



South East Strategic Reservoir Option
Preliminary Environmental Information Report

Appendix 19.1 - Stage 1: Hazard identification assessment

Date: October 2025

Contents

1 Initial hazard identification..... 1

References 11

List of tables

Table 1.1 Stage 1 assessment - Long list 3

1 Initial hazard identification

- 1.1.1 This document presents the Stage 1 Long-list assessment for the Major accidents and disasters aspect assessment (Chapter 19: Major accidents and disasters). The purpose of this assessment is to identify and evaluate a range of potential hazards that could give rise to major accidents or disasters, either as a result of the SESRO Project or through its interaction with external risks. This initial stage builds upon the preliminary hazard identification undertaken in the Scoping Report and incorporates feedback from the PINS Scoping Opinion. The outcome of this Stage 1 assessment is to determine which risks warrant further consideration in the Stage 2 assessment, based on their potential to result in expected or likely significant environmental effects.
- 1.1.2 In the Scoping Report, an initial hazard and identification assessment was carried out in consultation with the design engineers and Thames Water to establish the vulnerability of the SESRO Project to major accidents and disasters. 'Vulnerability' describes the potential for harm as a result of an event, the latter being an unplanned occurrence that has the potential to result in a major accident or disaster.
- 1.1.3 These risk categories were considered in the Scoping Report according to the National Risk Register (HM Government, 2023) as follows:
- Human, animal and plant health
 - Natural and environmental
 - Geological
 - Hydrological
 - Engineering
 - Industrial accidents
 - Accidents
 - Terrorism/civil unrest/public disorder
- 1.1.4 These risk categories were considered to define a long list of potential risks which could occur as a result of, or could affect, the SESRO Project. Following categorisation, these risks were assessed as to whether they could ultimately result in a major accident or disaster and therefore a significant environmental effect.
- 1.1.5 The assessment considered the Project's location and intended use and was undertaken using the methodology set out in the following guidance:
- IEMA Major Accidents and Disasters in EIA: A Primer (IEMA, 2020)
 - International Federation of Red Cross website (IFoRC, 2024)
 - National Risk Register (NRR) (United Kingdom Government, 2023)
 - Thames Valley Community Risk Register (Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum, 2022)
- 1.1.6 Professional judgement has been applied when considering the environmental constraints in the area and the nature of the SESRO Project.
- 1.1.7 The approach at scoping stage further refined the risks requiring assessment from a long-list to a short-list for further assessment (Stage 2) using the following questions, based on IEMA guidance:

- 1) Does the risk pose a specific risk to the Project?
- 2) Is a level of response to the potential consequences of a risk required outside of the Project, for example, from the emergency services?
- 3) Is the Project a source of hazard that could result in a major accident and/or disaster and is there a pathway to cause a significant effect to a receptor?
- 4) Does the Project interact with any external hazard (such as a terrorist attack or extreme weather event)? If yes, does the presence of the Project increase the risk of that hazard occurring at its source?
- 5) If an external man-made or natural hazard occurred, would the presence of the Project increase the risk of a significant effect occurring?
- 6) Does the Project interact with any external hazard (such as a terrorist attack or extreme weather event)? If yes, does the presence of the Project increase the risk of that hazard occurring at its source?
- 7) Do existing design measures or legal requirements, codes and standards adequately control the potential major accident and/or disaster, or will it be adequately covered/assessed by another aspect assessment?

1.1.8 Risks which could affect other developments in the area but would not affect the SESRO Project, as well as those already addressed by existing or standard controls, have been not been considered along with low-consequence (regardless of likelihood) risks; high-likelihood, high-consequence risks that should be designed out in any case and any hazards for which there is no credible source-pathway-receptor linkage. The focus of the major accidents and disasters assessment is on low-likelihood, high consequence risks.

1.1.9 An updated Stage 1 assessment, which takes into account the PINS Scoping Opinion, is provided below. The Stage 1 assessment identifies where risks are considered in other PEI Report chapters and therefore are not included in the Stage 2 assessment.

Table 1.1 Stage 1 assessment - Long list

Accident / disaster risk category and event type	Location Risk (to Project)	Land use Risk (from Project)	Does Project increase risk of major accident and/ or disaster and do the consequences require a response outside the scope of the Project?	Relevant to construction phase (hazard/ pathway/ receptor)	Relevant to operational phase (hazard/ pathway/ receptor)	Rationale	Further consideration required in other SESRO aspect chapters?	Further consideration required in Stage 2 MA&D aspect assessment?
Human, animal and plant health								
Animal strike (bird strike)	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Bird strike from aircraft is possible during operation as RAF Benson is located approximately 12km to the east of the draft Order limits and supports helicopter main operating base. Note that Abingdon airfield immediately to the north of the draft Order limits has also been identified. The airfield is currently proposed for redevelopment to non-airfield use and is scheduled to cease military operations in 2031. The SESRO Project, once operational, is expected to attract waterfowl and, the risk cannot be ruled out and could result in a major accident or disaster. Therefore, this risk has been scoped into the EIA and will be further assessed in the Stage 2 assessment under the Major accidents and disasters aspect.	No	Yes
Animal strike (vehicle collision)	No	No	No	No	No	Other animal strike by vehicles during construction and operation of the SESRO Project which could result in a road traffic accident was raised in the scoping report. In the course of assessing the preliminary likely and expected significant effects, this risk is not considered to be increased by the presence of the Project as it is standard practice to securely fence construction sites as well as fields containing livestock. As such, this is not covered further in the Stage 2 Assessment under the Major accidents and disasters aspect.	No	No
Insect infestation / disease	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	The risk of insect infestation and disease due to climate change would present a regional or national risk and is not specifically related to the SESRO Project. Disease vectors such as the malaria carrying anopheles mosquito or dengue fever carried by Tiger mosquitoes, amongst others, could spread northwards into the UK due to climate change and potentially breed at the reservoir. However, this event is not considered to be a major accident or disaster specifically related to the SESRO Project as mosquitos would be attracted to all potentially habitable waterbodies over a wide area on a regional or national basis, not just the SESRO reservoir and wetlands. Any health risks would be addressed by public health organisations. Given the wider implications well beyond SESRO Project, this risk has been scoped out of the EIA and will not be progressed to the Stage 2 assessment under the Major accidents and disasters aspect. In the Scoping Opinion, PINS agreed to scope out this risk from the assessment.	No	No
Healthcare	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	There is potential for the development of algal blooms (including toxic blue-green algae). The development of algal blooms is a common issue with open water and could result in health risks to workers and users of the reservoir during operation from contact with contaminated water. The presence of algal blooms could result in the reservoir becoming non-operational for a time and water would need to be supplied from other	Yes	Yes

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						sources, resulting in the potential over-abstraction from ecologically sensitive chalk streams. While measures would be taken manage algal bloom, they cannot be ruled out at Stage 1, and this risk could result in a major accident or disaster. Therefore, this risk was scoped into the EIA. Given the reasons above, this risk has been scoped into the EIA and will be further assessed in the Stage 2 assessment under the Major accidents and disasters aspect.		
Water supply affected (various factors)	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	The failure of critical infrastructure of the SESRO Project (such as the outlet and inlet and the Water Treatment Works (WTW)) would also affect water supply to Thames Water, Southern Water and Affinity Water customers and could result in a disaster if the infrastructure was out of action for a prolonged period. Cyber attack or poisoning/contamination of the WTW could also result in failure of the water supply. Should the operation of the reservoir be affected for a long period of time this could result in a disaster. Appropriate measures will be put in place to reduce the probability of risks occurring, but the risk cannot be eliminated. Given the reasons above, this risk has been scoped into the EIA and will be further assessed in the Stage 2 assessment under the Major accidents and disasters aspect.	No	Yes
Natural and environmental								
Severe weather events (heatwaves, drought, rain, low temperatures, heavy snow, lightning, high winds, tornado, ice)	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Tornados are not common within the UK and, therefore, are not anticipated to occur. High winds are more common and, given the SESRO Project is located within a relatively flat area, there is potential for localised and isolated acceleration or turbulence which could cause wind waves (as noted by the Environment Agency in the PINS Scoping Opinion). Such movement of water could potentially damage the structural integrity of the reservoir leading to a risk of disaster. In addition to this, wind waves could lead to water overtopping the embankments leading flooding events. Therefore, the risks associated with tornados are scoped out and will not be progressed to the Stage 2 assessment however risks associated with high winds were scoped into the EIA for the Major accidents and disasters aspect and will be considered further in the Stage 2 assessment. Extended periods of drought or heatwaves could lead to the reservoir embankments drying out. This could lead to cracks forming leakage pathways through the embankments resulting in catastrophic failure and risk of disaster. Until further design information is available, the risk cannot be completed eliminated and was therefore scoped in to the EIA following the PINS Scoping Opinion. It will be considered further in the Stage 2 assessment of the Major accidents and disasters aspect. Given the increasing global temperatures associated with climate change, the likelihood of prolonged periods of low temperatures leading to heavy snow and ice is unlikely and the likelihood of a disaster as result is low. As a result, the risks associated with such weather events are scoped out of	No	No (low temperature, heavy snow, ice, lightning, and tornado) Yes (heatwaves, droughts, rain, and high winds)

Accident / disaster risk category and event type	Location Risk (to Project)	Land use Risk (from Project)	Does Project increase risk of major accident and/ or disaster and do the consequences require a response outside the scope of the Project?	Relevant to construction phase (hazard/ pathway/ receptor)	Relevant to operational phase (hazard/ pathway/ receptor)	Rationale	Further consideration required in other SESRO aspect chapters?	Further consideration required in Stage 2 MA&D aspect assessment?
						the EIA for the Major accidents and disasters aspect and will not be considered further in the Stage 2 assessment. Due to the nature, size and scale of the SESRO Project, the hydrological catchment characteristics are likely to be altered which could potentially lead to more extreme rainfall events. This may lead to an increase of flood risk, which could result in a major accident or disaster. This risk is scoped into the EIA and assessed under the Water environment aspect (see Chapter 5) and will therefore not be considered further in the Stage 2 assessment under the Major accidents and disasters aspect. Lightning is considered to be a low likelihood and low consequence hazard in the context of the SESRO Project. Lightning is a well understood natural phenomenon and standard design measures incorporated into the SESRO Project will ensure there is no source pathway receptor linkage that would result in significant environmental effects. As such, lightning is scoped out of the EIA for the Major accidents and disasters aspect and will not be considered further in the Stage 2 assessment. In the Scoping Opinion, PINS agreed to scope out low temperatures, heavy snow, hail, lightning, and tornado from the assessment of this risk.		
Geological								
Landslides/mass movements	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	During construction, excavations required to form embankments could increase the risk of landslides. The displacement of material due to a landslide could lead to loss of floodplain storage leading to increase flooding risk. Given there is a risk of a catastrophic flooding event as a result of landslides, this risk was scoped in to the EIA for Major Accidents and Disasters and will be considered further in the Stage 2 assessment.	No	Yes
Sinkholes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	The SESRO Project is well suited to the construction of a non-impounding reservoir in relation to embankment safety, due to its largely flat topography and its bedrock geology. The site is underlain by a series of geological strata, predominantly consisting of two thick clay strata, namely Kimmeridge Clay and Gault Clay. The clay is low permeability, durable and suited for the reservoir bowl and stable perimeter embankment where the risk of sinkholes are unlikely. However, sinkholes could lead to changes in land levels that may increase flood risk, further information and consultation with the Environment Agency who consider this a risk for both construction and operation, has been requested and therefore this risk was scoped in to the EIA and will be considered further in the Stage 2 assessment under the Major accidents and disasters aspect.	No	Yes
Ground hazards / mobilisation of contamination	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Sources of contamination are likely to be present across the draft Order limits, particularly in relation to the rail line to the south, and other agricultural businesses. Contamination survey and assessment will be undertaken prior to Development Consent Order submission and remediation of contamination will be undertaken prior to / during construction, as appropriate. Given the potential for contamination across the draft Order limits, this risk has been scoped into the EIA and will be	Yes	No

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						assessed under the Geology and soils aspect (see Chapter 10: Geology and soils). This risk will not be progressed to the Stage 2 assessment under the Major accidents and disasters aspect.		
Hydrological								
Inland flooding	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	The preliminary design of the SESRO Project will ensure the probability of this risk occurring is unlikely and will be in accordance with The Environment Agency requirements to not make flooding worse than at present. However, inland flooding could result in a major accident or disaster. Changes to inland flood risk could occur from changes to the catchment characteristics (as outlined in the Severe Weather row above) resulting in hydrological, hydrogeological and hydraulic alterations caused by the SESRO Project. Inland flood risk has, therefore, been scoped into the EIA and will be assessed via Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) under the Water environment aspect (see Chapter 5: Water environment). This risk will not be progressed to the Stage 2 assessment under the Major accidents and disasters aspect.	Yes	No
Emergency drawdown to the River Thames	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Should an emergency drawdown event occur, then it could have an impact on the River Thames, potentially resulting in flooding. Given that this risk would only occur in the unlikely event of an emergency, it has been scoped into the EIA for the Major accidents and disasters aspect and will be considered further in the Stage 2 assessment.	No	Yes
Engineering								
Reservoir/embankment collapse	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	There is a high degree of legislative controls for the design and management of reservoir structures under the Reservoirs Act 1975 and an extremely high level of expertise and experience is needed to oversee their design and construction. Current practice for the design of any structures with higher consequences of failure, such as dams, are subject to detailed independent design and construction quality checking. The design of the reservoir will follow international best practice and current engineering standards and will be in accordance with the design requirements set out in the Reservoirs Act 1975. The embankment design will develop as the site investigation, trial embankment and earthworks progress during construction.	No	Yes
Building fire/failure	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Fires or failures may occur within proposed buildings such as visitor facilities, club houses, the WTW, pumping station, education facilities etc. However, Design Fire Strategies, or equivalent will be subsequently prepared, which will include relevant fire and safety measures. Therefore, this risk has been scoped out of the EIA and will not be considered in the Stage 2 assessment under the Major accidents and disasters aspect. In the Scoping Opinion, PINS agreed to scope out this risk from the assessment on the basis that the risk of building fire/failure will be mitigated through a Design Fire Strategy or equivalent including fire and safety measures.	No	No

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Battery storage fire	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Electricity will be generated and stored on the site, and there is a risk of a battery fire, with subsequent pollution from firewater, due to lithium ion in the batteries and other components (metals, oxides, solvents). This risk is a result of a major accident so has been scoped into the EIA under the Major accidents and disasters aspect and will be considered in the Stage 2 assessment.	No	Yes
Critical infrastructure failure/utilities failure not associated with the SESRO Project	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	There are a number of services, including overhead and underground, which cross the draft Order limits, and will need diverting. The services, where necessary, will be diverted prior to the construction of the SESRO Project. All relevant best practice, controls and good design and construction methods will be adhered to during the diversion work. Once the diversions have been completed the SESRO Project would not have an impact on infrastructure or utilities. This risk has been scoped out of the EIA for the Major accidents and disasters aspect and will not be considered in the Stage 2 assessment. In the Scoping Opinion, PINS agreed to scope out this risk from the assessment.	No	No
Critical failure of the existing electrical substation (Steventon)	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	The SESRO Project will require works to the connections in to the existing Steventon substation to facilitate service diversions. However, the works will utilise standard best practice and be undertaken by an appropriately qualified operator so there is unlikely to result in a major accident or disaster or cause critical failure of the existing substation. This risk has been scoped out of the EIA for the Major accidents and disasters aspect and will not be considered in the Stage 2 assessment. In the Scoping Opinion, PINS agreed to scope out this risk from the assessment on the basis that the works to the existing Steventon substation will be undertaken by an appropriately qualified company in accordance with standard best practice.	No	No
Ground instability	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	As outlined in the Landslides/mass movements row above, there is a risk of ground instability from construction activities. Although the SESRO Project will be designed specialist engineers following international best practice using gentle slopes and stability monitoring implemented as part of the preliminary design of the reservoir, the impact of potential ground instability on flood risk means this risk was scoped in to the EIA for the Major accidents and disasters aspect and will be considered further in the Stage 2 assessment (combined with landslips and mass movement).	No	Yes
Groundwater levels (flooding)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	While there is relatively little groundwater present within the draft Order limits due to the primarily clay geology. The SESRO Project has the potential to affect existing groundwater flows and levels in some non-clay strata, given the excavations required. Given that the SESRO Project could an impact on existing groundwater levels and flows and, therefore, flood risk, this risk has been scoped into the EIA and will be assessed under the Water environment aspect (see Chapter 5). This risk will not be	Yes	No

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						progressed to the Stage 2 assessment under the Major accidents and disasters aspect.		
Industrial accidents								
Chemical accidents	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	It is anticipated that chemicals will be stored at the Thames to Southern Water Transfer (T2ST) Water treatment works which have the potential to cause harm. This risk has been scoped into the EIA and will be progressed to the Stage 2 assessment the Major accidents and disasters aspect.	No	Yes
Defence / military accidents (UXO)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	There is potential for UXO across the draft Order limits from previous military uses given its proximity to military-owned land. As part of standard construction practice, UXO surveys and UXO clearance will be undertaken prior to construction works commencing. Survey teams and construction workers will be given toolbox talks about the process should UXO be found. Given these reasons, the risk of disaster is low and therefore, this risk has been scoped out of the EIA the Major accidents and disasters aspect and will not be considered in the Stage 2 assessment. In the Scoping Opinion, PINS agreed to scope out this risk from the assessment on the basis that that Unexploded Ordnance(UXO) surveys will be undertaken prior to works commencing, and construction workers will be given toolbox talks on what to do should UXO be found.	No	No
Industrial sites (Control of Major Accident and Hazards (COMAH) / Major Accident Control Regulations (MACR)	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	The risk of a COMAH incident occurring is low, given the distance between the SESRO Project and the nearest COMAH facility Didcot Air Products BR Limited (approximately 2.35km to the east) and the prevailing wind direction is likely to blow any plumes in a north-easterly direction away from the SESRO Project. The same applies to the atomic weapons establishment (AWE) at Aldermaston, given the distance to the reservoir (approximately 30km to the south-east) this risk is unlikely to apply. Furthermore, Didcot Air Products BR Limited and AWE Aldermaston have stringent processes/measures in place to prevent or manage incidents. Given the above this risk has been scoped out of the EIA for the Major accidents and disasters aspect and will not be considered in the Stage 2 assessment. In the Scoping Opinion, PINS agreed to scope out this risk from the assessment.	No	No
Accidents								
Traffic accidents	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Within the draft Order limits, the A415 runs through the north, A34 dual carriageway to the east and the A338 to the west. The wider area includes other regionally and locally significant roads including the A417, B4017 Abingdon Road / Drayton Rod and Steventon Road / Hanney Road. There is potential for an increase in traffic accidents as the SESRO Project is expected to lead to an increase in vehicle flows during both construction and operation. Given the above, this risk has been scoped into the EIA	Yes	No

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						and will be assessed under the Traffic and transport aspect (see Chapter 12). This risk will not be progressed to the Stage 2 assessment under the Major accidents and disasters aspect.		
Accidents involving pedestrians	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Due to the need for traffic to access the SESRO Project during both construction and operation, there is a potential for accidents involving pedestrians, therefore, this risk has been scoped into the EIA and will be assessed under the Traffic and transport aspect (see Chapter 12). This risk will not be progressed to the Stage 2 assessment under the Major accidents and disasters aspect.	Yes	No
Rail accidents	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	The Great Western Main Line (GWML) runs in both east and west directions near to the draft Order limits, and partially within the draft Order limits to the south. The SESRO Project includes the introduction of temporary sidings on the GWML to the south resulting in a need for construction activity to take place on an operational rail line and an increase in train movements. Therefore, there is potential for rail accidents to occur. Given the above, this risk has been scoped into the EIA and will be progressed to the Stage 2 assessment the Major accidents and disasters aspect.	Yes	Yes
Water sports accidents/drowning	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	The risk of drowning is possible given that the SESRO Project comprises the creation of a large expanse of water with the proposed recreational activities such as sailing in the reservoir and watersports in the recreational lakes. Rescue boats and lifeguards will be required and all relevant safety measures (such as provision of life belts at regular intervals along the embankments) will be included within the Safety Management Plan. The operators will also be required to have procedures in place to manage the safety of workers and visitors for all activities within the draft Order limits, therefore, the likelihood of this risk occurring is low. At this stage, there is insufficient information to scope the risk out of the EIA for the Major accidents and disasters aspect and will be considered in the Stage 2 assessment.	No	Yes
Aviation accidents	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	The presence of tall structures such as cranes during construction and embankments during operation, can pose a risk to low flying aircraft. Abindgdon airfield is located approximately 500m to the north of the draft Order limits and is used as a diversion airfield and for helicopter training by Royal Air Force Benson. RAF Benson is located approximately 12km to the east of the draft Order limits and supports helicopter main operating base. While there are protocols to avoid tall structures, the risk has not been ruled out and could result in a major accident or disaster. Therefore, this risk has been scoped in to the EIA and will be further assessed in the Stage 2 assessment under the Major accidents and disasters aspect.	No	Yes
Terrorism/civil unrest/public disorders								

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Terrorist attack on people or the reservoir and WTW (bomb, chemical, vehicle, malicious drone incident)	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Although the likelihood of this risk occurring is low, there could be a large-scale attack on the reservoir or a smaller scale attack on WTW workers or visitors. A security strategy will be implemented to mitigate the identified risks that the security team will have confirmed with Thames Water and will be informed by the Security and Emergency Measures Directions (SEMD) compliance requirements. The Operators will be required to have security procedures in place to reduce the risk of such an event occurring, such as the structure and openings of critical buildings required to achieve security rating in compliance with Thames Water Requirements, Intruder Detection Systems and video surveillance systems to prevent unauthorized access. At this stage there is insufficient information to scope out this risk from the EIA for the Major accidents and disasters aspect and it will be considered in the Stage 2 assessment.	No	Yes

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It's everyone's water