introducing diverse ecology, operational areas, such as for treating water or transferring it to and from the reservoir, amenity areas, public access, woodlands, footpaths and others.

Feedback on the Interim Master Plan principles was divided. Some consultees supported the plans, praising their comprehensiveness and environmental benefits, such as improved biodiversity and habitat protection. They noted potential community benefits through enhanced recreational activities (e.g. sailing). However, there was significant opposition due to perceived vagueness and lack of detail, inadequate local consultation, and transparency. Environmental concerns included potential harm to wildlife and habitats, and the absence of a thorough impact assessment. Concerns also focused on safety, negative effects on local communities, and transport issues affecting public access and infrastructure.

1.3.8 Other comments and feedback received

As well as providing comments on specific aspects of SESRO, consultees also provided comments on the project as a whole, about equalities impacts and the public consultation.

- Overall feedback about SESRO was mixed. Those who provided positive/receptive comments highlighted its necessity for future water needs, a well-planned process, and suitability of location, with benefits for local communities and the environment, including biodiversity and leisure activities. Conditional support depended on benefits to local people, if planned works would aid or complement canal development, and comprehensive management. However, there was substantial opposition due to distrust in Thames Water, perceived poor planning, and worries about the size of the planned reservoir. Concerns were also raised about environmental and community impacts, traffic, and socio-economic effects. Suggestions included repairing leaks, alternative solutions, an independent review, emphasising conservation, infrastructure upgrades, and community benefits.

- Among 153 consultees who provided comments about potential equalities impacts, about half (79) did not think SESRO would be discriminatory. Although some consultees voiced concerns about potential discrimination affecting local communities, people with disabilities, and elderly people.

- The consultation received valuable feedback from participants, generating 623 comments focused on improving the process. A significant portion of the feedback (256 comments) highlighted the need for clearer materials and better alignment between questions and consultation documents. Additionally, 217 comments emphasised the desire for more information and follow-up, while 150 comments specifically mentioned a lack of information. These insights will be instrumental in shaping future consultations.

1.4 Conclusion and next steps

Feedback received from the public consultation will play an important role in helping Thames Water inform the next stage of the design process. This document will be published alongside a formal response to the public consultation by Thames Water in early 2025, and local communities and stakeholders will be invited to have their say on the revised proposals for the reservoir during a statutory public consultation planned for late 2025.

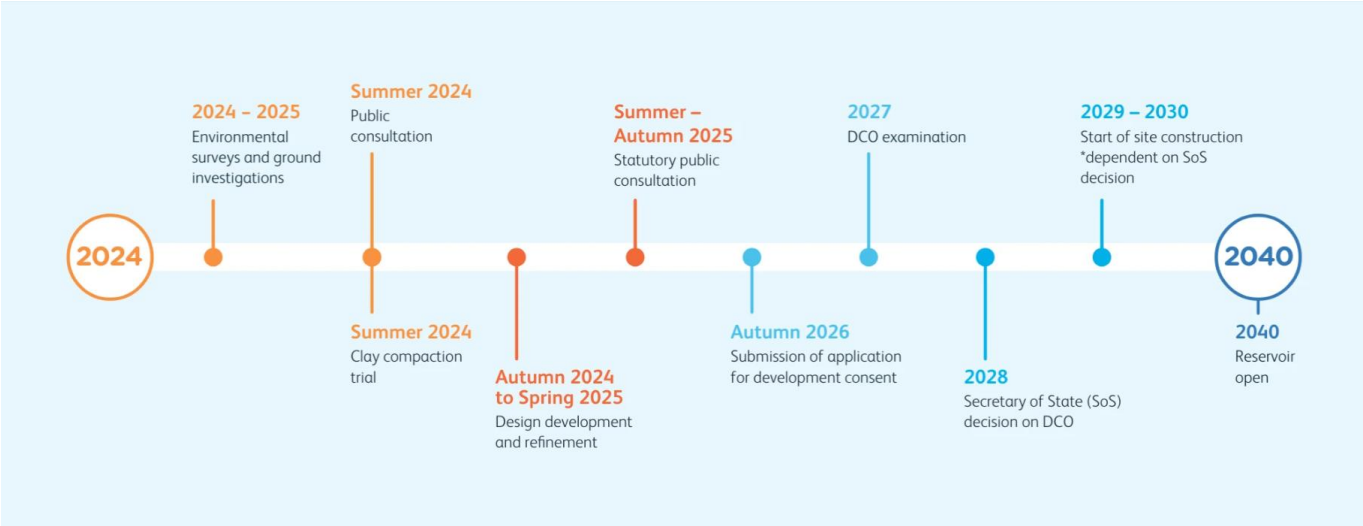
2. Introduction

2.1 Overview

The public consultation was the first project-specific non-statutory consultation on the South East Strategic Reservoir Option (SESRO) project (the Project) and was focused on different design options. SESRO is a proposed strategic water resource for the South East to secure water supplies for Thames Water, Affinity Water and Southern Water customers and forms part of a national portfolio of resource solutions.

The project is being developed for RAPID Gate 3 submission and an application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) under the Planning Act 2008 regime. The reservoir is expected to be operational in 2040 as illustrated in the timeline[3] in Figure 2.1 below.

Figure 2.1: Proposed timeline for SESRO



More details about SESRO are provided by Thames Water on its website[4].

2.2 Scope of the non-statutory consultation

As part of the early stages of designing and developing SESRO, Thames Water undertook a non-statutory public consultation. The aim of the public consultation and wider stakeholder engagement was to seek feedback from a variety of stakeholders, including landowners, residents, businesses, local authorities and other statutory bodies who might be affected by or interested in SESRO to help develop the proposals.

[3] Source: Thames Water

[4] Thames Water Resources Management Plan

The consultation was launched on 5 June 2024 and ran for 12 weeks, closing at 23:59 on 28 August 2024. Consultees could take part via a number of advertised response channels including an online or paper response form, by email or by post. The response channels were:

- **Online**: https://www.ipsos.uk/SESRO
- **Email**: SESRO@ipsos.com
- **Post:** Freepost SESRO CONSULTATION

The independent research agency Ipsos[5] was commissioned to receive responses, and to provide an independent report of the feedback received. This document provides a summary of the feedback.

2.3 Publicising the consultation

Thames Water publicised the consultation in a number of ways including in the press, on its website, and through running a number of events to provide details about SESRO. Postcards advertising the consultation, and providing details of the events were also sent to addresses in the vicinity of the project. Table 2.1 provides a breakdown of the date and location of each event, and the number of attendees.

Table 2.1 Consultation events and attendance[6]

Date	Venue	Number of attendees
Thursday 27 June	Sutton Courtenay Village Hall	142
Saturday 29 June	Royal British Legion, East Hanney	147
Monday 1 July	Abingdon Guildhall	334
Friday 5 July	Loyd Lindsay Rooms, Wantage	157
Tuesday 9 July	Didcot Civic Hall	190
Monday 15 July	Milton Hill House, Steventon	150
Thursday 18 July	Marcham Centre	156

[5] https://www.ipsos.com

[6] Source: Thames Water

2.4 Number of responses received

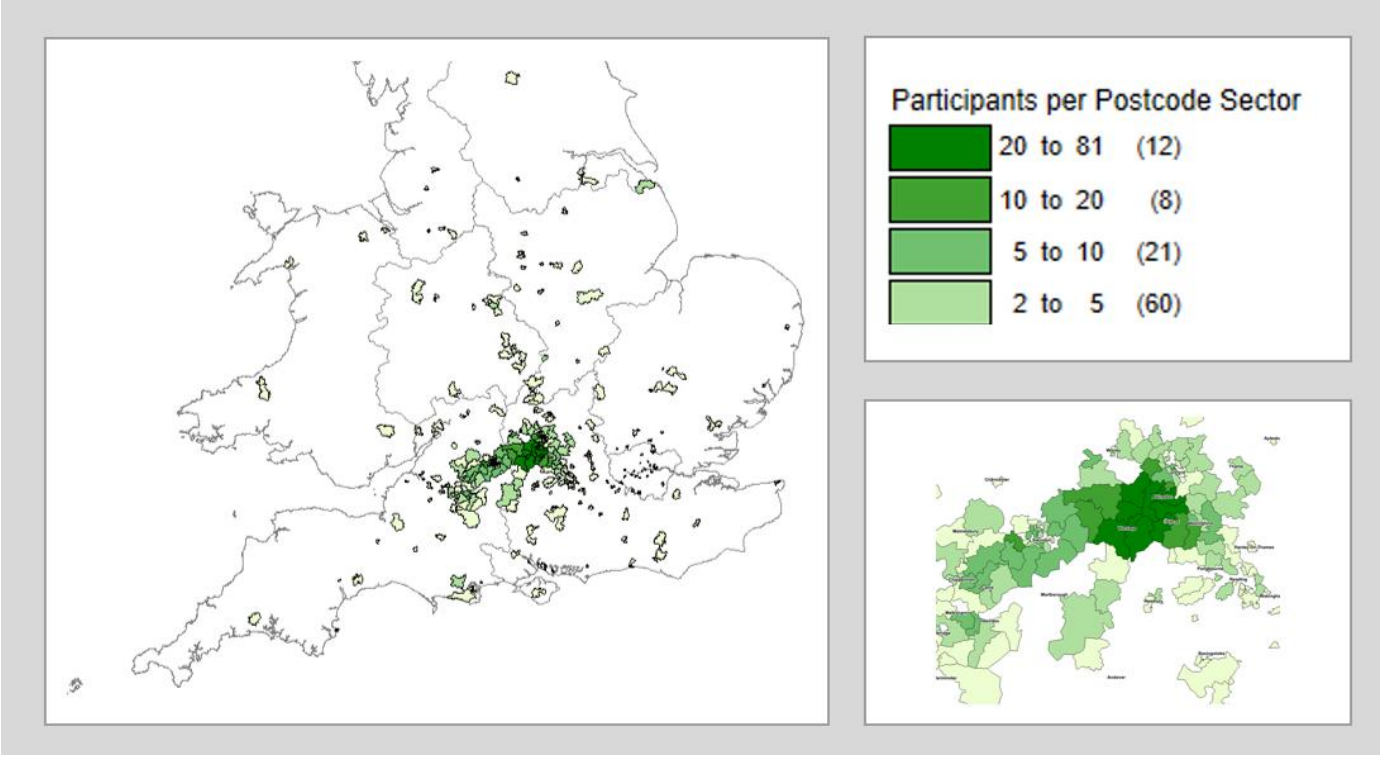
In total, **1,598**[7] consultees submitted a response to the consultation through the advertised response channels, as set out in Table 2.2 below.

Table 2.2 Responses received to the consultation by response channel

Response channel	Number of responses received
Online response form	1,423
Paper response form	35
Email	140
Total	**1,598**

Figure 2.2 provides a map to show the location of where consultees are located based on their postcode[8]. Of all who provided a response to the consultation, the majority 1,278 provided their postcode (either full postcode or partial postcode) when completing the response form, or included it in their emailed/postal responses.

Figure 2.2: Map showing the postcode location of consultees



[7] This excludes responses received after the consultation had closed on 28 August 2024. Responses received after the closing date were considered *late responses* and are briefly summarised separately in Chapter 13 of this report.

[8] A postcode sector is made up of the first part of postcode and the 1st character of the 2nd part of postcode

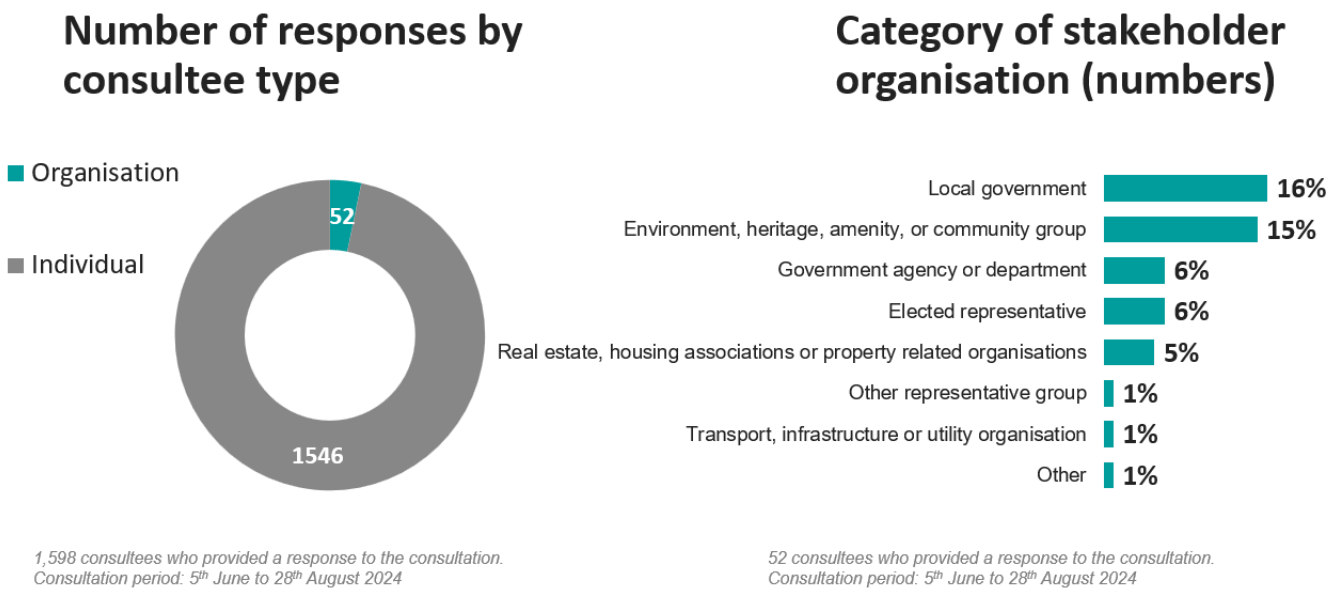
2.5 Categories of consultee

Those who used the response form to provide their feedback were asked to indicate if their response was on behalf of a business or organisation. For responses received via email, in the majority of cases, it was clear on whose behalf the response was from. Where this was less clear, and/or in cases where two or more responses were claiming to be on behalf of the same organisation, Ipsos used the best of its judgement to assign a response category, and/or to decide on which response was the official organisational response (when two or more responses were claiming to be on behalf of the same organisation), with the other response(s) re-categorised as responses from individuals.

Overall, the consultation received 52 responses from organisations and 1,546 responses from individual members of the public. Those who provided a response on behalf of an organisation or group were informed that the name and details of the organisation may be subject to publication or appear in the consultation report. Responses provided on behalf of individuals are included anonymously.

Organisational responses are responses sent on behalf of wider groups rather than individual members of the public. Such organisations included businesses, local government organisations, elected representatives, and environmental, heritage and amenity groups. A breakdown is shown in Figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3: Breakdown of responses by category of consultee



A full list of the organisations who responded within the consultation period (excluding those requesting confidentiality) is found in Appendix A of this report.

3. Structure of the report

This report summarises the comments of those who responded to the consultation. The structure of this report is as follows:

- **Chapter 4** describes a summary of the analysis process. It provides details on how the responses were analysed.
- **Chapters 5 to 12** summarise the feedback received for specific aspects of SESRO as follows:
  - **Chapter 5** – Rail links to the site
  - **Chapter 6** – Access and diversion roads
  - **Chapter 7** – Water treatment works
  - **Chapter 8** – Connectivity to the River Thames
  - **Chapter 9** – The process undertaken to identify infrastructure associated with the reservoir
  - **Chapter 10** – Draft design principles
  - **Chapter 11** – Interim Master Plan
  - **Chapter 12** – Other comments and feedback received. This includes overall views about SESRO, as well as comments about the consultation, and perceived equalities impacts.
- **Chapter 13** provides a short summary of responses received after the consultation closed, and as such were considered *late responses*. In total **10** responses were received after the consultation had closed on 28 August 2024. In the interest of fairness to those who responded on time, late responses are treated separately in this report. All responses received (both on time and late[9]) have been securely transferred to the consultation team at Thames Water for their ongoing review and action accordingly. Thames Water reserve the right not to accept late responses in any future consultations.
- **Appendices** includes a list of stakeholder organisations who responded to the consultation (excluding those who requested confidentiality); a profile of those who responded (where such information was provided); a copy of the response form; and a copy of the information leaflet about the consultation.

[9] The latest response was received via email on 4 September 2024. The consultation closed on 28 August 2024.

4. Analysis methodology

4.1 Receipt and handling of responses

The handling of responses to the consultation was subject to a process, run by Ipsos, of checking, logging and confirmation to ensure a full audit trail. All original electronic and hard copy responses were securely filed, catalogued and given a serial number for future reference, in line with requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Upon publication of this report, Ipsos will securely destroy all personal data it has received through the consultation response channels. The responses to the consultation have been securely transferred by Ipsos to Thames Water for their retention in accordance with the consultation privacy notice.

4.2 Analysis of responses

The process of analysing the content of each response was based on a system where summary 'codes' are applied to specific words or phrases contained in the text of the response. The application of these summary codes and sub-codes to the content of the responses allows systematic analysis of the data.

Ipsos developed an initial coding framework (i.e. a list of codes to be applied) based on the text of the first responses received. This initial set of codes was created by drawing out the common themes and points raised. The initial coding framework was then updated throughout the analysis process to ensure that any newly emerging themes were captured. Developing the coding framework in this way ensured that it would provide an accurate representation of what consultees said.

Ipsos used a web-based system called *Ascribe* to manage the coding of all the text to open/free-text question responses (including those received offline). Ascribe is a system which has been used on numerous large-scale public consultations. Responses were uploaded into the Ascribe system, where members of the Ipsos coding team worked systematically through the comments and applied a code to each relevant part(s) of them.

The Ascribe system allowed for detailed monitoring of coding progress and the organic development of the coding framework (i.e. the addition of new codes to new comments). A team of coders worked to review all of the responses as they were uploaded to the Ascribe system. The coding team was fully briefed on the scope of the consultation before they commenced work.

To ensure that no detail was lost, coders were briefed to raise codes that reflected the exact sentiment of a response, and these were then collapsed into a smaller number of key themes at the analysis stage to help with reporting. During the initial stages of the coding process, weekly meetings were held with the coding team to ensure a consistent approach in raising new codes and to ensure that all additional codes were appropriately and consistently assigned.

Responses were coded and analysed as positive/receptive, negative, or suggestive, and shared with Thames Water Ltd as part of their own response analysis. This includes a review of feedback suggesting a

change or changes to the proposed design, as well as comments on the consultation and consultation process.

When analysing responses, coders (and report writers) used their best judgement to determine if the response was about a specific aspect of SESRO, or about SESRO more generally. In some cases it was not possible to be certain if a response was about a specific aspect of SESRO, or wider than this. If Ipsos considered a response to be about a specific aspect, this is reported on in the relevant chapter of this document. If the response was considered to be about SESRO more generally, such comments are presented in Chapter 12 of this report.

4.3 Interpreting the feedback received

A public consultation is a valuable way to gather opinions about a topic, but there are a number of points to bear in mind when interpreting the responses received. While the consultation was open to everyone, those who provided a response were a self-selecting group and so certain people may have been more likely to contribute than others. This means that the responses can never be 'representative' of the population as a whole, as would be the case with a representative sample survey.

Typically, with any consultation, there can be a tendency for responses to come from those more likely to consider themselves affected and more motivated to express their views. Responses are also likely to be influenced by local campaigns.

It must be understood, therefore, that the consultation, as reflected through this report, can only aim to catalogue the various opinions of the members of the local community and organisations who have chosen to respond to the consultation. It can never measure the exact strength of particular views or concerns amongst members of the local community, nor may the responses have fully explained the views of those responding on every relevant matter. It cannot, therefore, be taken as a comprehensive, representative statement of opinion.

While attempts are made to draw out the variations between the different audiences, it is important to note that responses are not directly comparable. Those who have provided their feedback will have chosen to access differing levels of information about SESRO. Some responses are therefore based on more information than others and may also reflect differing degrees of interest.

It is important to note that the aim of a public consultation is not to gauge the popularity of a proposal or proposals; rather it is a process for identifying new and relevant information that should be considered in the decision-making process. All relevant issues are, therefore, considered equally, whether they are raised by a single consultee or a majority of consultees. A consultation is not a referendum.

4.4 Consultees vs. comments made

Please note that throughout the report, findings are reported on in terms of the number of consultees (or respondents) who made comments, and/or the number of comments made. It is important to bear in mind that a consultee can make both positive and negative comments, as well as suggestions and other comments. When numbers are mentioned, the report makes clear that this is either the number of

consultees who made comments, or the number of comments made. This will explain why for example that the number of comments made will generally add up to more than the number of consultees who made comments. It is important to bear this in mind when interpreting the consultation findings.

4.5 Organisational responses

Those who responded on behalf of an organisation or group were classified as *stakeholder organisation* responses. Those classified as stakeholder organisations included statutory agencies, elected representatives, community groups, local government organisations (including county, district, parish and town councils), and businesses.

The response form asked consultees to indicate whether they were responding on behalf of a business or organisation, or as an individual. Those who said they were responding on behalf of a business or organisation were generally classified as a stakeholder organisation, unless it was clear from their response that their comments were on their own behalf, and as such, responses were categorised as responses from individuals.

The response form asked stakeholder organisations to indicate the category of organisation they felt best described themselves from a pre-determined list. For the purposes of consistency of reporting, Ipsos has occasionally chosen to reallocate stakeholder organisations to a different category to the one that they self-selected. However, participants' own selections have been largely respected. Stakeholder organisations that responded by email were allocated to categories by Ipsos, to the best of its judgement.

A full list of the organisations that took part (excluding those requesting confidentiality) can be found in Appendix A.

4.6 General public response

Those who said they were providing their own response in the online and paper response form were generally classified as members of the public, unless it was clear from their response that they were responding on behalf of a group or organisation (i.e. they self-identified as such on the tick-box question on the response form). Those who responded by email or letter (i.e. not by use of the online response form) were classified as members of the public, unless it was clear that they were responding on behalf of an organisation or group.

Where two or more responses were received from the same organisation, Ipsos reviewed each response and made a decision as to which was the official response, and which was not. Those that were considered not to be representing the organisation were then categorised as responses from individuals/members of the public. Their responses are still included in the report, but not attributed to the organisation they were claiming to be responding on behalf of. There cannot be more than one official response from an organisation.

4.7 Campaigns

A campaign group response to public consultations refers to the collective feedback or input provided by an organised group that seeks to influence public policy or decision-making processes. These groups often represent specific interests, such as environmental concerns, business sectors, or social justice issues. Their responses are typically well-organised and aim to highlight the group's stance, provide evidence or arguments supporting their position, and suggest specific actions or changes. Campaign groups use public consultation as a platform to amplify their voice and ensure that their perspective is considered in the final decision-making process.

It was clear that some of the responses to the consultation had been influenced by campaign groups. Several campaign groups had published suggested text on their website and/or on social media. Ipsos analysts were able to determine if a response included some or all of the suggested campaign text. This can either be where a response uses the suggested campaign text/wording without any deviation and/or where the response uses at least some of the suggested wording, but not all of the wording. Consultees providing campaign responses can also include their own bespoke/additional comments.

For each question in the consultation, Ipsos has provided a count of campaign responses (either full campaign response or partial campaign response with or without additional comments). Of those who provided additional comments, these are included in the main chapters of the report alongside bespoke (non-campaign) responses – they are not treated any differently. However, the generic campaign text is only counted once (as relevant per aspect of SESRO) and included in its own section/s of the report. A short additional summary is also provided in each campaign section/chapter just to cover what the additional comments were.

5. Rail links to the site

Q. We are considering options for the rail links to the site. Our preferred option is Option 5. Do you have any comments on these plans?

5.1 Overview

The proposed reservoir site requires connectivity to the railway for the delivery of stone, sand and gravel required to construct the reservoir. Five options were assessed for the dedicated rail siding to import these materials. This chapter provides a summary overview of the options, and a summary of the feedback received, including on Thames Water's preferred option.

Option description

Option 1 - situated east of Steventon, about 1.5km west of the town itself and 260m south of the planned reservoir's southern embankment. It is located within an existing commercial estate. This option is unique among the Steventon to East Hanney Road Diversion options because it is the only one not situated off the railway's four-track section; it is off the two-track section.

Options 2 and 3 - these options, situated west of the area above, faced various limitations. After initial screening, Options 2 and 3 were combined into a single assessment option, Option 4.

Option 4 - located in the central western area between the locations of Options 2 and 3, approximately 1km south of East Hanney, 400m from the proposed Steventon to East Hanney Road Diversion, and 1km southwest of the proposed reservoir. According to Thames Water, this option would avoid flood zones, maintain a greater distance from residential areas, and would accommodate a railway embankment to the west of the Collins underbridge. Two variants of Option 4 (4a and 4b) were considered, with the primary difference being signalling configurations: 4a allows freight trains to exit both east and west, while 4b only allows eastward exits.

Option 1, 4a, and 4b were assessed further. Option 1, while environmentally preferable due to less land take and potential impact on the Cuttings and Hutchin's Copse Local Wildlife Site, was discounted due to a higher risk of rejection by Network Rail because of its impact on the Great Western Main Line. Option 4b was ultimately favoured over Option 4a due to its simpler signalling, lower capital cost, and lower carbon footprint. This led to the development of Option 5, a rotated version of Option 4b designed to minimise impact on the Local Wildlife Site by increasing the distance between the siding area and the site.

Option 5 - located approximately 1km south of East Hanney, 400 metres from the proposed Steventon to East Hanney Road Diversion, and 900m southwest of the proposed reservoir. Similar to Option 4b, the signalling for Option 5 only allows trains to exit eastward, though a westward exit could be accommodated with modifications similar to those in Options 4a or 4b.

Figure 5.1: Map of locations for rail links to the site[10]

5.2 Summary of feedback received

There were 397 consultees who provided comments in response to the options for the rail links to the site. Comments were received from 378 individuals and 19 organisations and representative groups.

Option 5 – Thames Water's preferred option

Thames Water has identified Option 5 as the preferred location for the rail link to the site and has asked for comments on this. The next sections of this chapter examine the reasons put forward in support of, or opposition to Option 5.

5.1.1 Favourable/receptive comments

Of the 74 consultees who provided favourable or receptive comments, this included general support (63), support for the proposal because it is well thought through (7), that it would be necessary (2), or that it will be practical (1).

[10] Source: Thames Water

"This looks like a good option, well-reasoned and researched arguments, it seems to cater best for most of the identified considerations."

Member of the public

Others who provided comments indicated that they would be in support of the proposal (or would not object to it) provided certain conditions would be met (4). This included that they would support the proposal provided it doesn't impact on biodiversity (1).

"Provided that there is minimal impact on the highlighted wildlife sites. Option 5 appears to be the best of the options presented."

Member of the public

5.2.2 Negative comments and concerns raised

There were 40 consultees who provided negative comments and/or raised concerns. This included 25 consultees who made negative comments in general.

A key concern was a perceived lack of information about the proposal (7 comments).

"The report contains too many 'should' statements. This indicates more analysis is required. It is a pity all the options are not available to be compared side by side."

Member of the public

Other less frequently cited general concerns included that the rail links will be disruptive (24), that it was a waste of money (10), opposition due to the impact (10) and length (4) of construction.

"Assumed to be highly disruptive, noisy and for a long period of time, making this (and the other options) highly disruptive for the local population, when it is assumed there is little to no actual requirement (other than financial) to build this reservoir."

Member of the public

Feedback received on alternative options

There were also comments about some of the alternative options. There were 3 consultees who provided positive or receptive comments regarding Option 1 for the reasons such as it minimises disruption (2) and minimises noise pollution (1).

"As a resident of Grove, my preference is for no reservoir, but otherwise the site furthest from Grove as possible (Option 1). This will reduce noise and disruption to the area and will not overlap with ANY of the proposed passenger rail sites."

Member of the public

There were also 2 consultees who provided positive or receptive comments regarding Option 4b and 1 consultee who provided positive or receptive comments regarding Option 4.

Negative comments and concerns about the proposal (not option specific)

While some of those who provided comments did so in support or opposition to specific options, a number of those who did raise concerns did not specifically mention which option or options they were referring to in their responses. Overall, there were 199 consultees who said they were opposed to or had concerns about *any* rail link.

There were 173 consultees who said they were opposed in general or had general concerns about rail links. Comments received about this included that there was a lack of information (55), that a rail link is not necessary (34) or that the proposal or plan was poorly thought through (30).

> *"The rail links are unnecessary as this reservoir should not be created. The need for it is not proven."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Other concerns included a view that the proposed rail link will be disruptive (24) or feeling that it is a waste of money (10).

Environmental impacts

There were 37 consultees who were concerned about the potential for rail links to harm or negatively impact the environment. The main comments received included worry that biodiversity, wildlife and habitats could be negatively affected (8), that the environment will be negatively impacted (7) and concern regarding noise pollution (7).

> *"It appears that there is no clear "winner" between Options 4a, 4b and 5 but all of them will have potentially negative impacts during construction, particularly noise."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Other less frequently raised concerns included worry over impact on green spaces (5).

Community impacts

There were 24 consultees who were concerned about how rail links could affect local communities. The main comments received included general concerns about impacts on the local people (10), impacts on local areas (7) and impacts on residential areas (3).

> *"Whatever site is chosen will make life very difficult for those in the area."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Traffic and transport issues

There were 39 consultees who raised concerns about local traffic and transport, as a consequence of, a rail link. Concerns were raised about how the proposal could impact local rail lines (20) and that traffic and congestion could increase (6).

> *"Your plans to build a rail link make no mention of the amount of trains that would be using the new rail links. Based on information available, you are likely to have to operate over a thousand trains a year, but you have not provided any accurate details or analysis of the impact of this. Wherever you site a rail link it will mean significant industrial transport movements, which will cause huge disruption."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Suggestions

There were 110 consultees who provided suggestions about the proposal, including change requests and refinements. The main suggestions by frequency of response were that a station should be built in Wantage/Grove (34), that the canal should be incorporated (14), and that the rail site should benefit the local people (9).

> *"Love rail links - will always be useful. As long as there is a station and the ability for recreational use, be it walking, cycling or doing other outdoor activities - boating, paddle boarding etc."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Other, less frequently cited suggestions included that Thames Water should consult with Network Rail (8) and that a station should be built (6).

> *"It is not evident whether you have had any meetings with Network Rail as to which of these options, if any, are actually feasible. Without that input, I don't see how you or anybody else can decide on the best option."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Looking at some of the specific suggestions made, these include from:

- **Cllr Sally Povolotsky** suggested that the rail sidings should be constructed in such a way (far enough away from the mainline) as to allow for a railway station to be constructed after the materials handling works are complete. She proposes that this would allow for the provision of a new Wantage and Grove railway station in this location which she feels supports the delivery of a long-standing safeguarded transport scheme in the district, as well as a valuable opportunity for visitors to travel sustainably to access future leisure activities at the reservoir, thereby reducing demand for car travel to the location. She also suggested that any rail line must run electric or hydrogen trains.
- **The Environment Agency** proposes that pollution prevention at the railway sidings and material handling site will be critical, especially if activities like refuelling will be taking place. It suggests

that as Table 6.11 in the rail siding and materials handling area report[11] mentions dewatering - early engagement regarding the need for an abstraction licence will be required. It also suggests that Thames Water takes a sequential approach to demonstrate that there is not a more appropriate location for the siding.

5.3 Campaigns

Group Against Reservoir Development (GARD)

GARD[12] provided an update on its website during the consultation period with suggested text for those responding to the consultation. In terms of the question about the rail links to the site, a summary of the GARD's response is as follows:

- GARD argued that the proposed reservoir's necessity is based on inaccurate data regarding population growth and expected reductions in water taken from streams and rivers.
- They highlighted the Environment Agency's recommendation against the project, citing concerns about its cost-effectiveness and ability to function effectively during periods of drought.
- The Group criticised a perceived lack of transparency and detailed information regarding the proposed rail links.
- They pointed to inconsistencies in reported data, particularly concerning the amount of rock and gravel required for the project which contribute to concerns about the project's planning and reliability.
- The Group emphasised that all proposed options would lead to considerable disruption over an extended period.

In total, 51 responses were received that either provided all or some of the suggested campaign text. This included 16 responses that included the suggested text word for word without any deviation, 16 responses that included at least some of the suggested text, but with bespoke comments as well. There were also 12 responses that included all of the suggested text, but with bespoke comments in addition. There were a further 7 responses that included at least some of the proposed text, but with no additional comments.

Of those who provided their own bespoke comments along with the suggested text, there was strong opposition to the proposed rail links and the SESRO project, highlighting several recurring themes and concerns including lack of information, how local communities could be negatively affected, and worry about negative environmental impacts. SESRO was viewed as unnecessary, with suggestions to explore alternative solutions such as fixing existing infrastructure faults and utilising water transfers.

[11] Rail Siding and materials handling area report
[12] Abingdon Reservoir - Group Against Reservoir Development

Wantage and Grove Campaign Group

The Wantage and Grove Campaign Group[13] also submitted a response to the consultation on behalf of their 1,000 members. In response to the question regarding rail links to the site, the campaign group felt they could not comment on detail due to a perceived lack of information as to the tonnage of materials to be brought in by train, the number of trains per day and the scale of the use of the railway.

[13] Wantage and Grove Campaign Group (wantageandgrove.org)

6. Access and diversion roads

Q. We are proposing to build a new access road to the site for construction vehicles. Once the reservoir is built the road could be used as the access for visitors for recreational use. Our preferred option is Option B. Do you have any comments on these plans?

Q. Several routes have been considered to replace the existing road between East Hanney and Steventon. Our preferred option is Option A. Do you have any comments on these plans?

6.1 Overview

In the consultation materials, Thames Water suggested that two new roads will be needed as part of the reservoir proposals – (1) a temporary and permanent main access road to the site and (2) a permanent diversion of the existing Steventon to East Hanney Road. This chapter provides a summary overview of the options, and a summary of the feedback received, including on Thames Water's preferred options for both pieces of operational infrastructure.

Section A: Main Access Road

A new main access road to the reservoir site would provide temporary construction access from the strategic road network for material transported by road during construction, and permanent access to SESRO for operational, maintenance and recreational purposes, which will be accessible by the public. Thames Water considered four options for the main access road.

Option description

Table 6.1: Options for a new access road to the site[14]

Option	Description
Option A	Option A connects to the A415 with a roundabout junction approximately 1.2km west of the Marcham Interchange (A415/A34) and to the east of the village of Marcham outside of the AQMA. Option A is approximately 5.12km long and initially routes east (parallel to the A415) and then south (parallel to the A34) to reach the reservoir crest. This option was developed with the possibility for the road embankment to also be used as a flood alleviation scheme.
Option B	Largely the same as Option A but the junction on the A415 is located approximately 440m west of the Marcham Interchange (A415/A34), so the total length of Option B is approximately 4.27km, which is shorter than Option A. The roundabout junction for Option B was located to align with an existing unnamed road which leads to Gozzards Ford (via Farringdon Road) because this unnamed road is likely to be used for access to the proposed housing development at Dalton Barracks so the roundabout may be able to serve both SESRO and Dalton Barracks.
Option C	Approximately 4.41km including a section of the Marcham bypass. It was included to consider whether the Main Access Road could connect to the A415 (Marcham Road) via the eastern section of a possible future South Marcham Bypass (accounting for 1km of the proposed route).
Option D	The most direct alignment to the reservoir. It is approximately 4.05km long and uses the same junction as Option A.

[14] Source: Thames Water

Figure: 6.1 map of the options for a new access road

Section B: Steventon to East Hanney Road Diversion

The reservoir footprint would interrupt the route of the existing road that connects Steventon and East Hanney and therefore a road diversion is required as part of the project. Four road alignment options were identified and are set out below.

Option description

Table 6.2: Options for Steventon to East Hanney Road Diversion

Option	Description
Option A	Approximately 5.1km long. Outside of Steventon, the road is diverted to the south from its current alignment from Hanney Road and then routed west along the southern extent of the reservoir embankment. At the western end of Option A, there is a new roundabout junction with the A338, which is around 800m south of the existing junction and approximately mid-way between the centre of East Hanney and the A338 bridge over the Great Western Main Line. At its eastern end, Option A uses part of the existing Hanney Road to link into Steventon.
Option B1	Only differs from Option A at the eastern end as a new junction with the B4017 is proposed to the north of Steventon. This alignment has been included to consider the potential benefits or drawbacks of the junction location, which could reduce traffic passing through Steventon. Alignment B1 is routed north of the existing sub-station and has a total length of approximately 6.4km.
Option B2	Only differs from Option A at the eastern end as a new junction with the B4017 is proposed to the north of Steventon; however, Option B2 is routed south of the sub-substation and it is in closer proximity to existing properties. Option B2 has a total length of approximately 6.2km.
Option C	Option C shifts the road diversion south of the Great Western Main Line. At the Option's eastern end, the existing junction of the B4017 (High Street) and the A4130 would be upgraded to a roundabout due to the additional traffic that would be introduced. The eastern end of the route would require some cutting of the road into the hillside because it is relatively steep, falling approximately 30m in 800m. At the western end of the alignment the road connects into the existing roundabout on the A338 in North Grove. Option C is approximately 7.2km in length.

Figure: 6.2: Map of the options for Steventon to East Hanney Road Diversion

6.2 Summary of feedback received

6.2.1 Section A: Main Access Road

Consultees were asked to provide their comments on the options for the Main Access Road. In total, 480 consultees provided comments about it. This included comments from 457 members of the public and 23 organisations and representative groups.

Option B – Thames Water's preferred option

Thames Water has identified Option B as the preferred location for the Main Access Road and has asked for comments on this. In total, there were 168 consultees who provided comments about Thames Water's preferred option. It included 139 consultees who provided supportive/receptive comments, and 37 consultees who provided negative comments or raised concerns about this option.

6.2.2 Favourable/receptive comments

Of the 139 consultees who provided favourable or receptive comments, this included general support (90), support for the proposal because it is well thought through (13), that it would minimise congestion (7), that it aligns well with planned developments (5) and that it would increase recreational activities (5).

> *"My preference is for Option B. This will provide local recreational and environmental benefits as well as benefitting the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust in its efforts to complete the route to the Thames."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Others who provided comments indicated that they would be in support of the proposal (or would not object to it) provided certain conditions would be met (8). This included that they would support the proposal provided there is a new roundabout (2).

> *"Option B is acceptable as long as the junction with the A415 is via a roundabout. This would also improve safety at the junction of the A415 and the unnamed road that goes to Gozzard's Ford."*
>
> **Member of the public**

6.2.3 Negative comments and concerns raised

There were 37 consultees who provided negative comments and/or raised concerns.

A key concern was a perceived lack of information about the proposal (7 comments).

> *"Some indication or reference to Option B in the above statement would help to put the question into context."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Other less frequently cited general concerns regarded the new roundabout (7), that it will increase congestion generally (7) and on the A34 (6) and in Marcham (6) or at Marcham interchange (6).

> *"A connection close to the A34 (Option B) is good, but does it need to be a roundabout which seems to be the default option for road planners when they can't think what else to do?"*
>
> **Member of the public**

Feedback received on alternative options

There were also comments about some of the alternative options. There were 12 consultees who provided positive or receptive comments regarding Option C for the reasons such as it minimises disruption (1) and impact on local people (1). There were also five consultees who provided positive or receptive comments regarding Option A, and one who provided a comment in support of Option D.

> *"Option C would be better for the Marcham community - by contributing to building the bypass it would be a significant benefit to the village as recompense for the disruption that the reservoir will cause."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Negative comments and concerns about the proposal (not option specific)

While some of those who provided comments did so in support or opposition to specific options, a number of those who did raise concerns did not specifically mention which option or options they were referring to in their responses. Overall, there were 239 consultees who said they were opposed to or had concerns about any access road.

There were 186 consultees who said they were opposed in general or had general concerns about access roads. Comments received about this included that the proposal or plan was poorly thought through (49), that the access road is not needed (41), that there was a lack of information (36) or that proposals were vague (18).

> *"There should not be any new road development to service the reservoir as the reservoir should not be taken forward."*
>
> **East Hanney Parish Council**

Other concerns included a view that the proposed access road will be disruptive (13) or worry over the impact of construction (9).

Environmental impacts

There were also 43 consultees who were opposed to the proposal or who raised concerns about it on environmental grounds. Comments received included concern about negative environmental impact (10), impact on air quality (9) and flood risks and floodplain resilience (8).

"All this will do is make all the houses in this area flood more."

Member of the public

Community impacts

In addition to negative environmental impacts and consequences, there were 67 consultees who raised concerns about how local communities could be affected. A key comment here was that the proposal for a new access road will negatively impact recreational activities (18) and worry that it poses safety issues (15). Other comments received included concern about how local people could be affected (14), and that there were no perceived benefits for local people (8).

"It is dishonest to suggest that there will be any easy access to the reservoir for leisure activities with Thames Water themselves saying that casual access to the reservoir will not be possible as it will be locked."

Member of the public

Socio-economic issues

There were two consultees who raised concerns about the impacts on local businesses as a consequence of a new access road.

"This whole concept of a new access road seems poorly considered, and likely to be detrimental to local and national traffic, with adverse impact/delay to businesses both local and national, as well as private vehicles both local and national."

Member of the public

Traffic and transport issues

There were also 75 consultees who raised concerns about how the proposal for a new access road could have implications for local traffic and transport. The majority of comments received in this regard were about an increase in congestion (30).

"The roads cannot handle the volume of traffic at current levels so I am bewildered and extremely concerned about the disruption construction vehicles will cause and then the disruption from visitors."

Member of the public

Suggestions

There were 99 consultees who provided suggestions about the proposal, including change requests and refinements. The main suggestions by frequency of response were that the new access road should increase recreational activities (19) and that it should incorporate active travel (11).

"I feel the access road should be used for recreational purposes and provide a cycling route."

Member of the public

Other, less frequently cited suggestions included that the new access road should incorporate canal links (9), minimise congestion (7) and benefit local people (7).

> *"I would like to be assured that the existing roads in the vicinity of the new access road can cope with the extra capacity as people come to the reservoir, without being overwhelmed or causing knock-on traffic jams and/or queues in the area."*
>
> **Member of the public**

6.2.4 Section B: Steventon to East Hanney Road Diversion

Consultees were asked to provide their comments on the options for the Steventon to East Hanney Road Diversion. In total, 398 consultees provided comments about it. This included comments from 377 members of the public and 21 organisations and representative groups.

Option A – Thames Water's preferred option

Thames Water has identified Option A as the preferred location for the Steventon to East Hanney Road Diversion and has asked for comments on this. In total, there were 140 consultees who provided comments about Thames Water's preferred option. It included 99 consultees who provided supportive/receptive comments, and 50 consultees who provided negative comments or raised concerns about this option.

6.2.5 Favourable/receptive comments

Of the 99 consultees who provided favourable or receptive comments, this included general support (63), support for the proposal because it minimises disruption (9), is well thought through (7), would minimise congestion (3), and because it is long overdue (3).

> *"I think option A is fine and will not have much of an impact as there is a road already in place."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Others who provided comments indicated that they would be in support of the proposal (or would not object to it) provided certain conditions would be met (6).

> *"Option A seems the most sensible, but can it be joined up properly at the western end with one of the minor roads into East Hanney, rather than cyclists (for example) having to travel along the A338 for some distance."*
>
> **Member of the public**

6.2.6 Negative comments and concerns raised

There were 50 consultees who provided negative comments and/or raised concerns.

A key concern was a perceived lack of information about the proposal (16 comments).

> *"Disruption of existing roads is an important matter for residents of the area. You have provided no information at all on the construction traffic flows, which need to be known before we can comment. Vague, references to 'traffic modelling' are no use at all."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Other less frequently cited general concerns (8), or a perception that the proposal is poorly thought through (8) or regarded the impact of construction (3) and disruption (3).

> *"We object to this on the grounds that it would cause distress, discomfort, and noise to local residents and the environment both in construction and after-use, and the following reasons: No information has been provided on which to base a decision. Traffic flows are not accurately described or projected."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Feedback received on alternative options

There were also comments about some of the alternative options. There were 20 consultees who provided positive or receptive comments regarding Option B1 for the reasons such as it minimises congestion in Steventon (10) and on local people (3).

> *"Option B1 or B2 should be the preference due to the diversion around Steventon. This is beneficial to residents on the East and West of the reservoir."*
>
> **Member of the public**

There were also 17 consultees who provided positive or receptive comments regarding Option B2 for the reasons such as it minimises congestion in Steventon (7). There were a further 18 consultees who provided positive or receptive comments regarding Option C for the reasons such as it minimises congestion in Steventon (6).

> *"Would it not be a more significant improvement to go with Option C, taking traffic away from the centre of Steventon and providing an upgraded access from north of Wantage to the A34?"*
>
> **Member of the public**

Negative comments and concerns about the proposal (not option specific)

While some of those who provided comments did so in support or opposition to specific options, a number of those who did raise concerns did not specifically mention which option(s) they were referring to in their responses. Overall, there were 194 consultees who said they were opposed to or had concerns about any route replacement.

There were 162 consultees who said they were opposed in general or had general concerns about route replacements. Comments received about this included that there was a lack of information (49), that route replacement is not needed (46), and that it will be disruptive (30).

> *"Again the disruption changing local roads will cause to already stretched local infrastructure where traffic is poor at peak times anyway is just not acceptable it will cause chaos whilst being done."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Other concerns included a view that the proposal is poorly thought through (19) or worry over the impact of construction (16).

Environmental impacts

There were 18 consultees who were concerned about the potential for the route replacement to harm or negatively impact the environment. The main comments received included concerns regarding the impact on the environment generally (6), on green spaces (3) and on biodiversity (3).

> *"I do not support to build a new road between East Hanney and Steventon and destroy all the environment and green areas."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Other less frequently raised concerns included worry over the impact on air quality (2) and consequential noise pollution (2).

Community impacts

There were 42 consultees who were concerned about how the route replacement could affect local communities. The main comments received included general concerns about impacts on local people (24) and on the local area (14).

> *"I believe all options that result in the building of this reservoir will be seriously detrimental to the village, its residence and the surrounding villages and towns."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Other less frequently raised concerns included worry over safety issues (5).

Socio-economic issues

There were five consultees who raised concerns about the impacts on local businesses as a consequence of the proposed route replacement.

> *"The proposal to move the Steventon/Hanney Road, and lack of clarity over how this interacts with the proposed sidings and haul road are concerning because any disruption or diversion could have serious implications for local's accessing their places of employment."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Traffic and transport issues

There were 72 consultees who raised concerns about local traffic and transport as a consequence of route replacement. Concerns were raised about how the proposal could increase traffic and congestion (36) and regarding the impact on local roads generally (27) and during construction (27).

Other less frequently raised concerns included worry over transport infrastructure in The Hanneys (11).

> *"This area is already congested traffic wise. Your plans to disrupt the traffic for 10 years or more, coupled with the thousands of lorry movements that will be required are unacceptable."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Suggestions

There were 98 consultees who provided suggestions about the proposal, including change requests and refinements. The main suggestions by frequency of response were that the route replacement should incorporate active travel (23), and should be built before the existing road closes (7).

> *"The replacement road should provide good provision for pedestrians and cyclists. The connection with the A338 to the west of the site should provide safe exit for pedestrians and cyclists, particularly to the north towards East Hanney."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Some of the organisations that provided feedback suggested that they would need to be involved in further discussions with Thames Water and other parties.

> *"In the 'South East Strategic Reservoir Option (SESRO) Public Consultation 2024' documents, there is shown options for a bypass between East Hanney and Steventon. This includes an 'Option B2' of a roundabout through our promotion site. We would be grateful if you would be amenable to a meeting to discuss this and any other ways the reservoir may affect our promotion site."*
>
> **Gladman**

6.3 Campaigns

6.3.1 Main Access Road

GARD

GARD provided an update on its website during the consultation period with suggested text for those responding to the consultation. In terms of the question about the main access road to the site, GARD challenged Thames Water's claims of easy reservoir access as dishonest, citing the restricted access to their existing Queen Mother and Queen Mary reservoirs as evidence. GARD also raised concerns about potential security risks of the reservoir to the surrounding population.

In total, 43 responses were received that either provided all or some of the suggested campaign text. This included 13 responses that included the identical suggested text without any deviation, 17 responses that included at least some of the suggested text, but with bespoke comments as well. There were also nine responses that included all of the suggested text, but with bespoke comments in addition. There were a further four responses that included at least some of the proposed text, but with no additional comments.

Of those who provided their own bespoke comments along with the suggested text, there was a strong opposition to the proposed access roads and the SESRO project, including lack of information and detail, negative impacts on local communities, and a view that key stakeholders had not been properly consulted.

The Wantage and Grove Campaign Group also submitted a response to the consultation. In response to the question regarding the main access road, they expressed concern that National Highways had not been properly consulted. They also raised concerns as to the impact on water quality and were unsure as to exactly what access to the reservoir there will be for recreational use.

6.3.2 Steventon to East Hanney Road Diversion

GARD

GARD provided an update on its website during the consultation period with suggested text for those responding to the consultation. In terms of the question about the Steventon to East Hanney Road Diversion, GARD raised concerns about the feasibility and safety of the proposed Steventon to East Hanney Road, questioning how it will be accommodated between the rail sidings and the reservoir. GARD also questioned the availability of sufficient space for overbridges and their associated access ramps.

In total, 44 responses were received that either provided all or some of the suggested text. This included 18 responses that included the suggested text word for word without any deviation, 20 responses that included at least some of the suggested text, but with bespoke comments as well. There were also two responses that included all of the suggested text, but with bespoke comments in addition. There were a further four responses that included at least some of the proposed text, but with no additional comments.

Of those who provided their own bespoke comments along with the suggested text, there was a strong opposition to the proposed diversion road and the SESRO project, citing reasons such as it is a waste of money, and that fixing existing faults in the infrastructure should be prioritised instead.

The Wantage and Grove Campaign Group

The group also submitted a response to the question regarding route replacement, they welcomed the proposal for a segregated footway and cycleway and emphasised the need for sufficient crossings to

ensure the safety of cyclists and pedestrians. They also expressed concern about the potential increase in traffic throughout construction and felt the proposal lacked detail on traffic management.

7. Water treatment works

Q. We need to identify a location for a proposed Water Treatment Works, which is currently proposed to be designed, consented, built and operated by Southern Water. Our preferred options for the location of the Water Treatment Works are Option 2 and Option 4. Do you have any comments on these plans?

7.1 Overview

The proposed reservoir could provide water to Southern Water, Thames Water and South East Water customers via the Thames to Southern Transfer (T2ST). The T2ST project has identified a need for a Water Treatment Works (WTW) to be located at the SESRO reservoir site. Therefore, the two project teams from Thames Water and Southern Water have worked together to identify provisional areas that could be 'reserved' for construction of a WTW for the T2ST project. This chapter provides a summary overview of the options, and a summary of the feedback received, including on Thames Water's preferred option.

Option description

Table 7.1: Options for the Water Treatment Works

Option	Description
Option 1	This positions the WTW along the northern edge of the outer reservoir embankment, approximately 1,900m south of Marcham. The Wilts and Berks Canal corridor lies immediately to the north of this option. By avoiding the northeast corner of the site, this option effectively reduces potential interactions with the pumping station, tunnel, potential recreational facilities associated with lakes, café and public parking. The WTW is assumed to be accessed for construction and operational purposes via the main SESRO access road, with a total length from Marcham Road of approximately 6,400m. Option 1 has been developed based on the dimensions of Layout 1 (but Layout 2 is also suitable for this land parcel if required).
Option 2	This positions the WTW within the northeast corner of the SESRO site, approximately 700m west of Drayton. This location places the WTW near the reservoir embankment, the main access road, the pump house and the tunnel. The WTW is assumed to be accessed for construction and operational purposes via the main SESRO access road, with a total length from Marcham Road of approximately 4,000m. The option has been developed based on the dimensions of Layout 1. Layout 2 would not fit within this land parcel unless the Auxiliary Drawdown Channel (ADC) is omitted, and the land parcel extended. The proximity of this option to the raw water pumping station minimises the length of raw and contingency pipeline, providing the most direct route from the WTW to the pump house.
Option 3	This option places the WTW on the southern edge of the study area, approximately 1,600m west of Steventon. This location positions the WTW within a narrow corridor of land between the Great Western Main Line railway and the Steventon to East Hanney Road Diversion. Notably, this option avoids the northeast corner of the site, effectively minimising interactions with recreational facilities and public parking. The land is currently used as a commercial warehousing and open storage facility under the name of Steventon Depot. Access to the WTW during construction is assumed to be via the main SESRO access road, with a total length from Marcham Road of approximately 8.1km. For operational purposes, direct access would be achieved from the Steventon to East Hanney Road Diversion. The option has been developed based on the dimensions of Layout 2. Layout 1 would not fit within this land parcel due to the restricted width of the parcel, bordering both the railway and Steventon to East Hanney Road Diversion. It may be feasible to reroute the watercourse and road diversion to create additional space. The proximity of this option away from the raw water pumping station and Abingdon STW increases the overall length of raw, contingency and foul pipework lengths required, however, offers a reduction in required potable pipework.
Option 4	This option positions the WTW near the entrance of the SESRO site, approximately 600m northwest of Drayton. This location is within a relatively spacious land parcel, situated 1,000m northeast of the reservoir. However, the localised higher elevation of this section of the site would likely require landscape mitigation and additional earthworks to reduce the visual impact of a WTW and integrate it into the landscape. The WTW is assumed to be accessed for construction and operational purposes via the main SESRO access road, with a total length from Marcham Road of approximately 4,000m. The option has been developed based on the dimensions of Layout 1, however, the land parcel assessed within Option 4 would cater to both layouts with ease.

Figure: 7.1 Map of the options for the Water Treatment Works

7.2 Summary of feedback received

There were 298 consultees who provided comments in response to the options for the WTW. Comments were received from 280 individuals and 18 organisations and representative groups.

Thames Water's Preferred Options – Option 2 and 4

Thames Water has identified Option 2 and Option 4 as the preferred locations for the WTW and has asked for comments on this. A total of 99 consultees offered comments in response to the preferred options, including 50 consultees who provided supportive/receptive comments, and 28 consultees who provided negative comments or raised concerns about these options. The next sections of this chapter examine the reasons put forward in support of, or opposition to these preferred options specifically.

Option 2 – Thames Water's Preferred Option

In total, there were 35 consultees who provided comments about Option 2 specifically. It included 23 consultees who provided supportive/receptive comments, and 4 consultees who provided negative comments or raised concerns about this option.

7.2.1 Favourable/receptive comments

Of the 23 consultees who provided supportive or receptive comments, this included support for Option 2 because the location is more suitable (4), and because it minimises negative aesthetics (4).

> *"Option 2 would seem to make more sense, as it keeps all the reservoir "works" to one side of the Canal."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Others who provided comments indicated that they would be in support of Option 2 (or would not object to it) provided certain conditions would be met (3).

> *"It would seem logical that it should be located as close as possible to the T2ST pipeline route, as well as to other proposed reservoir infrastructure (which would seem to favour Option 2), subject to the selected site having the lowest environmental (e.g. landscape and visual) impacts that could be successfully mitigated."*
>
> **Member of the public**

7.2.2 Negative comments and concerns raised

There were four consultees who provided negative comments and/or raised concerns about Option 2.

A key concern was the potential negative impact on biodiversity and wildlife (2 comments).

> *"Option 2 would encroach on habitats occupied by a number of Red List bird species, including Corn Bunting and Grey Partridge and destroy a number of ancient and veteran trees."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Other concerns regarded the plans as poorly thought through (1).

Option 4 – Thames Water's preferred option

In total, there were 17 consultees who provided comments about Option 4 specifically. This included five consultees who provided supportive/receptive comments, and six consultees who provided negative comments or raised concerns about this option.

7.2.3 Favourable/receptive comments

Of the five consultees who provided favourable or receptive comments, this included support for Option 4 because it is away from the reservoir (4) and leisure activities (3).

> *"(Option) 4 seems best, out of the way of the recreational lakes and main reservoir and on the access road. Keeps the reservoir looking nice!"*
>
> **Member of the public**

7.2.4 Negative comments and concerns raised

There were six consultees who provided negative comments and/or raised general concerns about Option 4.

> *"I think the option 4 elevation is a strong negative."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Feedback received on alternative options

There were also comments about some of the alternative options. There were five consultees who provided positive or receptive comments regarding Option 1 and a further six consultees who provided positive or receptive comments regarding Option 3.

Negative comments and concerns about the proposal (not option specific)

While some of those who provided comments did so in support or opposition to specific options, a number of those who did raise concerns did not specifically mention which option or options they were referring to in their responses. Overall, there were 145 consultees who said they were opposed to or had concerns about any WTW.

There were 129 consultees who said they were opposed in general or had general concerns about WTWs. Comments received about this included that there was a lack of information (40), that it is poorly thought through (33) or that a WTW is not needed (31).

> *"I disagree with the proposals for the reservoir so disagree with the options provided for the Water Treatment Works location or the associated Southern Water Transfer SRO."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Other concerns included a view that the proposal is a waste of money (11) or that the site is not suitable (6).

Environmental impacts

There were 30 consultees who were concerned about the potential for the proposed WTW to harm or negatively impact the environment. The main comments received included concerns regarding the impact on green spaces (6) and on visual aesthetics (4).

Other less frequently raised concerns included worry over the impact on water quality (3) and consequential noise pollution (3).

> *"Many of these appear to be around local dog walking spots and wildlife hot spots. Has any survey into the impact on wildlife etc. been undertaken?"*
>
> **Member of the public**

Community impacts

There were 16 consultees who were concerned about how the proposed WTW could affect local communities. The main comments received included general concerns about impacts on the local area (6) and concern that it will not benefit local people (4).

Other less frequently raised concerns included worry over the area of Oxfordshire specifically (2) and residential areas generally (2).

> *"Absolutely not. You are too close to housing; the smell will be unbearable and will affect towns and villages in a wider area."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Socio-economic issues

There was one consultee who raised concerns about the impacts on local businesses as a consequence of the proposed WTW.

> *"There is also the potential for losses to the economy by people being put off using the W&B if they have to pass that site. There is already a sewage works there: additional visual and olfactory pollution must also be considered as this is a popular stretch for holidayers and tourism, as well as the tens of thousands of people living aboard their own boat."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Traffic and transport issues

There were two consultees who raised concerns about local traffic and transport as a consequence of the proposed WTW.

Suggestions

There were 76 consultees who provided suggestions about the proposal, including change requests and refinements. The main suggestions by frequency of response were that the WTW should be far from residential areas (8), should be a priority over the proposed reservoir (8) and should minimise impact on the environment (7).

> *"These should be built as far away from residential areas as possible, and potentially on flood grounds but with suitable defences, to ensure that the chosen area is used sensibly and without disruption, but not flooded."*
>
> **Member of the public**

7.3 Campaigns

GARD

GARD provided an update on its website during the consultation period with suggested text for those responding to the consultation. In terms of the question about the proposed WTW, GARD urged for a thorough reappraisal and validation by the Environment Agency and DEFRA. It expressed an objection to inter-regional water transfer as well as the involvement of Southern Water. GARD criticised the perceived high combined cost of the water transfer and reservoir project.

In total, 59 responses were received that either provided all or some of the suggested campaign text. This included 18 responses that included the suggested text word for word without any deviation, 27 responses that included at least some of the suggested text, but with bespoke comments as well. There were also five responses that included all of the suggested text, but with bespoke comments in addition. There were a further nine responses that included at least some of the proposed text, but with no additional comments. Of those who provided their own bespoke comments along with the suggested text, there was strong opposition to the proposed diversion road and the SESRO project, citing reasons such as it is waste of money and that fixing existing faults in the infrastructure should be prioritised instead.

The Wantage and Grove Campaign Group also submitted a response. In response to the question regarding the WTW, they expressed concern that the proposal would be a waste of money.

8. Connectivity to the River Thames

Q. We are proposing Option B as our preferred option for our intake/outfall structure. Do you have any comments on these plans?

Q. We have considered several options for the emergency discharge and Option C is our preferred option. Do you have any comments on these plans?

8.1 Overview

The proposed reservoir requires connectivity to the River Thames for the following reasons:

1. During normal operating conditions, water would be abstracted from the River Thames to fill the reservoir (typically when flow is high in the river) and at other times water would be discharged to the river to augment flows for water supply abstraction downstream (typically during drier periods when river flows are low).

2. In an emergency event, the water level in the reservoir would be drawn down and discharged to the river at a higher rate than the normal operational discharges.

To achieve these two requirements, two specific pieces of operational infrastructure will be required – an intake/outfall structure and emergency discharge infrastructure.

Eight options were assessed for the intake/outfall structure and three options were identified and considered for the emergency discharge infrastructure. This chapter provides a summary overview of the options, and a summary of the feedback received, including on Thames Water's preferred options for both pieces of operational infrastructure.

Intake/outfall structure

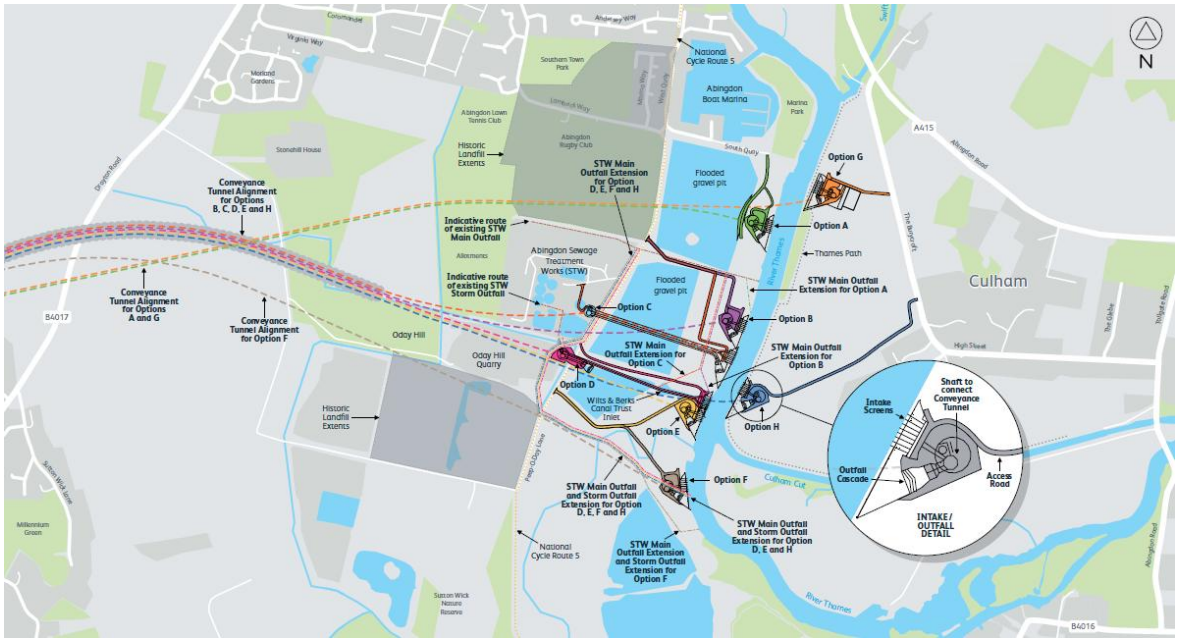
The purpose of the intake/outfall structure is to abstract water from the River Thames for reservoir filling, and, when required, discharge to the River Thames for downstream water supply abstraction. The location of the structure would set the end point of the underground conveyance tunnel that would start close to the reservoir embankment at the SESRO pumping station. A summary of the eight options are included in Table 8.1.

Option description

Table 8.1: Option for the intake/outfall structure[15]

Option	Description
Option A	A combined Intake/Outfall structure. Intake and Outfall located together on the right bank of the River Thames, upstream of the Abingdon STW outfall, south of Abingdon Marina. The shaft location is in the same location.
Option B	A combined Intake/Outfall structure. Intake and Outfall located on the right bank of the River Thames, upstream of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust Inlet. The shaft location is in the same location.
Option C	A combined Intake/Outfall structure. Intake and Outfall located on the right bank of the River Thames, upstream of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust Inlet. The shaft location is within Abingdon STW.
Option D	The Intake/Outfall structures are separated. Intake location is on the right bank of the River Thames, south of Abingdon STW. The Outfall location is in the right bank of the River Thames, upstream of Wilts & Berks Canal Inlet. The shaft location is south of Abingdon within an existing quarry site.
Option E	A combined Intake/Outfall structure. Intake and Outfall located on the right bank of the River Thames, immediately downstream of the Wilts & Berks Canal Inlet. The shaft location is in the same location.
Option F	A combined Intake/Outfall structure. Intake and Outfall located on the right bank of the River Thames, downstream of Culham Cut. The shaft location is in the same location.
Option G	A combined Intake/Outfall structure. Intake and Outfall located on the left bank of the River Thames, upstream of Abingdon STW outfall, south of Abingdon Marina. The shaft location is in the same location.
Option H	A combined Intake/Outfall structure. Intake and Outfall located on the left bank of the River Thames, upstream of Culham Cut. The shaft location is in the same location.

Figure 8.1: Map of the intake/outfall options



[15] Source: Thames Water

Emergency discharge infrastructure

The design of the proposed reservoir needs to include infrastructure to safely drawdown the water level in the reservoir during an emergency event. Water removed from the reservoir would need to be conveyed to a watercourse with sufficient hydraulic capacity to safely receive this flow during normal conditions without causing flooding. The engineering solutions for this conveyance would be either an Auxiliary Drawdown Channel (ADC) - a surface-level channel of water connecting the reservoir to the River Thames - or a sub-surface tunnel between the two. The only watercourse with sufficient capacity within the vicinity of the proposed reservoir is the River Thames. In common with the intake/outfall structure study above, the Culham reach of the River Thames has been assessed for emergency drawdown options.

Three options were identified and considered as set out in an options appraisal report. Study work was undertaken to investigate the behaviour of the River Thames floodplain in the vicinity of the options and understand the likely impact of an aboveground drawdown channel on flood risk. This work identified that Option A would have an unacceptable adverse impact on flooding. On this basis Option A was screened out and not taken forward to full assessment.

Option description

Table 8.2: Option for emergency discharge[16]

Option	Description
Option A	Includes two elements: • An Auxiliary Drawdown Channel (ADC) consisting of a surface channel capable of transferring 45m³/s to the River Thames via gravity. The channel would have raised levees on either side in the section approaching the river to retain water in the channel in a drawdown scenario. • A conveyance tunnel capable of transferring 30m³/s via gravity to the River Thames.
Option B	This option consists of an ADC and conveyance tunnel similar to Option A; however, the ADC design has been adjusted to remove the levees and introduce a gated structure on the section approaching the river to prevent backflow of River Thames flooding.
Option C	Does not include the ADC and instead utilises the conveyance tunnel alone to transfer 75m³/s to the River Thames in an emergency.

[16] Source: Thames Water

8.2 Summary of feedback received

8.2.1 Intake/outfall structure

Consultees were asked to provide their comments on the options for the intake/outfall structure. In total, 383 consultees provided comments about this. It included comments from 361 members of the public and 22 organisations and representative groups.

Option B – Thames Water's preferred option

Thames Water has identified Option B as the preferred location for the intake/outfall structure and has asked for comments on this. In total, there were 117 consultees who provided comments about Thames Water's preferred option. It included 78 consultees who provided supportive/receptive comments, and 40 consultees who provided negative comments or raised concerns about this option.

Most of the comments received that were positive/receptive to Option B were general comments including agreement that Option B would be the best, most suitable or beneficial option.

> *"This option seems to offer the most beneficial solution."*
>
> **Member of the public**

> *"On the basis of the studies so far the Trust accepts that Option B for the intake/outfall structure is reasonable."*
>
> **Wilts & Berks Canal Trust**

Other comments about Option B included that there would be benefits to local people and local communities (7 comments), benefits to wildlife (4 comments), and that the proposal was well thought out (4 comments).

Of those who provided negative comments or raised concerns about Thames Water's preferred option, comments received were that the proposal was inflexible (7), that it would impact recreational and leisure activities (7), concerns about how water quality could be affected (7), and general opposition (5).

> *"Detailed analysis by other interested parties…shows that the proposed structure will be prone to long periods of minimal inflow and outflow because of its inflexibility, which will result in poor water quality and algae."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Feedback received on alternative options

There were 43 consultees who provided positive or receptive comments, including some without specifying which option or options they were providing comments on. Table 8.3 includes an overview of the main comments received on alternative options.

Table 8.3: Positive/receptive comments received about alternative options for the intake/outfall structure

Option	Number of comments received	Details of what was said	Verbatim comments (examples)
A	*5*	General support	*"It seems crazy to have the intake just 150m downstream of the STW outfall. Therefore I think Option A is better."* **Member of the public**
C	*3*	Will improve recreational/leisure activities	
	2	Minimises impact on the environment	
E	*2*	General support	*"Preference would be Option E."* **Member of the public**
F	*6*	Minimises impact on recreational/leisure activities	*"My preferred option is Option F because this is the least disruptive to river users and this part of the river is between the 'danger sign' and the weir and therefore doesn't have as much traffic. The stretch of river between Abingdon and the Culham cut is extensively used by pleasure boats, rowing boats, paddle boarders, swimmers, canoe and sailing boats, all of which would be massively impacted by any outlet/intake structures."* **Member of the public**
	5	Minimises disruption/ less intrusive	
	2	Minimises danger/ safety issues	
	2	Minimises impact on the environment	
	2	Will not be a visual eyesore/hidden away	

There were also single comments about some of the alternative options including that:

- **Option A:** minimise impacts on residential areas, that local communities would benefit, will incorporate active travel.
- **Option C:** noise impacts would be mitigated.
- **Option D:** general support, minimises danger or improves safety, reduced impact on local communities, impacts on land near the River Thames would be reduced or kept to a minimum, more beneficial or complement emergency discharge.

> *"As a rower on the stretch, Options E, F, and H are too close to where we usually stop, turn and are coached. Any extra flow here could cause safety issues. Additionally, the STW outfalls should be as far downstream as possible, so my preference is Option D."*
>
> **Member of the public**

- **Optional E:** minimises impact, reduced impact on local water courses.

> *"Option E may be preferable but has an impact on coastal grazing land marsh priority habitat. If this can be investigated and shown to be of minimal impact, it would likely be the least impactful option as well as requiring no significant change when the (inevitable) linkage of STT (Severn-Thames-Transfer) is carried out."*
>
> **Cllr Andy Cooke, Drayton Ward**

- **Option F:** preference for this option as would reduce impact on river users.
- **Option G:** general support.
- **Option H:** minimises flood risk.

Concerns raised (not option specific)

There were 198 consultees who were opposed or raised concerns about the proposal for an intake/outfall structure. The main comments included a view that there had been a lack of information or specific details about the proposal (59), that the proposal was flawed or poorly thought through (42), general opposition or concerns about the proposal (38), reference to Farmoor Reservoir and how issues there could also apply to SESRO (29), concerns about discharge of sewage into waterways and how this could affect intake into the reservoir (22), and reference to issues at Sandford-on-Thames sewer overflow (22).

> *"Your intake/outfall document, and indeed your entire consultation documents contain no detail on how water quality in the reservoir will be managed…"*
>
> **Member of the public**

> *"The consultation document lacks detail of how the intake/outfall (and emergency discharge infrastructure) options will be constructed including land take required for the construction phase in gaining access, construction and storage compounds including stock piling of excavated material, safeguarded areas, depth of tunnels, and how the options impact on the council's land and their future use including timescales for construction."*
>
> **Vale of White Horse District Council**

Other concerns raised included that an intake/outfall structure would not be necessary (15), and concerns about negative impacts associated with construction (6). There were also a small number of comments with concerns about some of the alternative options including general opposition to Option H (7), Option G (6), Option C (6), Option E (4), Option A (3), and Option F (2).

Looking at some of the specific issues and concerns raised, there were 88 comments citing environmental issues or consequences; 23 comments about how local communities could be adversely affected; and 12 comments raising traffic and transport issues.

A key environmental concern was about how the proposed intake/outfall structure would negatively impact water quality (with 51 comments received).

> *"All the options for the water intake location are close to both an existing sewage site and two historic landfill sites…sites close to or downstream of the Abingdon sewage works and waste disposal sites will add to the already high bacterial and contamination load. There appears to be no existing design for the intake/outfall site plant."*
>
> **Wantage Town Council**

Other environmental concerns included negative environmental consequences in general (11), flood risk (11), impacts on wildlife (10), and how the local landscape would be blighted visually (9).

> *"The scale of the intake/outfall structure will have a negative impact on the visual amenity of the locality."*
>
> **Cllr Sally Povolotsky, Hendreds & Harwell**

On community impacts, there were eight comments about how the proposal could impact recreational activities, five comments about how people's homes could be adversely affected, four comments about negative consequences for local towns and villages in the vicinity of the proposal, and three comments about lack of benefits of the proposal.

On those who raised concerns about traffic and transport (12 comments), a particular concern was about how some or most of the proposed options could negatively affect a cycle route (9).

> *"It could disrupt cycle route NCN 5, an important active travel route needed for non-car travel."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Suggestions

There were 109 consultees who made suggestions about the intake/outfall structure. The main comments received by frequency of response were that canal linkages should be incorporated (35), and specifically to the Wilts & Berks Canal (16). Other suggestions included that the structure should be above ground (19), resilient (6), that it should entail environmental benefits (6), that contaminated outfall should be mitigated (4), and construction effects managed (1).

> *"I feel that the outfall should be above ground possibly utilising the canal route."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Looking at some specific suggestions, questions or requests from organisations included:

- **Oxfordshire County Council** suggested that construction effects would need to be managed and that there would be a need to ascertain where construction traffic would be routed, and how impacts would be mitigated.
- **The Environment Agency** stated that in terms of water quality it would require further information on the pollution criteria and standard mitigation outlined in the consultation documentation. It was suggested that detailed modelling should be carried out to assess the impact of flood storage and flood flows.
- **Steventon Parish Council** stated that whatever option is chosen the inflows to the reservoir will only be allowed when river flow at Culham is above average flow, mainly in winter, so there is likely to be frequent poor water quality in its opinion. The Council asked questions including what the effect on water quality in the proposed reservoir would be, and also if the reservoir would be prone to algal blooms.
- **Wantage Town Council** suggested that the project should take on "net zero carbon" principles and to use frameworks such as the *Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method* to ensure sustainable development.

8.2.2 Emergency discharge infrastructure

Thames Water has identified Option C as the preferred location for the emergency discharge infrastructure. Consultees were asked to provide their comments on the options for the emergency discharge infrastructure. In total, 836 consultees provided comments about this. It included comments from 811 members of the public and 25 organisations and representative groups.

Option C – Thames Water's preferred option

Thames Water has identified Option C as the preferred option and has asked for comments on this. In total, there were 362 consultees who provided comments about Thames Water's preferred option. It included 59 consultees who provided supportive/receptive comments, and 309 consultees who provided negative comments or raised concerns about this option.

Most of those who provided positive/receptive comments about Option C used words such as "good, "fine", "agree" or "support" in response to the question asking about Thames Water's preferred option for emergency discharge.

> *"I agree Option C is the best. It should be in a tunnel. I am against the use of an Auxiliary Drawdown Channel being open - it will unnecessarily impact the landscape."*
>
> **Member of the public**

> *"We agree with the choice of Option C as the preferred option."*
>
> **Freshwater Habitats Trust**

Other comments in support of Option C included that the plan was well thought out (3), that a tunnel would be better than an open channel to deal with higher water flow rates (3), that flood risk would be mitigated (3), and reduced or mitigated environmental impact compared to an open channel (3).

Concerns raised about Option C

Of those who provided negative comments or raised concerns about Option C, the main comments received were opposition to a tunnel (98), lack of benefits for local people and local communities (72), concern about the rate or volume of discharge (35), safety concerns (29), concern about structural integrity (26), and concern about high embankments (24).

> *"Regarding the Emergency Discharge options IWA strongly disagrees with the proposed Option C which will provide no public benefit. Option B - Open Channel Transfer (OCT) should be used instead, incorporating the Wilts & Berks Canal and including a connection under the A34. Option B will provide significant economic, wellbeing and environment benefit…"*
>
> **Inland Waterways Association**

Other concerns included comments about the proposed frequency of discharge (13), worry about how the Wilts & Berks Canal could be negatively affected (12), that Thames Water's preferred option would be putting profit before people (11), negative environmental impacts (8), expensive or poor value for money (8), and that biodiversity, wildlife and habitats could be negatively impacted, disrupted or damaged (7).

Option B

While Option B (a channel) is not Thames Water's preferred option, it received a relatively high level of support, particularly from a number of campaign groups and their supporters. A key comment was that Option B would incorporate or encourage active travel, walking and cycling routes (158 comments received). Other frequently cited comments in support of Option B included that it would be more likely to benefit local people and local communities (129), that it would benefit the Wilts & Berks Canal (111), that it would be more environmentally sustainable compared to a tunnel (94), that it would encourage and support increased recreational use and leisure activities (92), and that it could support or improve biodiversity, and sustainable habitats for wildlife (75).

> *"The Trust believes Option B is the correct choice for the auxiliary drawdown and requests sight of the cost/benefit analysis for the auxiliary drawdown options and further engagement to seek agreement on an improved analysis."*
>
> **Wilts & Berks Canal Trust**

> *"Option B should be implemented. Only option B (an open channel/canal) would provide a lasting legacy of a canal, towpath and dedicated cycle route. This will have huge positive effect to the surrounding community."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Other receptive or supportive comments about Option B included that it would create or have long-term benefits (64), it would facilitate or allow creation of towpaths (63), incorporation of canal links (48), that it would bring benefits to local rivers and water courses (46), economic benefits and benefits for local businesses (26), that benefits outweigh drawbacks or impacts (25), improvements to local people's quality of life (24), that it would facilitate linkages to Abingdon (23), and improved public access (19).

Negative comments and concerns about the proposal (not option specific)

While some of those who provided comments did so in support or opposition to Options B and C, a number of those who did raise concerns did not specifically mention which option or options they were referring to in their feedback. Overall, there were 268 consultees who said they were opposed to or had concerns about any discharge.

There were 229 consultees who said they were opposed in general or had general concerns about emergency discharge. Comments received about this included that the proposal or plan was poorly thought through (68), that there was a lack of information (56), concern about volume of discharge (32), worry about discharge of sewage into local rivers and water courses (25), and/or that emergency discharge was not needed as they felt a reservoir was not needed in the first place (22).

> *"Don't build the reservoir then you won't need emergency run off."*
>
> **Member of the public**

> *"We have reservations of how the large emergency flow can be safely achieved without weakening the embankment structure. Are routine tests and inspections to be carried out? Getting this wrong will be catastrophic. Part of the reservoir operation has just not been thought through."*
>
> **Steventon Parish Council**

Other concerns included a view that the proposed reservoir was too big (15), lack of suitable and alternative options (5), and concern about disruption in general (4).

There were also 86 consultees who were opposed to the proposal or who raised concerns about it on environmental grounds. Comments received included concern about flood risks and floodplain resilience (30), negative environmental impact (18), negative impacts and consequences for local rivers and watercourses (11), as well as consequences for wildlife (9).

> *"The whole area is already susceptible to flooding. So building one of the largest reservoirs is Europe is already not the best idea, but in the event of emergency discharge, what flooding impact will that have on the area?"*
>
> **Member of the public**

> *"Flooding is a serious issue in Oxford City and the wider Oxfordshire. The analysis of the flood risks seem completely inadequate…"*
>
> **CPRE Oxfordshire**

In addition to perceived negative environmental impacts and consequences, there were 67 consultees who raised concerns about how local communities could be affected. A central comment here was that the proposal for emergency discharge could have safety issues (30). Other comments received included concern about how local settlements could be affected (22), that recreational and leisure activities could be reduced (9), and a view that there were no perceived benefits for local people (8).

> *"It's too risky to have that much water in a built up area surrounded by villages on all sites - it's a disaster waiting to happen…"*
>
> **Member of the public**

> *"…there is no way you can casually punt the critical safety decisions…and wider dam-break contingency planning into the long grass. There are tens of thousands of lives in the area."*
>
> **Cllr Andy Cooke, Drayton Ward**

There were also eight consultees who raised concerns about how the proposal for emergency discharge could have implications for local traffic and transport. Comments received in this regard were about how transport infrastructure, cycle routes and access to local villages could be impacted by flooding from emergency discharge of water from the reservoir, and also disruption due to construction.

> *"…the construction would take out the A34 trunk road and the B4017 for long periods, up to two years, leading to huge traffic disruption."*
>
> **Group Against Reservoir Development (GARD)**

Suggestions

There were 200 consultees who provided suggestions about the proposal, including change requests and refinements. The main suggestions by frequency of response were that the proposal for emergency discharge should incorporate existing canal links (66), that any development should aid the restoration of the Wilts & Berks Canal (42), that local people and communities should benefit from the proposal (29), that focus should be on environmental benefits, including for wildlife and habitats (24), and that there should be benefits for recreational and leisure users (20).

> *"I would prefer the option to install the new canal and provide leisure and more opportunities for nature to thrive. It will be a real asset to the community."*
>
> **Member of the public**

> *"Whilst a piped solution is acceptable… VWHDC is, in principle, supportive of the open channel…the SESRO team are encouraged to investigate the opportunities of an open canal in more detail…"*
>
> **Vale of White Horse District Council**

Other suggestions included that the development should incorporate public access and to encourage active and sustainable travel (13), that it should be a resilient, reliable and long-term solution (12), that Thames Water should invest in other complimentary and auxiliary infrastructure such as sewage use to minimise the need for emergency discharge (9), and that an environmental impact assessment should be carried out (5).

> *"I would like to see Thames Water doing more to promote sustainable local travel forms as side benefits of their plans for the Emergency Discharge, between the area of the proposed reservoir and the River Thames."*
>
> **Olly Glover, Member of Parliament for Didcot and Wantage**

Some of the organisations that provided feedback suggested that they would need to be involved in further discussions with Thames Water and other parties.

> *"The construction effects will include a lot of earth removal. The traffic management implications need to be further understood. Both the County Council and National Highways need to be involved in discussions."*
>
> **Oxfordshire County Council**

Looking at some of the specific suggestions and/or requests from organisations, these included:

- **The National Farmers' Union (NFU)** stated that Culham reach of the River Thames has been assessed for emergency drawdown options, and the technical brochure refers to Option C as the preferred option, utilising a tunnel to transport water. The NFU stated that it would like to understand what the potential impact on the land downstream of this outfall is, and if any fortification work will need to be done to surrounding watercourses in order to accommodate a large release of water in a short period of time.
- **Oxfordshire Cycling Network** suggested that from an active travel view, Option B would have a path alongside, permitted for walking and cycling, providing a route to/from the reservoir, its amenities and points west, north Drayton, and Peep-O-Day Lane for South Abingdon and Sutton Courtenay. It was stated that Peep-O-Day Lane is a significant active travel corridor with average cycle counts of 200 per day in 2022 (annual average), plus walkers and other users.
- **Victoria Land** stated that Jubb had been appointed by Victoria Land to provide technical advice in relation to the proposed development of land to the north of Abingdon Road in Drayton, Oxfordshire. It was stated that Jubb provide an alternative solution which would redirect the tunnel away from the village. It is suggested that the route of this tunnel should be taken further north to avoid any potential conflict, for example, to not conflict with land safeguarded for the proposed South Abingdon bypass.
- **Wilts & Berks Canal Trust** stated that it was their sincere wish that Thames Water will continue to work on the open channel (Option B) in partnership with the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust. The Trust further stated that any canal-related works left to be completed later within the diversion

route around the reservoir should be executed similarly. This was stated it would be in compliance with the protection for the canal in local planning policy.

8.3 Campaigns

8.3.1 Intake/outflow structure

GARD

GARD provided an update on its website during the consultation period with suggested text for those responding to the consultation. In terms of the question about the intake/outflow structure, a summary of the Group's response is as follows:

- The Group requested a detailed explanation of how water quality in the reservoir will be managed.
- They also raised concerns about the perceived high likelihood of contaminated water entering the reservoir.

In total, 56 responses were received that either provided all or some of the suggested campaign text. This included 19 responses that included the suggested text word for word without any deviation, 29 responses that included at least some of the suggested text, but with bespoke comments as well. There were also three responses that included all of the suggested text, but with bespoke comments in addition. There were a further five responses that included at least some of the proposed text, but with no additional comments. Of those who provided their own bespoke comments along with the suggested text, there was strong opposition to the intake/outfall structure, including concerns about lack of information, mismanagement of the project, and environmental concerns about how water quality and biodiversity could be affected,

Wantage and Grove Campaign Group

The group stated that they support the use of a tunnel for “normal” intake/outfall as they believe that this would increase the security of water quality but not for emergency drawdown. They were concerned that there was no detail how water quality in the reservoir and on outflow to the River Thames would be managed.

8.3.2 Emergency discharge

The question about emergency discharge attracted responses from several campaign groups as shown in Table 8.4.

Table 8.4: Campaign responses received about the options for emergency discharge

Name of campaign group	Number of responses received
Wilts & Berks Canal Trust	*163*
Wilts & Berks Canal Trust (Facebook Campaign)	*42*
Canal & River Trust Volunteers (Facebook Campaign)	*86*
Group Against Reservoir Development (GARD)	*47*
Inland Waterways Association	*15*

Wilts & Berks Canal Trust

The group strongly advocated for Option B and argued that this option offers significant economic, well-being, and environmental benefits. Excluding the Facebook campaign (see later), 163 responses were received that either provided all or some of the suggested campaign text. This included 120 responses that included the suggested text word for word without any deviation, 10 responses that included at least some of the suggested text, but with bespoke comments as well. There were also 16 responses that included all of the suggested text, but with bespoke comments in addition. There were a further 17 responses that included at least some of the proposed text, but with no additional comments.

It was stated that the proposed emergency discharge Option B would offer numerous perceived benefits. Comments expressed a belief that it would improve the environment and support the restoration of the Wilts & Berks Canal and that local communities would benefit from increased quality of life, health, wellbeing, and a boost to the local economy. There was also belief that recreational activities would increase with the creation of open channels, canal links, and connections to Abingdon, Wantage, Grove, Swindon, Melksham, the Kennet & Avon Canal, the River Severn, and possibly Cricklade and that waterways, especially the Wilts & Berks Canal, and areas of historical interest would also benefit. Moreover, Option B was expected to foster goodwill, be easier to maintain, minimise operating costs and road traffic impact, and offer long-term sustainable benefits for the local area.

Option C was widely considered expensive and of poor value. It was perceived as not benefitting local people or communities, failing to complement the restoration of the Wilts & Berks Canal (and potentially harming it), and offering no benefits to biodiversity, wildlife, habitats, or recreational activities. The inclusion of a tunnel was considered undesirable, and that the project was unnecessary, with negative impacts on the local area, especially Oxfordshire.

Suggestions regarding the emergency discharge proposal emphasised aligning with the restoration of the Wilts & Berks Canal, benefitting local communities (quality of life, health, wellbeing, and economy), and enhancing the environment (biodiversity, wildlife, habitats). It was stated that the proposed solution should incorporate public access, be resilient and reliable for the long term, and integrate existing canal links. Finally, minimising the use of emergency discharge through investment in other infrastructure, such as sewage treatment plants was recommended.

Additional comments provided in the **Wilts & Berks Canal Facebook Campaign** reflect the points made in the online campaign. Option C faced opposition due to concerns about cost-effectiveness and the inclusion of a tunnel. Option B, conversely, was supported for its potential benefits to waterways (especially the Wilts & Berks Canal), the local economy, and the community through easier maintenance, active travel routes, and improvements to biodiversity. It was also expected to increase tourism.

Canal & River Trust Volunteers (Facebook Campaign)

The Group strongly advocated for Option B, emphasising its potential to create a lasting legacy. In total, 86 responses were received that either provided all or some of the suggested campaign text. This included two responses that included the suggested text word for word without any deviation, 68 responses that included at least some of the suggested text, but with bespoke comments as well. There were also three responses that included all of the suggested text, but with bespoke comments in addition. There were a further 13 responses that included at least some of the proposed text, but with no additional comments.

Of those who provided their own bespoke comments along with the suggested text, Option B for the emergency discharge proposal had overwhelming support. It centred around enhancing waterways, particularly the Wilts & Berks Canal, with towpaths and active travel routes (walking/cycling). This was viewed as a long-term, sustainable solution that would benefit local people and communities, boosting the local economy and improving biodiversity and the environment. Option C was largely opposed due to a perceived lack of information and concerns about its potential negative impacts.

GARD

The Group highlighted the need for careful consideration regarding emergency drawdown procedures, expressing concerns about potential risks and environmental impacts. They sought greater transparency and detail regarding Option C, particularly concerning the management of large-scale water discharge during emergency drawdown. They also raised questions about the potential downstream consequences of emergency drawdown, particularly the perceived risk of embankment erosion and habitat disruption.

In total, 47 responses were received that either provided all or some of the suggested campaign text. This included 20 responses that included the suggested text word for word without any deviation, 19 responses that included at least some of the suggested text, but with bespoke comments as well. There was one response that included all of the suggested text, but with bespoke comments in addition. There were a further seven responses that included at least some of the proposed text, but with no additional comments.

Of those who provided their own bespoke comments along with the suggested text, Option C was overwhelmingly opposed due to numerous safety and environmental concerns. The inclusion of a tunnel, potential dangers, lack of information, concerns about the discharge rate and volume, impacts on embankments and structural integrity, and an overall perception of flawed planning contributed to this opposition. Doubts about the plan's impact on local communities, water quality, and flood risks were also prevalent. Some felt that the emergency discharge structure would be too large, and there were concerns about the frequency of discharge. While some support existed for previous emergency discharge plans, there was a view that the current Option C proposal lacked sufficient detail with significant concerns raised.

Inland Waterways Association

The campaign expressed a clear preference for Option B, emphasising the numerous public benefits it offered, particularly the incorporation of the Wilts & Berks Canal. Option B was envisioned as a way to create a vibrant recreational corridor, enabling boating from the River Thames to the proposed reservoir, potentially even incorporating a new marina. The potential of Option B to expand blue-green infrastructure in Oxfordshire and extend the active travel network, promoting walking, cycling, and boating was also highlighted.

In total, 15 responses were received that either provided all or some of the suggested campaign text. This included two responses that included the suggested text word for word without any deviation, four responses that included at least some of the suggested text, but with bespoke comments as well. There were a further nine responses that included at least some of the proposed text, but with no additional comments.

Of those who provided their own bespoke comments along with the suggested text there was a mixed reaction to the project. While there was general support for the project's aims of increasing water resources and offering recreational opportunities, specific concerns were raised about the emergency discharge proposals. Option B for the emergency discharge was favoured for its potential to improve the environment, benefit the local economy, and foster goodwill. It was suggested that this option could complement the restoration of existing canals and increase recreational activities. Conversely, Option C was opposed due to concerns about its environmental impact, potential for increased flood risk, and negative effects on biodiversity and waterways. The inclusion of a tunnel was also a point of contention.

Regarding the SESRO project itself, there was support for its potential to benefit waterways and increase recreational activities, particularly water sports. Suggestions included incorporating canal links (potentially with the Cotswold canals), ensuring public access to recreational facilities, and providing a multi-sector reservoir. However, it was suggested that alternative, greener, and more cost-effective solutions, such as water transfer should also be considered. A key requirement was for an environmental impact assessment. There was also a desire for more community engagement and exploration of alternative options.

Wantage and Grove Campaign Group

It was stated that the group did not believe that a conveyance tunnel could be used to transfer water abstracted from the River Thames to the reservoir and from the reservoir back to the river.

> *"The maximum "normal" abstraction rate is quoted as 13.9m^3/s and the outfall to the River Thames must provide a controlled maximum discharge of 6.9m^3/s in normal operation, ensuring minimal disturbance to natural river currents. The emergency discharge flow of 75m^3/s is a completely different requirement."*
>
> **Wantage and Grove Campaign Group**

It was suggested that the tunnel could be used to transfer "normal" levels of water to/from the River Thames but that an additional auxiliary drawdown channel should be provided for emergency drawdown of the reservoir.

8.4 Petitions

8.4.1 Emergency discharge

One petition was received about the options for emergency discharge. It was signed by 68 members of the general public who attended the White Horse Show in Oxfordshire on 26 August 2024. The petition urged Thames Water to create an open water channel from the proposed reservoir to the River Thames (Option B in the consultation document) as opposed to a tunnel (Option C).

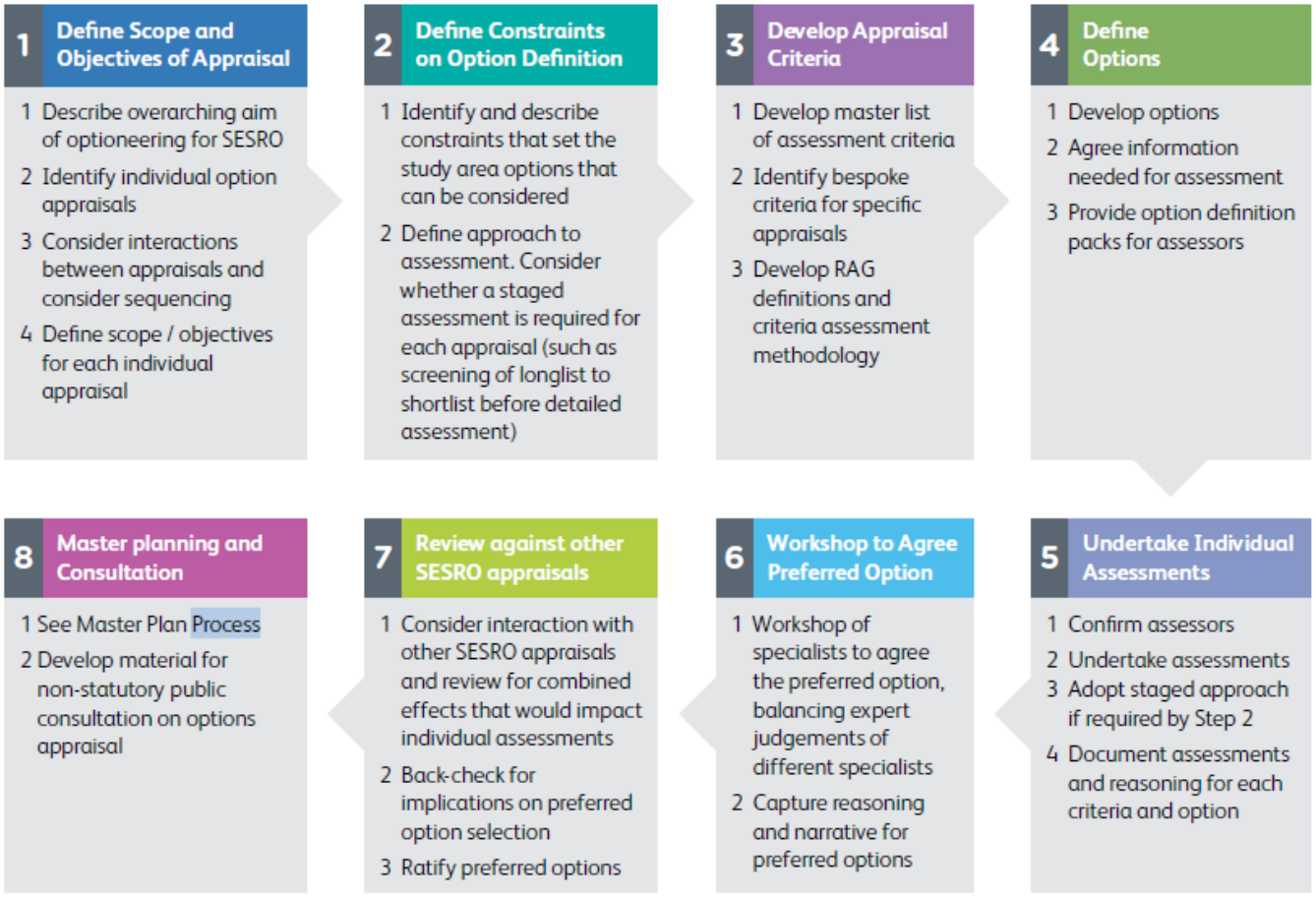
9. The process undertaken to identify infrastructure associated with the reservoir

Q. Do you have any comments on the process we undertook to develop our preferred options for the infrastructure associated with the reservoir?

9.1 Overview

Thames Water states that it has developed a consistent methodology for identification and assessment of options that considers engineering, environmental, land and planning issues to identify its preferred options. The methodology is summarised in Figure 9.1[17] below.

Figure 9.1. The process to identify infrastructure associated with the reservoir



[17] Source: Thames Water

Steps 7 and 8 of the methodology have been addressed through development of the Interim Master Plan (please see Chapter 11 for further details and a summary of feedback received relating to the Interim Master Plan).

To deliver an operational reservoir at the proposed site, Thames Water has identified a number of options for the associated infrastructure including: a location for a construction rail siding; new roads, including an access road and diversion of the existing road between East Hanney and Steventon; locations for water treatment works; and connections to the River Thames. Consultees were asked to comment on the process Thames Water has undertaken to develop its preferred options for the infrastructure associated with the reservoir. A summary of feedback received is included in the next sections.

9.2 Summary of the feedback received

Consultees were asked to provide their comments on the process Thames Water has taken to develop preferred options for the infrastructure associated with the reservoir. In total, 379 consultees provided comments. This included comments from 362 members of the public and 17 organisations and representative groups.

9.2.1 Positive/receptive comments

There were 26 consultees who provided positive or receptive comments about the process Thames Water has taken to develop preferred options for the infrastructure associated with the reservoir. Comments received included a view that the process was well thought through (16), that there had been good information and details provided about the process (7), that local people and communities had been adequately or sufficiently consulted (4), and that the process was satisfactory (2) and fair (2).

> *"We have found the process for the development of preferred options for the infrastructure associated with the reservoir helpful and satisfactory."*
>
> **Freshwater Habitats Trust**

9.2.2 Negative comments and concerns

There were 351 consultees who raised concerns about the process Thames Water has taken to develop its preferred options for the infrastructure associated with the reservoir. The main comments received by frequency of response were concerns about how the process was planned and thought through (109), lack of consideration for local people and local communities (85), that local people/communities had not been adequately consulted (70), or that public opinion had not been fully taken into account (57).

> *"There are holes in your argument and there are faults within your corporation (leaks, discharges, money lining shareholders pockets instead of providing a decent service) all of which impact on the process as a whole."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Other comments included a view that there had been a lack of credible or viable options (37), that the process was difficult to understand or too complex (31), concern that flood risk had not been fully accounted for in the process (29), that it was a profit-making exercise (25), or that the process was biased or unreliable (23).

> *"...you've made finding the options very difficult hidden away in documents. Have one clear easy to find doc explaining the options clearly."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Suggestions and requests

Some of those who provided feedback about the process undertaken to develop preferred options for the infrastructure associated with the reservoir provided suggestions or had requests. This included:

- **Cllr Sally Povolotsky, Independent County Councillor for Hendreds & Harwell Division** stated that environmental surveys would be needed to assess the impacts and benefits of any scheme. She suggested that such surveys should identify site constraints and opportunities before the design stages begin.
- **Environment Agency** stated that it urgently required further discussion to understand how flood risk modelling has informed various options presented in the consultation.
- **Wilts & Berks Canal Trust** suggested that the consultation process had missed out some important steps and had not included a social value assessment of the reconstruction of the canal.

9.3 Campaigns

GARD

The Group expressed their disappointment that some local views shared during the 2023 dWRMP24 consultation remained unaddressed and felt that these perspectives could have been given further consideration. It was also suggested that Thames Water's decision to change the proposed reservoir's size after the previous consultation could have been communicated more effectively to foster a greater sense of transparency and collaboration with the community.

In total, there were 38 campaign responses received about the process Thames Water has undertaken to develop preferred options for the infrastructure associated with the reservoir. This included 19 responses that included the suggested text word for word without any deviation, 15 responses that included at least some of the suggested text, but with bespoke comments as well. There were also three responses that included the full text and bespoke comments, and one response that included part of the suggested text, but with no additional comments.

Of those who provided their own bespoke comments along with the suggested text, comments made highlighted several key concerns regarding the proposed reservoir development. This included a strong

feeling that public opinion had been overlooked in past consultations, causing a lack of trust. Additionally, the development process was criticised for being poorly planned, with previously rejected proposals being reconsidered. There were concerns raised about the large size of the reservoir and associated safety and environmental risks. Suggestions were made for alternative solutions, such as fixing leaks and faults in existing infrastructure, or consideration of water transfer options.

Wantage and Grove Campaign Group

The campaign group objected strongly to what it considered to be Thames Water's "complete discounting of local residents and organisations' views in the 2023 dWRMP24 consultation". The group also objected to what it considered to be *"the unilateral decision to ignore safety issues and arbitrarily increase the reservoir size by 50% bringing many new dangers and flooding risks"*.

10. Draft design principles

Q. We have presented our draft design principles for the SESRO Master Plan. Do you have any comments on our draft design principles?

10.1 Overview

The proposed new reservoir is one of several strategic projects in the UK being developed by water companies across the country to address predicted water shortages over the next 50 years and beyond. All these projects should comply with good design requirements, including those set out by the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC), to help create effective and sustainable infrastructure systems.

Strategic projects require a design vision to set the direction and ambitions of the project. The vision helps to guide the development of the design principles.

Thames Water's reservoir design vision is as follows:

- **Delivery of a reservoir for the south east which will help to protect customers, communities and the environment from drought.**
- **Provision of a safe, sustainable and resilient water supply for future generations whilst delivering new high-quality spaces for nature and recreation, creating a lasting legacy for communities and the environment.**

Design principles provide a structured framework for guiding the development of major infrastructure projects, ensuring that they are well planned, functional, safe, sustainable, resilient and cost-effective. Many major infrastructure projects such as the Thames Tideway Tunnel and the Lower Thames Crossing have developed design principles to guide the projects, from the earliest stages through to construction and operation.

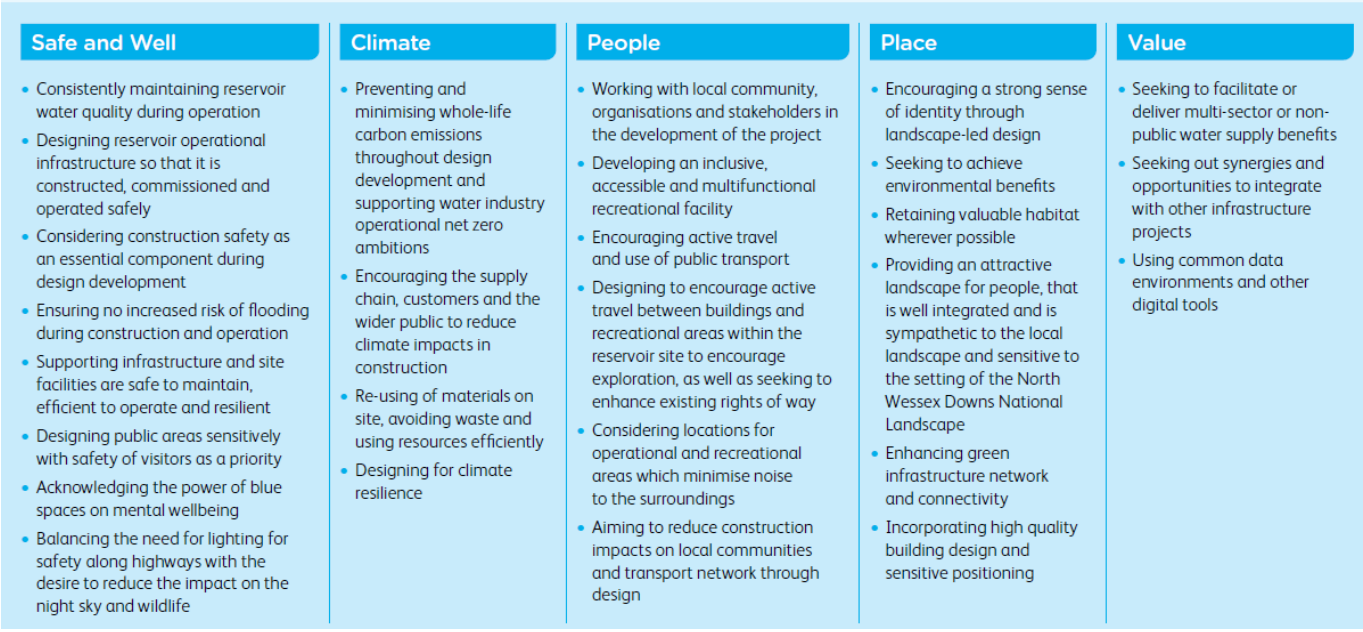
The NIC's Design Principles for National Infrastructure sets out a framework for design and it is intended that all the design elements of the new reservoir (engineering, landscape and architecture) will follow this guidance. Further design principles have been developed by the All Company Working Group (ACWG), a group of water companies set up to ensure a consistent approach across new water projects. These principles ensure the projects are safe to build and operate, and that they are designed specifically for their context and surroundings. In addition, Natural England is in the process of developing guidance on preparing design principles specifically for new reservoirs which will need to be taken into account.

Thames Water's proposed reservoir design principles are based on the NIC themes of Safe and Well, Climate, People, Place, and Value.

The proposed design principles apply to the whole project and will guide the way the reservoir is designed in terms of its function and appearance.

The design principles are summarised in Figure 10.1[18].

Figure 10.1: The Design Principles



10.2 Summary of feedback received

Consultees were asked to provide their comments on the draft design principles. In total, 387 consultees provided comments about this. It included comments from 365 members of the public and 22 organisations and representative groups.

10.2.1 Positive/receptive comments

There were 61 consultees who provided positive or receptive comments about the draft design principles. The main comments received were that consultees supported or approved of the draft design principles (27), that they were well thought out and planned for (16), that they looked good or were attractive (9), and that they would help secure future water supplies and help with drought planning and preparedness (7).

> *"These design principles seem sensible. I am pleased to see the impact on the natural landscape being considered. I won't be living next to the reservoir and am more likely to visit it for water sports and recreation, so prioritising the "Place" is important to me."*
>
> **Member of the public**

[18] Source: Thames Water

Other, less frequently cited responses included that the draft design principles were supported because a reservoir was needed or overdue (3), that safety issues were well planned for (2), and that there was good or sufficient information and about the plans (2).

10.2.2 Negative comments and concerns raised

There were 312 consultees who had concerns about the draft design principles. The main comments received were a view that the draft design principles were misleading or based on inaccurate information (112), that they were flawed or poorly thought through (105), lack of information or details (55), concerns about safety issues (53), lack of consideration for local people and local communities (49), and flood risk issues (37).

> *"The design principles show that the reservoir itself will be used for recreational purposes with an image of a sailing boat. This is not true…"*
>
> **Member of the public**

> *"If Thames Water want to build a reservoir it needs to be on a much smaller scale relative to the height of the walls and impact on the local area, communities and environment. The current design proposal is too high risk bearing in mind its location…"*
>
> **East Hanney Parish Council**

Other, less frequently mentioned issues and concerns included lack of concern for public opinion (32), that the proposed reservoir would be too big (29), that extreme weather events were not taken into consideration (27), concern about floating islands (26), and lack of consideration for biodiversity (24).

> *"In short, your present design for the reservoir is unsafe with floating islands and potential from tree root damage. Once safety factors have been considered the final design is likely to be vastly different from your proposals and much less pretty."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Suggestions

In total, 137 consultees made suggestions about the draft design principles. The main comments received were that Thames Water should not plant trees on embankments nor bunds (33), that large-scale testing of the embankments should be undertaken (25), that a wave protection barrier should be built around the reservoir (23), that any design principles should aid the restoration of the Wilts & Berks Canal (20), that the principles should be reviewed by experts independent of Thames Water (15), and that active travel principles should be more robust (13).

> *"…the criteria used for determining the need and size of a reservoir should be independently reviewed as the data about population growth and supply demands seem to be in dispute."*
>
> **Member of the public**

> *"There should be stronger principles about active travel and public transport including bus and rail."*
>
> **Oxfordshire County Council**

Some of the organisations that provided feedback stated they were supportive of the proposals, and wished to work with Thames Water to ensure that their stated aims and objectives can be met.

> *"We are supportive and wish to work with Thames Water to develop the design principles and plans so that the sports that we represent can be facilitated…we can also help support you with seeking advice from the relevant sport national governing bodies to use current best practice for the design of the ancillary facilities."*
>
> **Sport England**

Looking at some specific suggestions and requests:

- **Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust** stated that the Design Principles Summary within the Technical Consultation document needed to have much more ambition and content on wildlife and wildlife habitats, and providing recreational opportunities for people to enjoy wildlife and wildlife habitats. The organisation considered the Design Principles Summary table should include wording that more closely represents the ambition for nature of the Master Plan, Technical Brochure and Design Principles documents. The organisation also considers that the proposal for the reservoir needs to be linked to a strategy to ensure that the additional availability of water it will provide, if approved, results in a parallel (once increased levels of population are taken into account) reduction in the abstraction of water from environmentally vulnerable watercourses and aquifers, rather than it just being seen as an opportunity to "take the pressure off" the need for our use of water to be kept within reasonable constraints.

- **Cllr Andy Cooke, Drayton Ward** made several suggestions about the draft design principles. He said that they are all praiseworthy words, and that Thames Water would need to adhere to them.

- **Cllr Sally Povolotsky, Independent County Councillor for Hendreds Harwell Division** suggested that principles should be improved so that they do not indicate weak commitments such as 'to consider' and to do something 'where reasonably practicable'. Cllr Povolotsky stated that design should seek to avoid impacts in the first instance. While supportive of the stated principles, Cllr Povolotsky made several suggestions including that all excavated material should be used on site with zero removal, and the drive for net zero emissions throughout the project should be prioritised.

- **Freshwater Habitats Trust** recommended that for the principle about Place, that text is amended to more clearly state that the aim is to enhance the area's biodiversity. It was suggested that the text could be adapted to say: *"…leave the natural environment in a better state through creation of new terrestrial and aquatic habitats, giving these space to function naturally and ensuring that, as*

far as possible, they are supplied by clean and unpolluted water, as well as enhancement of existing habitats to be retained…"

- **GARD** made a number of suggestions. This included that Thames Water should perform a Dam Breach Analysis to assess the emergency evacuation zone from a SESRO fault and release the results; that Thames Water should build a large-scale test of the embankment; and to take on board the recommendations from a report by Professor Binnie and engage in discussions with local groups.

- **Natural England** stated that the draft design principles refer to the design being environment-led but include reference to landscape in the Place section only. It was suggested that a wider vision for landscape as an integrating framework would deliver greater integration of the reservoir into its wider environmental context.

- **Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership** did not comment specifically on the design principles, however, it would encourage Thames Water to seek to maximise the nature benefits of the proposed scheme, and alignment with the evolving Local Nature Recovery Strategy. It was stated that the proposal has the capacity to deliver significantly in excess of 10% minimum biodiversity net gain, and OLNP would encourage Thames Water to seek to maximise this potential, rather than simply target the 10% threshold.

- **The Environment Agency** stated that in terms of ecology, it recommended following the forthcoming Natural England design principles once they are published.

- **Wantage Town Council** suggested that the draft design principles should place a greater emphasis on environmental sustainability.

- **Wilts & Berks Canal Trust** stated that the proposal of a reserved corridor for Wilts & Berks Canal is inadequate compensation for the length of existing canal and locks that will be permanently drowned by the proposed reservoir. This principle would provide for the restoration of a corridor which is longer than the original route; does not include any of the structures which may be restorable; and may be entirely featureless and at the wrong ground levels. The corridor would need to be considered in its relationship to the local watercourses, flood storage provisions and other new facilities. All of which would require careful design integration.

10.3 Campaigns

GARD

GARD urged Thames Water to prioritise transparency and public safety by conducting a Dam Breach Analysis, providing realistic visualisations of the project, and offering detailed information about its engineering challenges, particularly regarding wave protection and embankment stability. They also emphasised the need for more genuine and responsive community engagement, ensuring that local concerns are addressed, and feedback is meaningfully incorporated into the project's design and implementation.

In total, 50 responses were received that either provided all or some of the suggested campaign text. This included 16 responses that included the suggested text word for word without any deviation, 22 responses that included at least some of the suggested text, but with bespoke comments as well. There were also six responses that provided some of the suggested text but with no additional comments, and six responses that included all of the suggested response from GARD as well as their own bespoke responses.

Of those who provided additional comments along with the suggested campaign wording, a number of concerns were raised including about safety issues due to design flaws; that water levels and flood risks would pose significant concerns; lack of consideration for local areas such as Drayton, and broader environmental impacts; structural integrity issues, particularly with low walls and use of high embankments; impact on local infrastructure, including rail lines and roads'; vague, changing, and misleading information based on inaccurate data; and, insufficient emergency plans and safety/risk assessments.

A number of suggestions were made including to conduct an extensive test of the embankments; build a wave protection barrier around the reservoir; avoid planting trees on embankments/bunds; review by experts, and involve further consultation.

Wantage and Grove Campaign Group

The group stated it had a number of issues and concerns including that the views of the local community had been overlooked or ignored; concerns about dam break risks to local communities and infrastructure; and worry about poor water quality and algal blooms, exacerbated by filling restrictions. There was also a significant concern that the design plans could threaten around 200 ancient trees.

11. Interim Master Plan

Q. Our Interim Master Plan is an overall spatial layout of the proposed reservoir site, including wetlands for capturing flood water and introducing diverse ecology, operational areas, such as for treating water or transferring it to and from the reservoir, amenity areas, public access, woodlands, footpaths and others. Do you have any comments on our Interim Master Plan?

11.1 Overview

In 2022, Thames Water produced an indicative landscape and environment-led Master Plan for the proposed reservoir, to illustrate how the engineering requirements for the project could be integrated with environmental mitigation and potential recreational uses of the site.

In October 2022, the indicative Master Plan was included in the Gate 2 submission[19] to RAPID as part of the regulatory 'gated' process. Since then, Thames Water has developed an Interim Landscape and Environmental Master Plan (referred to as the Interim Master Plan), based on their preferred project configuration of infrastructure features. Thames Water states that it wants to ensure that the design is sensitive to the surrounding context, well integrated into the landscape and contributes to the delivery of benefits for landscape, nature and people.

Thames Water states that the design development has been informed by the Design Vision and proposed Design Principles for SESRO, and through engagement with key stakeholders at local authorities, as well as Network Rail, National Highways, Natural England and the Environment Agency.

The Interim Master Plan has also informed the preparation of Thames Water's Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) scoping request to the Planning Inspectorate, which will help define how to approach the EIA and what information may be needed to identify the likely significant effects from the development.

The Interim Master Plan will be updated to take into account consultation and engagement feedback as it progresses towards the application for development consent. The Interim Master Plan is shown in the map book, available on Thames Water's website[20].

[19] 1 The RAPID 'gated process relates to the funding of investigations and development of water resource solutions. There are four gates. 'Gate 2 is the second gate and was focused on 'investigation and development of solutions' that aligned with water resource management planning.
[20] Thames Water Resources Management Plan

11.2 Summary of feedback received

Consultees were asked to provide their comments on the Interim Master Plan. In total, 573 consultees provided comments about it. This included comments from 548 members of the public and 25 organisations and representative groups.

11.2.1 Positive/receptive comments

There were 107 consultees who provided positive or receptive comments about the Interim Master Plan principles. Many of those who provided such comments (91) tended to provide general support with words including "fine", "agree" and "support" used. Of those who provided reasons for their support or agreement, the main general comments received were that the plans were comprehensive (20), and that such plans were necessary or long overdue (9).

> *"This looks like good piece of work with thorough consideration of all the elements. I am supportive of the Master Plan and the proposed development of the reservoir."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Twenty-six consultees provided positive or supportive comments relating to the environment, with a main comment being that plans for the reservoir would benefit biodiversity, wildlife and habitats (18), support for the inclusion of wetlands (6), or that plans had adequately considered the local environment (4).

> *"I am very glad that…the support of diversity/ecology has been considered as well as it has been. Much better than Farmoor."*
>
> **Member of the public**

There were also 17 consultees who provided positive or receptive comments about benefits for local people and local communities. It was believed that that the reservoir would help or encourage recreational activities such as sailing (10 comments). Other, less frequency cited comments about impacts on local communities included that it would benefit the local area (2), that local facilities would be improved (2).

In addition, 23 consultees said they would support or approve of the Interim Master Plan provided certain conditions would be met. This included a number of things such as so long as there were environmental benefits, benefits to local people, that good transport links, and that impact of construction works would be minimised.

> *"As long as the spoil from any construction work is removed without a detrimental effect to the environment and local areas, then there should be no problems!"*
>
> **Member of the public**

11.2.2 Negative comments and concerns

General concerns

There were 371 consultees who provided negative comments or raised concerns about the Interim Master Plan. Many of those who made comments (308) provided general comments including words such as "object", "awful" and "unsuitable". Of those who provided more detailed comments, the main comments received by frequency of response were a belief that the draft Master Plan was vague, inaccurate or misleading (99), that it was poorly planned out or thought through (86), or that there was a lack of information about what was being proposed (51).

> *"The Master Plan fails to show how the reservoir will really be."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Other comments about the draft Master Plan included a view that there had been lack of consultation with local people and local communities (24), lack of transparency and openness (24), that SESRO was not necessary nor wanted (20) and that it should be scrapped (20).

Other less frequently made comments included concerns about construction (18), that the proposed reservoir was too big (16), that it was a waste of money or that money could be better spent elsewhere (16), or that it was a profit-making exercise with profits prioritised over local people (13).

Environmental concerns

There were 157 consultees who raised concerns about environmental impacts and effects as a result of the draft Master Plan. The main comments received by frequency of response were concerns that proposal would negatively impact wildlife, biodiversity and habitats (54), concern about lack of an environmental impact assessment (40), concern about increased flood risk (36), or negative consequences for the environment in general (33).

> *"You have provided no evidence to support that your plans would do anything other than damage the environment, the natural landscape and the character of Abingdon, wildlife and surrounding landscapes."*
>
> **Member of the public**

> *"We are very concerned that a full Environmental Impact Assessment has yet to be completed."*
>
> **CPRE Oxfordshire**

> *"Your lack of 'walking the site' means that you haven't even been able to see the over 200 ancient, veteran and notable trees which are on the Woodland Trust's site! If you can't spot something as large as a tree, what chance is there that you'll be able to see flowers, butterflies and birds?"*
>
> **GARD**

Other less frequently mentioned environmental concerns and issues included opposition to inclusion of wetlands (10), worry about how the water table could be affected (10), negative consequences for local rivers and water courses (9), concern about negative water quality (8), concern that the embankments would not be aesthetically pleasing or visually attractive on the environment (5), and pollution (3).

Concerns about impacts on local communities

There were 80 consultees who were concerned about negative consequences for local people and on local communities as a result of the draft Master Plan. The main comments received by frequency of response were impacts on local towns and villages in general (23), negative consequences for local people (17), that the proposal could cause safety issues (14). Other comments received stated that there would be no benefits for local communities (10), negative impacts on homes and housing (8), and that people's leisure and recreational activities could be affected (6).

> *"All at the cost of the local inhabitants. Who wants a massive earth embankment behind their back door or village street? It is quite ridiculous and unsafe."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Traffic and transport issues and concerns

In addition to environmental impacts and negative consequences for local communities, 23 consultees believed that the draft Master Plan would result in issues related to traffic and transport. Comments received included concerns about public access (10), that transport infrastructure could be affected (8), impacts on local cycling and walking routes (7), and reduced car parking availability (2).

> *"It is absolutely essential that in addition to ecological benefits, the Master Plan includes facilities for recreation and leisure. What seems to be missing is what these would be, where they would be, how they would be accessed, where the requisite car parking would be, and what provision would be made for access via public transport."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Suggestions

There were 244 consultees who made suggestions about the draft Master Plan. The main suggestions by frequency of response were for Thames Water to prioritise fixing leaks (39), that the development of the reservoir should ensure it compliments restoration of the Wilts & Berks Canal (36), that there should be more recreational amenities and facilities (31), incorporate canal links (31), encourage active travel (23), mitigate or minimise negative impacts on wildlife, habitats and biodiversity (19), that there should be (more) benefits for local people and local communities (18), and that Thames Water should seek alternative ways to save water and invest in or upgrade existing infrastructure (15).

> *"Thames Water have proven themselves to be unfit to undertake this project and money should be spent on fixing leaks."*
>
> **Member of the public**

> *"...the construction of the Wilts & Berks Canal could add much value in terms of sustainable transport along the towpath and ecological and environmental enhancement creating blue/green infrastructure."*
>
> **Wiltshire Swindon & Oxfordshire Canal Partnership**

Other, less frequently cited suggestions included comments about ensuring priority access for local people (9), more focus on safety issues and risks associate with the reservoir (7), for Thames Water to conduct an ecological assessment (6), and to focus on greener and more sustainable and environmentally friendly alternatives (5).

Looking at some specific suggestions about the Interim Master Plan, this included as follows:

- **East Hendred Parish Council** made several suggestions including having a nature reserve area in Zone 1, with bird walks and an information centre. In Zones 2 & 4 proposed circular footpaths/cycleways around the lake should be shown, with links to adjoining villages to the north, south, east & west. In Zones 1, 3 & 7 the date for the canal restoration should be agreed. Zone 5 should include a rail/busway between Wantage Station & Didcot Station. Zone 6 should include a water-centre/café for wild swimming/sailing/rowing. Zone 7 should include the restoration of the canal, to the east of the lake.

- **Natural England** suggested that any buildings, car parking or access roads are considered carefully in relation to their effects on the NWDNL.

- **Cllr Sally Povolotsky, Independent County Councillor for Hendreds Harwell Division** suggested that the Master Plan is led by the relevant technical studies and assessments yet to be undertaken and that the design process remains iterative and flexible to respond to those assessment findings. Cllr Povolotsky also suggested that the Interim Master Plan has missed opportunities including a visitor/recreation access direct from Steventon village; Wilts & Berks Canal restoration; and provision of new Railway Station at Grove.

- **Wantage Town Council** stated that while the Interim Master Plan's inclusion of wetlands and diverse ecology was commendable, the significant environmental impact of constructing the reservoir remains a major concern. It suggested that it is crucial to weigh these benefits against the substantial carbon emissions and habitat destruction the project would cause. It also suggested that the design and implementation should comply with "net zero carbon" principles and Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Methodology (BREEAM) standards to ensure environmental sustainability from the beginning.

- **Wilts & Berks Canal Trust** stated that it is strongly recommended that the canal design be integrated into the Master Plan in both alignment and level. It also stated that access for

operation and maintenance would need to be planned along with the towpath and other paths and cycleways.

11.3 Campaigns

GARD

GARD encouraged Thames Water to ensure that all materials accurately and comprehensively represent the proposed reservoir project, including its potential visual and environmental impacts. They also requested access to a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to better understand the project's implications. The Group highlighted the importance of a comprehensive approach to biodiversity, suggesting that Thames Water ensure all significant ecological features, including notable trees, are accounted for in planning documents.

In total, 61 responses were received that either provided all or some of the suggested campaign text. This included 20 responses that included the suggested text word for word without any deviation, 26 responses that included at least some of the suggested text, but with bespoke comments as well. There were also eight responses that provided some of the suggested text but with no additional comments, and seven responses that included all of the suggested response from GARD as well as their own bespoke responses.

Of those who provided additional comments along with the suggested campaign wording, the draft Master Plan has been met with significant opposition. Key criticisms highlighted a belief that it is flawed, poorly thought through, and inadequately planned. It was argued that SESRO is unnecessary and a waste of resources, with funds better allocated to fixing existing infrastructure issues. Recurring themes included vagueness, a reliance on misleading or inaccurate data, and a lack of transparency and detailed information. Suggestions for alternative solutions included focusing on infrastructure repairs and water transfer systems.

Wantage and Grove Campaign Group

The group raised a number of issues and concerns including safety issues of dam breaks; water quality management issues; and impact on rail services given lack of consideration of the construction's freight requirements on South West England's rail services. It was stated that the environmental impact assessment was a statement of intention rather than a detailed analysis; no mention on the need to keep dam embankments clear of trees, as per national guidelines and rules; and lack of details on managing the safety and security aspects to prevent a breach or failure of the reservoir structure

12. Other comments and feedback received

Q. Do you have any other comments relating to the proposals for SESRO at this stage in the process?

12.1 Overall comments about SESRO

As well as being asked for comments on specific aspects of the project, consultees were also asked for any other comments relating to the proposals for SESRO. In total, 848 consultees provided comments about SESRO overall. This included 151 who provided positive/receptive comments, and 623 who raised issues or concerns. Additionally, 600 consultees made suggestions about SESRO. Comments received are briefly summarised in the following sections of this chapter of the report.

12.1.1 Positive/receptive comments

Of those who provided positive/receptive comments about SESRO, this included 137 consultees who provided general comments, and 31 who provided conditional support provided certain conditions would be met, included or achieved. Of those who provided positive/receptive comments, the main general comments received by frequency of response were that SESRO was needed, necessary or long overdue (64), that it would secure future water needs (32), that the process was well thought out and planned (11), and that the proposed location would be suitable (9).

> *"...we like the idea of this reservoir. Something is needed and this is as good a location as anywhere. Please don't let the NIMBYs stop you..."*
>
> **Member of the public**

> *"Overall, I am supportive of the reservoir as I think it is necessary."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Some of those who provided feedback to the consultation said that they either agreed or supported the proposals, or that they didn't object.

> *"I can confirm that, following review of the application documents, the proposed development would be considered to have no detrimental impact on the operation or capability of a defence site or asset. The MOD has no objection to the development proposed."*
>
> **Ministry of Defence**

Of those who provided conditional support this was on the basis that the project would benefit local people (six comments), provided there was no obstruction or hindrance to the development of the Wilts & Berks Canal (four comments), provided development was managed properly (two comments), and that proper assessments were carried out (two comments).

"Overall, WildFish is supportive of the scheme. However, that support is conditional upon a full environmental assessment of impact, and that the assessment should be carried out as soon as possible and all steps are taken to mitigate damage to the rivers and streams impacted by the project – not just the Thames."

WildFish

Benefits to the local community

There were 29 consultees who believed that SESRO would bring benefits to local communities. Comments received in this respect included that the reservoir would increase leisure and recreational activities for local people (20), that it would benefit local people (7), and that local facilities could be improved (2).

Environmental benefits

Twenty-one consultees provided positive/receptive comments about SESRO in relation to the environment. Comments received included a view that the reservoir could benefit wildlife and support biodiversity (8), that there would be environmental benefits in general (5), support for inclusion of wetlands (3), and that local rivers and water courses would benefit too.

"In general, I welcome the development of this critical infrastructure and would like a rapid decision to be made so that we can move ahead. I believe that in the long term this will provide an enhanced habitat for wildlife…."

Member of the public

Other positive benefits of SESRO

In addition to general support and positive benefits to local communities and the local environment, four consultees mentioned that the reservoir would provide benefits for local traffic and transport, and three consultees cited socio-economic benefits.

"I do have some comments in brief I come from Rutland when Rutland water was built it has done a huge amount for local businesses and really improved the county I am an advocate for your plans wish you all the best in your endeavour."

Member of the public

12.1.2 Negative comments and concerns

Of the 623 consultees who provided negative comments or raised concerns about SESRO, the main comments received by frequency of response were around lack of trust in Thames Water with many citing a poor track record around fixing leakages (333), general opposition to the proposals (267), that SESRO should not be going ahead as it wasn't needed and/or that the case for SESRO was unproven (215), that the process was poorly thought through or planned for (185), concern about the proposed size of the reservoir (158) and that the project should be cancelled (113).

> *" I object to the construction of this reservoir…the plan will cause a lot of disruption to the area during its construction and also when it is completed. The reservoir is much too large and will not benefit the area."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Other negative comments and concerns included a view that money could be better spent elsewhere (102), concern or frustration about lack of information and details about the proposals (101), that the project would be expensive and represent poor value for money (94), that Thames Water was putting profit before people (83), and concern about negative impacts associated with construction (71).

> *"You have disregarded previous feedback from local residents after which you have arbitrarily increased the problem (SESRO size) by 50%."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Environmental impacts

There were 282 consultees who raised concerns about the impact of SESRO on the local environment. Comments received by frequency of response included concerns about flood risk (120), negative impacts to the environment in general (83), concern about consequences for wildlife (54), worry about visually aesthetics (43), and that farms and agricultural land could be negatively affected (40).

> *"This project will be ruinous if it is undertaken, devastating the surrounding area…"*
>
> **Member of the public**

> *"Natural England has two major concerns. The first is the scale of the proposed reservoir…the second concern is the loss of views towards the 'dramatic recognisable horizon' of the northern scarp of the NWDNL (North Wessex Downs National Landscape) from the public right of way north of the proposed reservoir…"*
>
> **Natural England**

> *"The proposal…has the potential to have significant negative impacts on wildlife without appropriate mitigation, compensation, and ambitious proposals for wildlife habitat creation."*
>
> **Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust**

Other less frequently mentioned issues and concerns about how SESRO could affect the environment included how water quality could be affected (37), impact on open/green spaces (33), negative consequences for local rivers and water courses (26), impacts on the water table and water levels (24), and concern about noise pollution (24) and air pollution (23) including during the construction period.

> *"I have several concerns: - Impact on water table. I'm not confident your mitigation will prevent flooding in the Hanneys - Impact on the environment during construction period, dust, noise, traffic. - Thames Water's ability to manage such a large project."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Impacts on local communities

In total, 281 consultees raised concerns about how SESRO could impact local communities. Key concerns raised included comments about how the project could be dangerous and cause safety issues (95), that local people and communities would be negatively affected (93), that there would be negative consequences for local villages and towns (74), and that there would be little or no benefit for local people (56) given that it was perceived that the reservoir would serve London and the south east, but not South West Oxfordshire (35).

> *"Perhaps most concerning is that the potential harms, risks and inefficiencies of the SESRO will not bring any 'new water' into the dry and heavily populated Thames Valley, unlike transfer schemes such as the Severn to Thames transfer."*
>
> **Layla Moran, Member of Parliament for Oxford West & Abingdon**

Other, less frequently mentioned issues and concerns included that there could be negative impacts of local people's quality of life (23), impacts to the recreational activities and leisure interests of local people (22), lack of consideration for local people (17), and that property values and insurance premiums could be negatively affected (12).

> *"… I am concerned that the value of my property would be negatively impacted…"*
>
> **Member of the public**

Traffic and transport

Eighty-six consultees raised concerns about the potential impact of SESRO on local traffic and transport. Chief comments on this were that local roads and transport infrastructure would be negatively impacted (34), cause traffic congestion (30), restrict road access (21), and negative impacts associated with HGVs and construction traffic, including other developments in the same period as SESRO (17).

> *"It is insane to consider infrastructure building in this area without finally dealing with the need for a bypass in Marcham…"*
>
> **Member of the public**

> *"Local plans for large scale redevelopments for Culham Science Village…and Dalton Barracks/Abingdon Airfield to meet required local housing need and targets for housing will be generating high levels of construction traffic simultaneously should SESRO proceed on its planned timescale."*
>
> **Abingdon Town Council**

Other less frequently made negative comments and concerns about traffic and transport included a belief that SESRO would affect active travel (10), that rail infrastructure could be negatively impacted (6), and concerns about traffic congestion in local towns and villages including Steventon (3), Drayton (2), on the A34 (3), Marcham (2) and also Abingdon (2).

Socio-economic impacts

Twenty-three consultees were concerned about socio-economic issues. Comments received about this aspect included that the local economy, including local businesses and jobs could be affected by SESRO (19), and opposition due to lack of an economic impact assessment by Thames Water (3).

> *"…home insurance premiums will increase, which will drive people away from this area, which is terrible for businesses located around this region…"*
>
> **Member of the public**

Suggestions

There were 600 consultees who made suggestions for Thames Water to take into consideration. The main suggestions by frequency of response included that Thames Water should focus on fixing leaks/faults within existing infrastructure (243), invest/upgrade existing facilities (106), stop sewage discharge (103), transfer water from the River Severn (84), that there should be an independent public inquiry, assessment or review of the proposals (78), that Thames Water should look at other alternative options (54), including greener and more environmentally sustainable options (49).

> *"Please just fix the leaks, then look at alternative options."*
>
> **Member of the public**

> *"Given the huge uncertainties and risks in this project CPRE Oxfordshire call for a Public Inquiry, as demanded by GARD and many local MPs, councils and campaign groups."*
>
> **CPRE Oxfordshire**

Other, less frequently made suggestions included that Thames Water should provide more recreational activities alongside the reservoir (44), education and encourage the public to use less water (40), invest in a more resilient and long-term solution (37), incorporate the Wilts & Berks Canal into the development (36), incorporate and encourage active travel, including walking and cycling (27), and ensure that disabled people can access the reservoir (17), and noise mitigation (4).

> *"More emphasis on giving local communities as much chance to enjoy the surrounding areas by providing access to recreational routes and facilities, and the canal."*
>
> **Member of the public**

> *"The Partnership strongly urges the designers of SESRO to fully engage with the construction of the Wilts & Berks Canal."*
>
> **Wiltshire Swindon & Oxfordshire Canal Partnership**

Some of the organisations that provided feedback made specific requests of Thames Water. This includes Southern Gas Networks (SGN).

> *"SGN's apparatus is subject to very specific working practices that must be observed by any third party working in the vicinity of it. SGN will need to ensure that these working practices are observed prior to any works taking place and all reasonable measures are taken to maintain the integrity of the apparatus and access to it…"*
>
> **Southern Gas Networks Plc**

Looking at some specific suggestions and requests:

- **Freshwater Habitats Trust** suggested that the Havant Thicket Reservoir project Landscape & Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) was excellent, and suggested it would be valuable to have more detailed guidance on water quality management, and the identification and maintenance of clean water (i.e. water chemically reaching the status of WFD High status) on the site.
- **GARD** requested that Thames Water's predictions that the reservoir will be able to supply water in extreme droughts are questionable and should be redone.
- **GLA** stated that while SESRO is necessary, it must be taken forward with other measures set out in the Water Resources South-East plan.
- **Inland Waterways Association** stated that an alternative route for the Wilts & Berks Canal must be included in order that its planned link to the Thames is not in its words "obliterated".
- **National Farmers Union (NFU)** stated that there is no mention in the summary brochure about how agriculture will benefit from SESRO. It was stated that the NFU would expect to see plans on how agricultural water needs would be met, particularly during summer irrigation and dry periods.
- **Natural England** expected that Thames Water would explore ways to maximise the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity, collaborating with local partners to identify priorities and opportunities.
- **Oxfordshire Cycling Network** suggested that for main routes, which include the ones linking Grove to Steventon and Grove to Abingdon, these should be LTN 1/20 specification with an eye to people cycling direct from town to town who do not wish to have delays on their journey, and a design speed of 30kph.
- **Steventon Parish Council** suggested that a dam breach analysis should be undertaken.
- **Stop the Arc Group** suggested a number of solutions which it would prefer. This included spreading the risk and cost of delivery with a stepped series of smaller projects would go some way towards assuaging cost-concerns.
- **The Environment Agency** stated that it would welcome more detailed discussions on how flood risk is being assessed for the optioneering process as this will be essential moving into more detailed planning phases.

12.2 Campaigns

GARD

Gard urged Thames Water to prioritise transparency by accurately representing the project's visual and environmental impacts, addressing concerns about groundwater flooding, and clearly communicating the planned level of recreational access. The Group expressed concerns about Thames Water's financial stability and its potential impact on the project's successful implementation. They reiterated their support for a Public Inquiry to facilitate a comprehensive and independent review of the project.

In total, 49 responses were received that either provided all or some of the suggested campaign text. This included 13 responses that included the suggested text word for word without any deviation, 24 responses that included at least some of the suggested text, but with bespoke comments as well. There were also seven responses that provided some of the suggested text but with no additional comments, and five responses that included all of the suggested response from GARD as well as their own bespoke responses.

Of those who provided bespoke comments along with the suggested, feedback regarding the SESRO project highlights significant opposition and several suggestions for improvement. It was stated that the SESRO project faces substantial criticism primarily due to a pronounced lack of trust in Thames Water, attributed to its poor track record and reputation. The project was also perceived as being poorly planned and flawed. Environmental concerns were significant, with potential adverse effects on biodiversity, habitats, and local aesthetics being highlighted. Additionally, it was believed that the project is expected to negatively impact property values, local communities, and infrastructure, exacerbating traffic congestion. There were also serious concerns about increased flood risks in certain areas.

Several key suggestions were made about the proposed project. Firstly, enhancing information and transparency by providing detailed maps and pictures could help build trust with stakeholders. Secondly, exploring alternative solutions such as repairing existing infrastructure leaks, implementing water transfers, and adopting more sustainable approaches could address environmental concerns. Lastly, fostering collaboration with other water companies and initiating a national water grid, along with conducting an independent public inquiry, was proposed to ensure thorough assessment and oversight.

Wantage and Grove Campaign Group

The group raised a number of issues and concerns including about lack of proven need, exaggerated projections, and environmental concerns. A Public Inquiry was deemed necessary as the arguments for SESRO were considered to be overstated. Key points included overstated need for abstraction reductions to improve river flows by about 500ml/d, unrealistic population growth forecasts, overestimating by about 330ml/d, and disproportionate cost of £2 billion for the proposed transfer from SESRO to Southern Water with minimal benefits. Overall, the need for more water in SESRO supply areas was believed to be overestimated by about 1,000ml/d, suggesting SESRO would be unnecessary

12.3 Equality monitoring

The Equality Act 2010 protects people against discrimination based on nine protected characteristics. These are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

Consultees were asked to explain if they believed the proposals would discriminate against people with protected characteristics. There were 153 consultees who provided comments about this. This included comments from 150 members of the public and three organisations and representative groups.

The main comments received where that the proposals would not discriminate against people with protected characteristics (79 comments).

Some of those who provided comments did however think that the proposals would discriminate against people with protected characteristics. The main comments received by frequency of response were that proposals would discriminate against local people and local communities (17), people with disabilities (11), all people/everyone (10), elderly people (9), people who do not understand what the consultation is about (9), and people on low incomes (7).

> *"I am a permanent wheelchair user. I didn't see in any of the too long and complex documents any clear description of how people like me will be catered for."*
>
> **Member of the public**

Other less frequently cited comments included that proposal would discriminate against young people, (4), people with health conditions (3), people with mental health problems (3), and people who use the Wilts & Berks Canal (3).

> *"I think these proposals discriminate against young people who are likely to be paying back the debts of failed water companies for decades."*
>
> **Member of the public**

12.4 Other comments and feedback received

There were 543 consultees who provided other comments. The main comments revolved around negativity about the consultation, events, and documentation associated with the consultation. It was believed that the materials and information should have been clearer, with better signage between the questions and the relevant information in supporting documentation.

> *"You need to put these options alongside the question. I can't remember all the information and what goes with what."*
>
> **Member of the public**

> *"No…*(the consultation materials) *were not clear and easy to understand. Many of the facts needed to answer questions were missing and it has been very difficult to give coherent answers to questions when only a small proportion of the information required is available."*
>
> **Wantage and Grove Campaign Group**

Other comments received included requests for additional information and/or follow-up (217), and that there had been a lack of information (150). There were also 20 comments that stated they supported the arguments and position taken by the Group Against Reservoir Development (GARD).

But not all the comments received were negative. There were twenty positive and supportive comments about the consultation and information about the proposals.

> *"…thank you for your public consultation, we found it to be very informative and your staff at the event should be commended for their hard work answering our questions…"*
>
> **Member of the public**

> *"We welcome the approach you have taken ahead of the statutory public consultation next year, to listen to local communities and engage them on proposals for the design and location of the reservoir now."*
>
> **Greater London Authority**

A number of organisations in particular stated that they wished to engage further with Thames Water (19). These details have been provided to Thames Water to take forward.

13. Late responses

13.1 Summary of feedback

A total of 10 responses were submitted after the consultation closing date. These have not been included in the analysis. A brief summary of the substance of each response is shown below:

- There was sentiment that the reservoir is unnecessary and will cause environmental damage.
- Some suggested water transfer schemes, like from the River Severn, as cheaper and faster alternatives.
- Respondents expressed concerns that Thames Water has a poor track record of delivering and operating infrastructure on time or as needed and felt that Thames Water has not sufficiently addressed existing issues, such as fixing leaks, before proposing new projects.
- Suggestions were made for road alterations, emphasising the need to minimise disruption and consider traffic flow in Steventon.
- Protecting wildlife areas and the River Thames were major concerns. The impact on the floodplain is also raised.
- Some of those who provided a response expressed a desire for the reservoir to include public access, leisure facilities, cycle lanes, and parking.
- There was also desire for a clear timeline and more information about the project's phases and potential consequences (e.g. safety/risk, disruption, environmental impact etc).

Appendices

Appendix A – List of organisations that responded to the consultation

The following is a list of organisations that responded to the consultation within the advertised consultation period. In total, 52 organisations provided a response to the consultation.

There was one organisation that requested confidentiality – this organisation has not been included in the list of organisations, nor have they been quoted or mentioned anywhere in this report.

List of stakeholder organisations and representative groups

Environment, heritage, amenity, or community groups

- Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust
- Campaign to Protect Rural England
- Freshwater Habitats Trust
- Group Against Reservoir Development
- Inland Waterways Association
- Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society
- Oxfordshire Cycling Network
- Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership
- Planning Oxfordshire's Environment and Transport Sustainably
- Stop the Arc Group
- Thames River Trust
- The Kennet and Avon Canal Trust
- Wantage and Grove Campaign Group
- WildFish
- Wilts & Berks Canal Trust
- Wiltshire Swindon and Oxfordshire Canal Trust

Elected representatives

- Cllr Andy Cooke, Vale of the White Horse District Council
- Cllr Sally Povolotsky, Oxfordshire County Council
- Cllr Sarah James, Vale of the White Horse District Council
- Greater London Authority
- Layla Moran, MP for Oxford West & Abingdon
- Olly Glover, MP for Didcot and Wantage

Local government

- Abingdon Town Council
- Chilton Parish Council

- Culham Parish Council
- Drayton Parish Council
- East Hanney Parish Council
- East Hendred Parish Council
- Garford Parish Council
- Marcham Parish Council
- Nuneham Courtenay Parish Council
- Oxfordshire County Council
- Radley Parish Council
- St Helen Without Parish Council
- Steventon Parish Council
- Sutton Courtenay Parish Council
- Vale of White Horse District Council
- Wantage Town Council

Government agency or department

- Defence Infrastructure Organisation
- Environment Agency
- Historic England
- Ministry of Defence
- Natural England
- Sport England
- UK Health Security Agency

Other representative group

- National Farmers' Union

Real estate, housing associations or property-related organisations

- Gladman
- Lichfields
- Planning Potential
- Victoria Land Limited

Transport, infrastructure or utility organisation

- Southern Gas Networks Plc

Appendix B – Stakeholder summaries

This section provides further detail of key comments provided about the proposals from organisations and representative groups.

Rail links to the site

Environment and heritage groups	
The Environment Agency	The Environment Agency acknowledges the removal of 450m of watercourse, urging avoidance or compensation. It raised concerns about pollution and sediment runoff during construction, contamination at the existing level crossing, pollution prevention at the sidings, potential dewatering requiring an abstraction licence, and emphasised a need for a Sequential Approach to demonstrate the necessity of the chosen location within flood zone 2/3.

Access and Diversion roads

Environment and heritage groups	
The Environment Agency	The Environment Agency feels more detail is needed on the predicted adverse effects on water bodies and mitigation measures. It suggests that contamination is likely due to the road passing over the infilled canal, requiring a site investigation and pollution prevention. It feels A Sequential Approach is needed to justify the road's location crossing flood zones, and hydraulic modelling is required to assess the impact on flood risk. The Agency supports the road's use as a flood embankment, aligning with the Thames Valley Flood Scheme. It also feels further details are needed on the moderate adverse effects and mitigation for water bodies. It also stresses that contamination is likely at the Steventon Depot, requiring investigation and pollution prevention. Again, it suggests A Sequential Approach is needed to justify the road's location, and hydraulic modelling is required to assess flood risk impacts. It also emphasises that the historic landfill South of A34 at Drayton needs consideration.

Local government organisations	
Nuneham Courtenay Parish Council	Nuneham Courtenay Parish Council expresses concern that, whatever the outcome of the Network Rail option, care should be taken to ensure lorry movements are kept to a minimum on roads in the surrounding area. The Council is concerned that no lorries connected with the construction of the proposed reservoir should be permitted to use the A4074 through Nuneham Courtenay due to the potential damage increased heavy vehicle movements may cause to these listed buildings.
Other organisations	
The Oxfordshire Cycling Network	The Oxfordshire Cycling Network supports the need for active travel routes and infrastructure if the SESRO project goes ahead. It highlights the importance of replacing existing Public Rights of Way, creating safe and accessible routes for cyclists and pedestrians, and ensuring connectivity with surrounding areas.
Gladman	Gladman notes that 'Option B2' for the proposed East Hanney and Steventon bypass would involve a roundabout cutting through their promotion site. It requests a meeting with Thames Water to discuss this and any other potential impacts of the reservoir on their site.

Water Treatment Works

Environment and heritage groups	
The Environment Agency	The Environment Agency suggests that A Sequential Approach is needed to justify the location within the lowest flood risk zone. It feels chosen option needs testing to ensure it doesn't increase flood risk and is designed to be flood-free.
Local government organisations	
Marcham Parish Council	Marcham Parish Council prefers Option 2 for the water treatment works. It feels this option minimises the impact on the floodplain, utilises the most accessible road, and reduces visual impact on residential areas.

Steventon Parish Council	Steventon Parish Council questions the viability of the Water Treatment Works proposal due to Southern Water's lack of approval for its Water Resources Management Plan. Concerns are also raised about potential water quality issues, the safety and impact of the emergency discharge, and the lack of consideration for local resident views in the development process.

Connectivity to the River Thames

Environment and heritage groups	
The Environment Agency	The Environment Agency feels more information is needed on the pollution criteria and mitigation regarding Option B. It suggests that detailed modelling is required to assess the impact on flood risk, and no increase in flood risk will be accepted. It also feels that more information is needed on the pollution criteria and controls of Option C. It emphasises that the option must not increase flood risk.
Inland Waterways Association	The Inland Waterways Association strongly disagrees with the proposed Option C which it suggests will provide no public benefit. It expresses that Option B - Open Channel Transfer (OCT) should be used instead, incorporating the Wilts & Berks Canal and including a connection under the A34. It feels Option B will provide significant economic, wellbeing and environment benefit and that a reconstructed Wilts & Berks Canal and towpath will link the proposed reservoir to Abingdon as a sustainable transport route for walking, cycling and boating.
Local government organisations	
Vale of White Horse District Council	Vale of White Horse District Council expresses concern about the lack of detail regarding the construction and operation of the proposed intake/outfall and emergency discharge infrastructure options, particularly their impact on council-owned land. It objects to the proposals due to this lack of information and its disappointment at not being engaged with as a landowner.

Other comments

Environment and heritage groups	
WildFish	WildFish supports the long-term measures proposed by the SESRO project, including the provision of a long-term water supply that reduces reliance on over-abstracted rivers and aquifers. However, it emphasises the need for a thorough Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to address potential impacts on water bodies and ecosystems. It recommends early and comprehensive assessments to ensure the project's sustainability and minimise harm to water bodies and ecosystems.
Natural England	Natural England finds the current Master Plan lacking in detail and integration with the surrounding landscape. It calls for a more nuanced landscape design that considers the site's hydrology, history, and vegetation. Natural England also encourages Thames Water to exceed the mandatory 10% Biodiversity Net Gain requirement, maximising conservation and enhancement opportunities within the site and the wider catchment. It recommends prioritising public access, paths, cycle routes, and integration with local green infrastructure strategies. It calls for sustainable transport options and exceeding local policies related to green infrastructure.
Government Agencies	
Ministry of Defence	The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has no objection to the proposed South East Strategic Reservoir Option (SESRO) development. It has reviewed the application documents and determined that the project would not have a detrimental impact on the operation or capability of any defence sites or assets. It emphasises the need for continued communication and consultation if any changes are made to the project.
The Greater London Authority	The Greater London Authority supports the proposed SESRO reservoir project, recognising its importance in securing future drinking water supply for the South East and London, especially considering population growth and climate change. It emphasises the need for a strategic approach to water management, including

	collaboration between water companies and improved infrastructure efficiency.
Elected Representatives	
Olly Glover MP	Olly Glover MP expresses concern about the proposed SESRO project and calls for a public inquiry. He highlights the lack of detail, transparency, and engagement with local communities, as well as concerns about the project's need, design, environmental impact, and Thames Water's ability to deliver it effectively.
Layla Moran MP	Layla Moran MP expresses concern about the proposed South East Strategic Reservoir Option (SESRO), questioning its necessity and suggesting alternative solutions. She concludes by urging Thames Water to engage with local communities and expert groups to explore alternative solutions and ensure the best possible outcome for the region.
Local Government	
Chilton Parish Council	Chilton Parish Council strongly object to this proposal by Thames Water, the Council feels that it is not justified, and the problems of leaks should be fixed first. It suggests it will cause wildlife and ecological destruction.
Radley Parish Council	Radley Parish Council strongly objects to the SESRO project and joins other local authorities and organisations in calling for a full Public Inquiry. It has concerns about the need for the project, its design, and Thames Water's ability to deliver it effectively.
Abingdon Town Council	Abingdon Town Council strongly objects to the proposed SESRO project due to concerns about its necessity, suitability, resilience, environmental impact, and economic viability. It also expresses doubts about Thames Water's ability to deliver the project effectively.
Oxfordshire County Council	Oxfordshire County Council questions the need for the reservoir, citing concerns about the lack of finalised regional and water resources plans, and the need to explore alternative options like water recycling and a Severn-Thames transfer.

	It criticises the lack of sufficient background information and data to support the proposed options, making the consultation premature and the options' viability and practicality unclear. The Council seeks ongoing meaningful engagement with Thames Water, VOWHDC, and the Group Against Reservoir Development (GARD).
Drayton Parish Council	Drayton Parish Council strongly opposes the proposed SESRO project and supports calls for a Public Inquiry. It raises concerns about the project's need, design, environmental impact, and Thames Water's ability to deliver it effectively. The Council questions the need for the reservoir, citing concerns about the unapproved Water Resource Management Plans, potential overestimation of demand, and lack of consideration for alternative options like the Severn-Thames transfer. It criticises the proposed design of the reservoir wall as flawed and unproven, citing concerns about similar projects experiencing problems during construction. The Council expresses concern about Thames Water's track record of poor infrastructure maintenance, financial instability, and inability to address leakage and sewage containment issues. It criticises the lack of a detailed environmental impact assessment and expresses concerns about the potential negative impact on the existing landscape, biodiversity, and recreational use of the area.
East Hendred Parish Council	East Hendred Parish Council strongly objects to the proposed SESRO project and calls for a Public Inquiry to examine the need, design, and alternatives for meeting future water needs in the South East. It raises concerns about the lack of robust evidence supporting the need for the reservoir, the feasibility of alternative options like the Severn-Thames transfer, and the potential negative impacts on the environment and local communities. It advocates for exploring alternative options like the Severn-Thames transfer, which it believes is a more resilient and cost-effective solution.

	The Council calls for a Public Inquiry to ensure transparency and accountability in the decision-making process and to address its concerns about the project.
Nuneham Parish Council	The Council expresses concern that, whatever the outcome of the Network Rail option, care should be taken to ensure lorry movements are kept to a minimum on roads in the surrounding area. The Council is concerned that no lorries connected with the construction of the proposed reservoir should be permitted to use the A4074 through Nuneham Courtenay due to the potential damage increased heavy vehicle movements may cause to these listed buildings.
Marcham Parish Council	The Council is worried about the impact of construction traffic on the A415, particularly through Marcham village. It believes the current plan lacks detail and support diverting traffic away from the village to avoid exacerbating existing pollution and congestion issues. The Barrow Road Junction is also a concern due to its limited capacity. Full traffic modelling is requested. The Council is concerned about the environmental impact of the project, particularly the potential consequences of a dam breach. It requests a thorough analysis and emergency response plan be prepared before the Development Consent Order process.
Saint Helen Without Parish Council	Saint Helen Without Parish Council reiterates its objection to the proposed reservoir, deeming the non-statutory consultation premature due to insufficient data and lack of credibility in the presented preferred options. The Council withholds detailed observations until supporting evidence is provided.
Culham Parish Council	Culham Parish Council objects to the proposed South East Strategic Reservoir Option (SESRO) due to concerns about its size, water quality management, flood risk, financial viability of Thames Water, and the impact on the environment and local communities. The Council supports calls for a Public Inquiry and submitting its response from the perspective of Culham parishioners, emphasising the lack of detailed information and the need for a more thorough assessment of the project's impact.

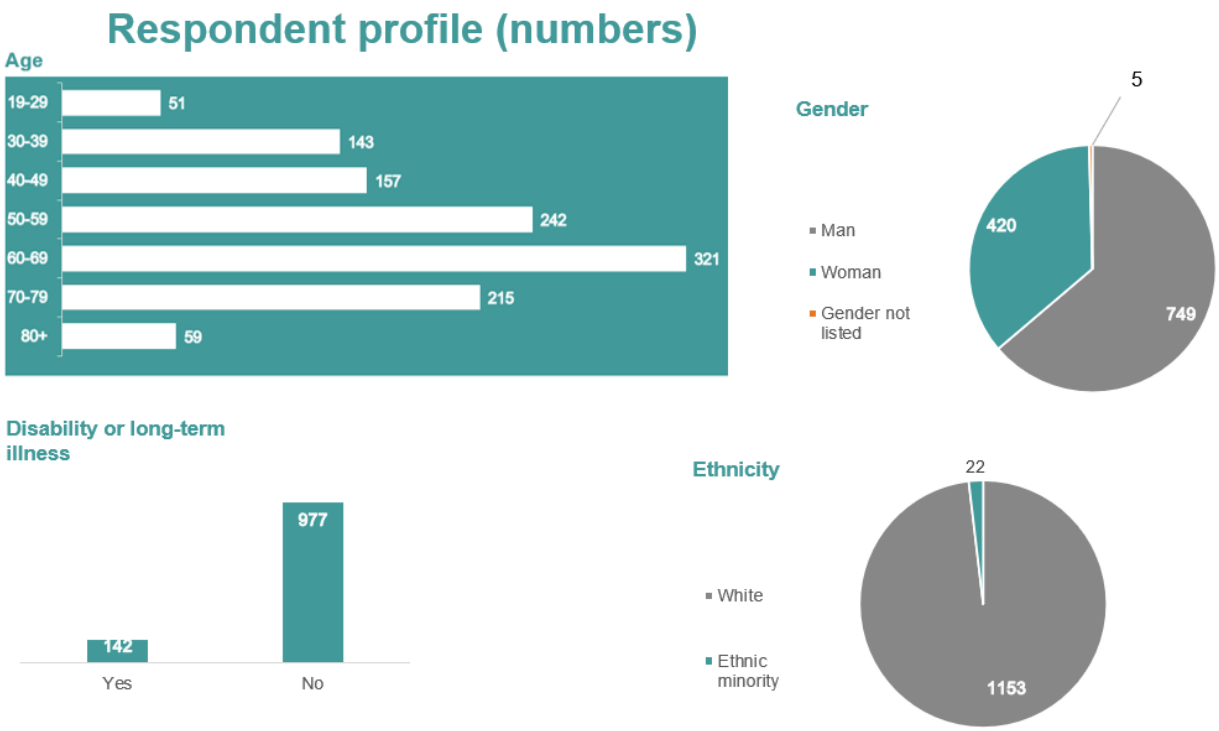
Other	
UK Health Security Agency	UKHSA concludes that the South East Strategic Reservoir scheme is a highly complex development with the potential for significant population and human health effects (positive and negative). In order to assist with scheme design and guide impact assessments it recommends that a health technical working group is established with suitable membership from the statutory agencies, including Directors of Public Health, Integrated Care Boards, UKHSA and OHID.
Sport England	Sport England supports the South East Strategic Reservoir Option (SESRO) project and sees it as an opportunity to create new recreational and sporting facilities. It recommends that the project developers consider a wider range of water sports, including canoeing, kayaking, paddleboarding, rowing, open water swimming, and sailing. It also emphasises the need for appropriate infrastructure, such as boat houses, storage facilities, and accessible slipways.
National Farmers Union	The National Farmers Union (NFU) acknowledges the need for improved water management in the region and the potential benefits of the proposed SESRO reservoir. However, it raises several concerns and requires further details from Thames Water regarding the project's impact on agriculture and farming communities. The NFU seeks more details on how the project will impact agricultural water access during and after construction, especially during dry periods. It requests plans for meeting agricultural water needs and mitigating potential disruptions. The NFU encourages Thames Water to explore opportunities for multi-sectoral water use, including using surplus or lower-quality water for alternative sectors and collaborating with stakeholders on drought planning. It also requests a detailed breakdown of land requirements for the reservoir, infrastructure, recreation, and environmental mitigation. It wants to understand the impact on Best and Most Versatile

	Land, including temporary and permanent land take, and a breakdown of affected Agricultural Land Classification grades. The NFU seeks clarification on the potential impact of emergency water releases on downstream farmland and watercourses. It requests a comprehensive risk assessment, mitigation plans to protect farmland from flooding, and clear communication with at-risk landowners. The NFU expects timely and transparent communication with affected landowners, including regular updates and direct communication channels. They request avoiding consultation periods during peak agricultural seasons and minimising disruption to farming activities during surveys. The NFU emphasises the need for thorough assessments, mitigation plans, and clear communication to address the concerns of the farming community and ensure the project's benefits are shared across sectors.

Appendix C – Profile of those who responded to the consultation

Those who responded to the consultation using the response form were asked if they wished to provide more information about themselves. This section includes a summary graphic of those who chose to provide additional demographic information. It excludes those who provided their responses offline.

Figure C1: Number of consultees who responded using the response form by key group



Appendix D – Response form

South East Strategic Reservoir Option (SESRO):

Our interim master plan and design options

Public consultation
Summer 2024

We're seeking your views on our interim master plan and emerging design options for the proposed new reservoir to the south-west of Abingdon, known as SESRO. You can share your feedback using this form, but if your response is likely to be lengthy or technical you could also:

- email us at **SESRO@ipsos.com** or
- write to us at **FREEPOST SESRO CONSULTATION**

Please only use the response methods described here to respond to the consultation. We cannot guarantee that responses sent to other addresses will be considered. Please send your response by **11.59pm on 28 August 2024**, when the consultation closes.

For more information about the options we've considered, please read our supporting documents, which you can find on our website at thames-sro.co.uk/supportingdocuments

If you need assistance completing this questionnaire, or for material in other formats, please email us on info.SESRO@ thameswater.co.uk or phone us on **0800 316 9800**.

Confidentiality and Data Protection: Thames Water will store and use your personal data in relation to this consultation on the SESRO project. This is important so we can record accurately and analyse any feedback and/or questions raised.

○ If you don't want us to contact you again, please tick this box

Our privacy notice covering the use of personal data for consultations can be found here. To find out more about how we use and protect personal data including your data subject rights please visit our main website (Privacy policy | Legal | Thames Water).

(EVERYONE TO ANSWER QA)

QA. Please provide your email address (DO NOT MAKE COMPULSORY)

By providing your email address, we will be able to email you a unique link to your response. This link will allow you to return to your response, in the event that you exit this form before you have formally submitted your response.

In addition, by providing your email address, we will be able to email you a copy of your consultation response, upon submission.

Your email address may be used to inform you of the outcomes of the consultation.

Email address: _____

About you:

Q1. Please provide your name

Please type in below

- Prefer not to say

Q2. What is your postcode?

Providing your postcode is not compulsory but may be helpful when we analyse your feedback

Please type in below

- Prefer not to say

Q3. Are you are responding on behalf of a business or organisation?

Please type in below

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

IF YES at Q3 show Q4 AND Q5

Q4. Please include the name of your organisation

Please note, if you are providing a response on behalf of an organisation or group, the name and details of the organisation may be subject to publication or appear in a consultation report.

Please type in below

- Prefer not to say

Q5. What category of organisation or groups are you representing?

Please select all that apply

- Business
- Elected representative (MPs, and local councillors)
- Environment, heritage, amenity, or community group
- Local government (county and district councils, parish and town councils and local partnerships)
- Other representative group (includes trade unions, political parties and professional bodies)
- Statutory agency
- Real estate, housing associations or property-related organisations
- Transport, infrastructure or utility organisation
- Other
- Prefer not to say

ASK ALL

Q6. How did you hear about this consultation?

- Letter or postcard
- Newspaper advertisement
- Social media e.g., Facebook, Twitter/X, Whatsapp
- Word of mouth
- Community group or recreational group
- Other (please state)

Relating to the project: our preferred options

Q7. We are considering options for the rail links to the site. Our preferred option is Option 5. Do you have any comments on these plans?

Please type your comments in the box below

- Prefer not to say

Q8. We are proposing to build a new access road to the site for construction vehicles. Once the reservoir is built the road could be used as the access for visitors for recreational use. Our preferred option is Option B. Do you have any comments on these plans?

Please type your comments in the box below

- No comments

Q9. Several routes have been considered to replace the existing road between East Hanney and Steventon. Our preferred option is Option A. Do you have any comments on these plans?

Please type your comments in the box below

- No comments

Q10. We need to identify a location for a proposed Water Treatment Works, which is currently proposed to be designed, consented, built and operated by Southern Water. Our preferred options for the location of the Water Treatment Works are Option 2 and Option 4. Do you have any comments on these plans?

Please type your comments in the box below

- ○ No comments

Q11. We are proposing Option B as our preferred option for our intake/outfall structure. Do you have any comments on these plans?

Please type your comments in the box below

- ○ No comments

Q12. We have considered several options for the Emergency Discharge and Option C is our preferred option. Do you have any comments on these plans?

Please type your comments in the box below

- ○ No comments

Q13. Do you have any comments on the process we undertook to develop our preferred options for the infrastructure associated with the reservoir?

Please type your comments in the box below

- ○ No comments

Relating to the project: our design principles

Q14. We have presented our draft design principles for the SESRO Master Plan. Do you have any comments on our draft design principles?

Please type your comments in the box below

- ○ No comments

Relating to the project: our interim Master Plan

Q15. Our Interim Master Plan is an overall spatial layout of the proposed reservoir site, including wetlands for capturing flood water and introducing diverse ecology, operational areas, such as for treating water or transferring it to and from the reservoir, amenity areas, public access, woodlands, footpaths and others. Do you have any comments on our Interim Master Plan?

Please type your comments in the box below

- ○ No comments

Q16. Do you have any other comments relating to the proposals for SESRO at this stage in the process?

Please type your comments in the box below

- ○ No comments

Communication

Q17.
Were the consultation materials clear and easy to understand?
Please select one option only

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Q18.
How would you like us to communicate with you in future?

- Newsletters
- Through face to face events
- Online
- Other (please specify)

Equality monitoring

These questions are optional. By monitoring the answers you provide, we can ensure that our project does not discriminate against anyone with a protected characteristic as defined in the Equality Act 2010.

Q19.
The Equality Act 2010 protects people against discrimination based on nine protected characteristics. These are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

Please explain if you think our proposals will discriminate against people with protected characteristics

Please type your comments in the box below.

- ○ No comments

Q20.
Which of the following best describes your gender?
Please select one option only

- ○ Man
- ○ Woman
- ○ Non-binary
- ○ My gender is not listed
- ○ Prefer not to say

Q21.
What is your age group?
Please select one option only

- ○ Under 18
- ○ 19-29
- ○ 30-39
- ○ 40-49
- ○ 50-59
- ○ 60-69
- ○ 70-79
- ○ 80+
- ○ Prefer not to say

ASK THOSE UNDER 18

Q21b.
As you are under 18 please ask a parent, teacher or guardian to include their name below to indicate they are happy for your response to be considered.

Name of parent / teacher / guardian:

Q22.
Which of the following best describes you?
Please select one option only

White:
- English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British
- Irish
- Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- Any other White background (Please specify) _____

Mixed / multiple ethnic groups:
- White and Black Caribbean
- While and Black African
- White and Asian
- Any other Mixed/multiple ethnic background (Please specify) _____

Asian/Asian British:
- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Other Asian background (Please specify) _____

Black/African/Caribbean/Black British:
- African
- Caribbean
- Any other Black/African/Caribbean background (Please specify) _____

Other ethnic group:
- Arab
- Other ethnic background (Please specify) _____
- Prefer not to say

Q21.
Do you consider yourself or anyone in your household to be officially disabled defined by the Equality Act 2010 as 'A physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out day-to-day activities'?
Please select one option only

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Please press **“submit response”** if you wish for your response to be included. If you wish to make any changes before submitting your response, please use the back arrow to go back to the question or questions you wish to amend.

Please ensure you have submitted your response before **11.59pm on 28 August 2024.**

Thank you for taking part in this consultation.