

Factsheet

Land and property



This factsheet provides information for people whose land or property might be affected by the reservoir project. It sets out how and why we've identified the land that we might need for the proposed new reservoir. If you have any questions or concerns please don't hesitate to contact us at property.sesro@thameswater.co.uk.

The land and property needed for the new reservoir

We're planning to submit an application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) for the reservoir in autumn 2026. A DCO is like a planning application for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP). The DCO will include the land we may need temporarily - for example, to carry out certain construction activities - and the land we may need permanently to construct, maintain and operate the reservoir site.

Most of the land we think we'd need permanently, based on our current proposals, comprises agricultural fields interspersed with isolated houses and farmsteads. There is also an industrial area to the south of the site, and three existing operational solar farms. In addition, we'd need to acquire certain permanent rights over land to allow us, as the maintainer of the reservoir, and third parties, such as utility companies, to access, protect and maintain any new or diverted assets. We'd also need land underground, known as 'subsoil', to build a tunnel between the reservoir and the River Thames.

The land that we currently think we'd need for the project is shown within a plan called the draft 'Order Limits'. They're called 'Order Limits' because they show the full extent of land needed to be approved by the DCO. The current draft Order Limits could potentially change between now and our application for Development Consent as we continue to develop our proposals.

You can view the project's draft Order Limits online using our digital map, or in our map books, all of which can be found at our consultation website at thames-sro.co.uk/sesro/statcon2025



How we have identified the land we may need

While developing our proposals for the new reservoir, we've been using HM Land Registry and desktop research to identify people who own or have an interest in the land that is within the draft Order Limits.

We've also sent out Land Interest Questionnaires to those land interests we have currently identified, asking for information to clarify their ownership (or interest) in the land. The information we've received helps us to engage with potentially affected people. We have also visited properties to speak with landowners about their land interest and to give them an opportunity to find out more about the project or ask any questions they might have.

You may also have received a letter marked Section 42 (which is a formal notification of our duty to consult you), which could mean that land or property that you occupy or have an interest in has been identified as potentially being affected by the project in some way be it directly or indirectly. If you'd like to talk to us about what that might mean, please contact us using the details provided in the letter, or the contact information at the bottom of this factsheet.

Land within the draft Order Limits - Category 1 and 2 land interests

Owners, occupiers, lessees, tenants and those with rights over land or property within the project's draft Order Limits are known as having 'Category 1' or 'Category 2' land interests as defined by the Planning Act 2008.

The Planning Act 2008 requires developers of nationally significant infrastructure projects, including our proposed new reservoir, to identify and consult with people in these categories to ensure they have a fair opportunity to make representations about the project.

Land outside the draft Order Limits - Category 3 land interests

The Planning Act 2008 also requires us to identify people whose land is not needed by the project (and is therefore outside the draft Order Limits) but could be indirectly affected by the construction activity or the operation of the proposed infrastructure.

These people are described in the Planning Act 2008 as having a 'Category 3' interest, meaning that they might be able to claim compensation if they can evidence that the value of their land has been impacted by the project's indirect effects, such as dust, noise, vibration or similar, during construction or operational activities. Our assessment of which properties to include as Category 3 interests is based on the extent to which they might be impacted, which varies according to location.

As at the time of our statutory public consultation, we have identified a large number of Category 3 properties on a precautionary basis. As our assessments of the potential impacts of the project continue, we expect the number of Category 3 interests to significantly reduce, and there are likely to be fewer Category 3 interests identified at the time of our proposed DCO submission. Our construction activity would be regulated by a Code of Construction Practice and where we follow this code we expect the impact on Category 3 interests to be minimal.

We've sent Land Interest Questionnaires to all those currently identified as having Category 1, 2 or 3 land interests and will be sending Section 42 letters to them too.



Acquiring land and rights over land for the project

Where we need to secure land or rights for the reservoir, our preference is to do this by agreement.

We would seek to enter into an agreement with the landowner through an Option to Purchase or other similar arrangement where we agree to purchase the identified land if the project obtains consent. In this agreement, a small premium (option fee) may be payable upfront to the landowner to secure the agreement. These payments would be made to landowners regardless of whether we ultimately exercise the option to acquire the land, cancel the option, or the project is not approved for a DCO.

If we can't reach agreement, then we'd use compulsory acquisition powers that we'd seek in our application for Development Consent, under the Planning Act 2008.

Using compulsory acquisition powers is our least preferred approach and we'd only pursue this approach if we are not able to reach agreement. The Government has published guidance to help people understand the compulsory purchase compensation framework, at www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-land-compensation-manual.

In some circumstances we may decide to acquire land early if the landowner is agreeable but this approach is less likely and Options to Purchase or similar arrangements remain the preferred method of securing land for the Project.

Acquiring subsoil land for our tunnel

As part of the project we need to construct a tunnel from the reservoir to the River Thames for our intake and outfall infrastructure. Because this tunnel is deep below the surface we only need to acquire the 'subsoil' through which it passes and not the surface land. Again, our preference is to acquire this subsoil through agreement with the landowner.

Where we only need subsoil land it means the surface land can continue to be used in the same way it is now and will continue to remain in the ownership of the landowner.

Accessing land for surveys

As we continue to develop our designs for the new reservoir, we'd need to continue to carry out surveys, investigations and assessments, focusing on local habitats and ecology, waterways, archaeology and ground conditions. These are likely to continue beyond the submission of our application for Development Consent, and the information obtained will inform the final design and construction planning.

We've already undertaken an extensive survey programme which has been enabled through Survey and Investigation Licences agreed with landowners. Surveys will continue through these Licences, but if we need licences for surveys on other land, we will contact those landowners. Where access can't be agreed through a Licence, and we are unable to carry out equivalent surveys on nearby land, then we may have to seek powers to access land under section 172 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016, although this is our least-preferred course of action.



Next steps for landowners and affected parties

We know a project of this size and complexity can cause concerns for those whose land or property may be affected. We're committed to making ourselves available to understand those concerns and answer questions. For further information, or if you have queries related to land and property, please contact our experienced Land and Property team using the details on this page, or meet them at our public information events.

You can find more details of these at
thames-sro.co.uk/sesro

For land and property queries:



Email us:
property.SESRO@thameswater.co.uk



Or you can phone us: **0800 033 6677**



To find out more about our proposals please visit: www.thames-sro.co.uk