



South East Strategic Reservoir Option
Preliminary Environmental Information Report

Preliminary Transport Assessment Report: Appendix 1: Outline operational travel strategy

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1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This Outline Operational Travel Strategy (Outline OTS) has been prepared to accompany, and is an appendix to, the Preliminary Transport Assessment Report (PTAR), which sets out preliminary information on the likely transport impacts of the proposed South East Strategic Reservoir Option (SESRO), referred to as the 'Project'.
- 1.1.2 The OTS would apply to the operational stage of the Project, once construction is complete. At this stage, this Outline OTS has been prepared to set out the framework within which the full OTS will be prepared for the DCO application.
- 1.1.3 The OTS itself provides the strategy that will guide the preparation of a more detailed Operational Travel Plan (OTP) once development consent has been granted. Given that the Project would not be operational until 2040, the OTP would need to be prepared much nearer that time, so that it can reflect contemporary travel behaviour and opportunities. Plate 1.1 illustrates this evolution.

Plate 1.1 Proposed approach to Travel Plan for SESRO



- 1.1.4 This Outline OTS sets out objectives and broad targets aimed at reducing car travel to the site and increasing travel by sustainable modes, along with a range of measures which could be deployed to support and achieve these goals. This Outline OTS should be read in conjunction with the PTAR.

1.2 Overview of the Project

- 1.2.1 The Project would provide a new reservoir to the south-west of Abingdon in Oxfordshire. It would be the second largest reservoir in England and the first major reservoir built for a decade.
- 1.2.2 The Project would play a crucial role in protecting local and regional public water supplies during drought. The reservoir would be filled from the River Thames during winter months when there is surplus water. 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 new reservoir would supply water to local customers, as well as homes and businesses across London and the South East.

- 1.2.3 As well as providing a resilient water supply for the South East, the reservoir would also provide opportunities to create new habitats and increase biodiversity, as well as providing new leisure and recreation facilities.
- 1.2.4 A Preliminary Environmental Information (PEI) Report has been submitted for statutory consultation and includes a Traffic and transport chapter, which outlines the anticipated environmental effects of the Project on the transport network.
- 1.2.5 An application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) will be accompanied by an Environmental Statement (ES), including a Traffic and transport chapter, and a detailed Transport Assessment (TA). A refined OTS will be provided at that time.

1.3 Report purpose

- 1.3.1 This Outline OTS sets out the principles for managing the impact of travel by visitors to, and workers at, the Project during its operational phase. It also sets out a strategy for maximising the sustainability of travel methods used to get to and from the site, as well as minimising the impact of the Project on the local road network and by association on the local communities and road users in Oxfordshire and beyond.
- 1.3.2 This report has been prepared taking into account Oxfordshire County Council policies and guidance, including *Implementing 'Decide & Provide': Requirements for Transport Assessments* (2022), *Travel Plan Monitoring Guidance* (2014) and *Transport for New Developments: Transport Assessments and Travel Plans* (2014).

1.4 Structure of the OTS

- 1.4.1 The remainder of this Outline OTS is structured as follows:
- Section 2: sets out the aims, objectives and outcomes of this Outline OTS
 - Section 3: sets out a series of measures to help achieve those objectives
 - Section 4: sets out the principles of how the future OTP would be managed
 - Section 5: summarises how the future OTP would be monitored and reviewed.

2 Objectives and targets

2.1 Objectives

- 2.1.1 Travel planning is about helping people to make sustainable travel choices. The Outline OTS provides a strategy for promoting realistic and high-quality sustainable transport choices to improve the travel environment for the benefit of all users.
- 2.1.2 The overarching objective of the Outline OTS, and thus a future OTP, is to encourage and promote travel by sustainable modes such as public transport, walking and cycling.
- 2.1.3 The future OTP will seek to address this objective by highlighting the accessibility and availability of these modes and guiding the introduction of measures to offer a range of travel choices.

2.2 Types of targets

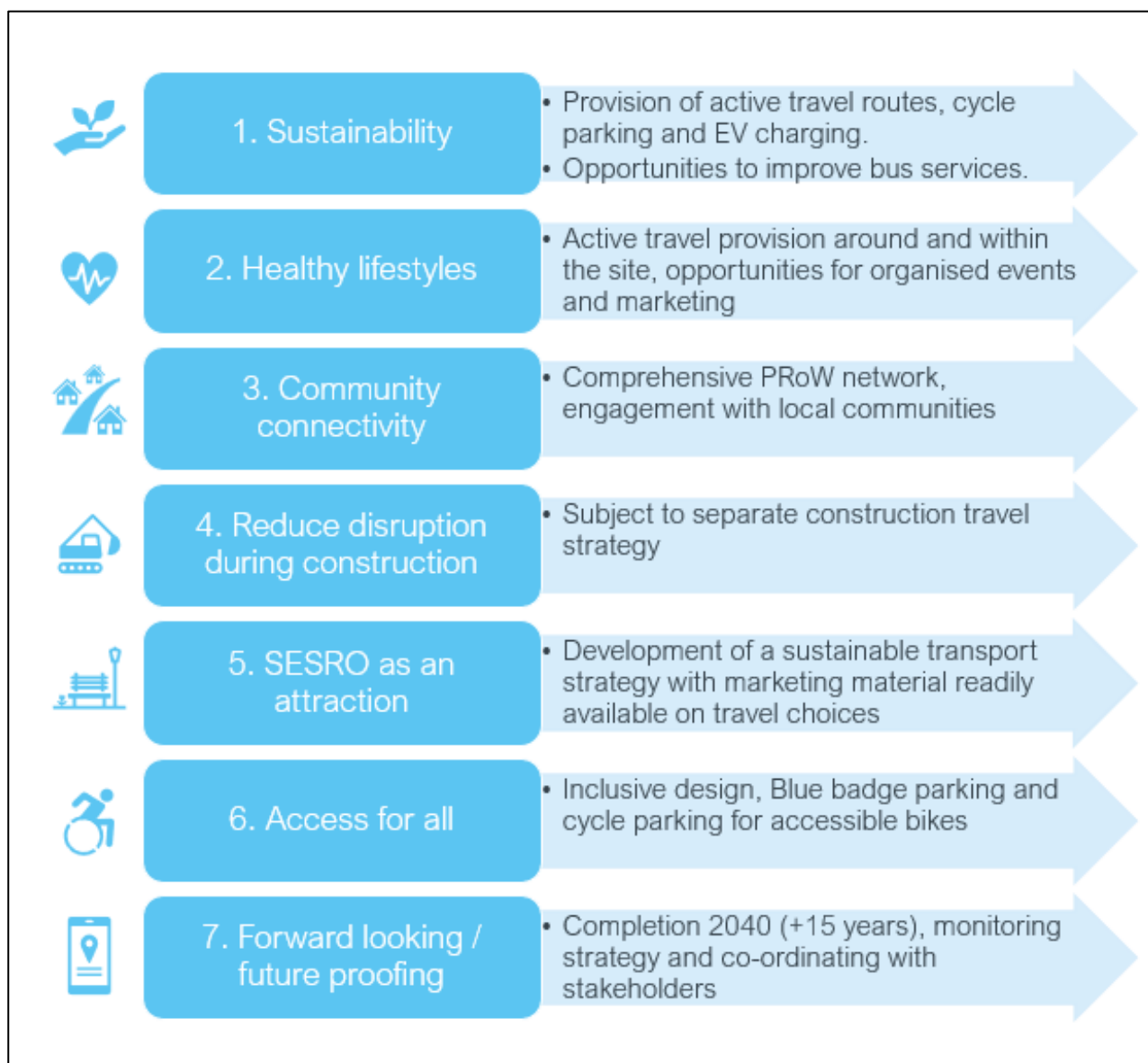
- 2.2.1 Targets for a travel plan should seek to be 'SMART', outlined as:
 - Specific
 - Measurable
 - Achievable
 - Realistic
 - Time-related
- 2.2.2 There are two types of target: 'aim' and 'action' targets.
 - 'Aim' targets are generally based on identifying desired outcomes and defining qualitative or quantitative targets. For example, this might include the proportion of journeys made by different travel modes over a specific time frame.
 - 'Action' targets are task-specific and are typically consolidated into an Action Plan. They are about the implementation of particular measures and initiatives which will support the objectives of the travel plan and the delivery of the 'aim' targets. For example, generic 'action' targets might include the provision of travel information, or arranging discounted fares.
- 2.2.3 In due course, as part of the OTP, a series of 'aim' targets together with a detailed Action Plan will be developed.
- 2.2.4 The OTP, including the 'aim' and 'action' targets, will be subject to a monitoring and review process which will include Vale of White Horse District Council, Oxfordshire County Council and may also include other stakeholders.

3 Travel Plan measures and initiatives

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 This section identifies design (engineering) measures which maybe incorporated into the Project together with a range of services, facilities, marketing and management measures which may be implemented as part of the Project and under the umbrella of the OTP.
- 3.1.2 The themes and principles of the transport vision for the Project are outlined in Plate 3.1, together with the broad proposals outlined in this Outline OTS.

Plate 3.1 Proposed themes and principles of the transport vision and related Travel Strategy proposals



3.2 Sustainable transport provision within the design of the Project

- 3.2.1 The provision of sustainable transport infrastructure as part of the design of the Project is expected to support and encourage a shift towards increased use of sustainable transport and improve accessibility to the Project by non-car modes.

Active travel network (walkers, cyclists and horse-riders)

- 3.2.2 The active travel proposals aim to connect the park and reservoir to local villages and existing PRoW, and to maintain through routes.
- 3.2.3 Several PRoW of all types currently run through the Site which cater for a wide range of users (see Section 4.2 of the PTAR). Existing routes and, in particular, existing points of access, would be retained where possible.
- 3.2.4 A majority of active travel routes would be accessible to all users regardless of mobility needs; alternative paths would be available where topographical constraints could render a route unsuitable for inclusive access.
- 3.2.5 Active travel provision could include:
- Provision for walkers, wheelers and cyclists alongside the Steventon to East Hanney road diversion and horse riders within the main carriageway.
 - Provision on the canal towpath for walkers and cyclists, and horses associated with pulling narrow boats.
 - Footway improvements connecting to the Site along Hanney Road in Steventon.
 - Improvements to active travel facilities at the A34 Marcham interchange and alongside the A415.
 - A range of paths for walking, wheeling, cycling and horse riding connecting into the existing PRoW network surrounding the Project.
 - An access track around the crest for public recreational use (walking and cycling only) and maintenance and inspection, with multiple accesses to this from approximately each 'corner' of the reservoir.
 - Walking and cycling provision as part of junction designs to ensure safe movement along key routes between nearby settlements and the Project.
- 3.2.6 A list of the current proposals for new pathways across the Site is included in Table 3.1 of the PTAR.

Public transport

- 3.2.7 The Project may facilitate improvements to bus services and public transport accessibility and proposals for improvements and how these could be funded are currently being developed. This may include the extension or diversion of existing bus routes into the Site, improvements to bus service frequencies or the provision of new bus routes to serve the Site and surrounding areas.
- 3.2.8 Proposals would aim to connect the Site with key origins and destinations nearby. These include local communities such as Wantage and Grove, the Hanneys, Frilford, Marcham, Drayton, Steventon and the Hendreds, larger urban areas such as Abingdon, Didcot and Oxford, and railway stations such as Didcot Parkway for wider connections.

- 3.2.9 Provision for pick-up and set-down (and layover if necessary) within the Site could be made for buses and coaches. The possibility of providing an internal public transport service, such as a land train or shuttle bus, could also be investigated. This could help connect people to different amenities within the Site and provide accessibility for people with lower mobility levels.

Car parking

- 3.2.10 Two main car parks are proposed to be located to the south-west and north-east of the reservoir (as part of the Nature Education Centre and Recreational Lakes Centre). A further car park would be associated with the water sports centre together with smaller areas for parking distributed around the recreational lakes area (which would be accessed from the main access road) and at the two 'trailheads' at each end of the closed alignment of the Steventon to East Hanney Road.

All main parking areas would include provision for electric vehicle (EV) parking and charging infrastructure, supporting sustainable travel to and around the site, and Blue Badge parking to support inclusive travel.

Cycle parking

- 3.2.11 In accordance with Oxfordshire County Council guidance and the principles outlined in Department for Transport (DfT) publication *Cycle Infrastructure Design* (Local Transport Note 1/20, 2020), the following cycle parking facilities would be provided to support active travel and encourage cycling among all site users:
- Long stay and short stay cycle parking spaces would be provided across the Project, with dedicated provision at key destinations including the Nature Education Centre, Recreational Lakes Centre, and Water Sports Centre.
 - Additional short stay cycle parking would be distributed at key access points, trailheads and near entrances to promote convenience for visitors and day users.
 - High-quality, secure cycle parking facilities would be delivered to accommodate non-standard and adaptive cycles.
 - Covered long-stay cycle parking areas would be located close to staff and operational buildings, with lighting and natural surveillance to ensure security.

3.3 Related measures to encourage sustainable travel

Travel Plan Co-coordinator and Travel Plan Group

- 3.3.1 As a first step under the future OTP, a Travel Plan Co-ordinator (TPC) would be appointed prior to the Site being open to the public. The TPC would have overall responsibility for delivering the objectives and outcomes set out in the OTP and would also act as the first point of contact for staff and visitors regarding the Travel Plan.

Promoting walking, cycling and wheeling

- 3.3.2 To encourage sustainable travel behaviour to and at the Site, a series of initiatives would be implemented as part of the future OTP. These measures would aim to promote walking, cycling and wheeling for staff and visitors. They could include:

- Organised group walking and cycling events
- Provision of walking and cycling maps online and on noticeboards
- Provision of themed walking routes and / or treasure hunt type activities during school holidays
- Offering and / or facilitating individual cycling lessons
- Holiday cycling courses for children
- School cycling courses
- Pop-up cycling events and awareness campaigns and local cycling events
- Implementing speed limits on roads within the Site to reduce vehicle speeds and improve the environment for walking, cycling and wheeling

3.3.3 These types of measures would be promoted as part of the communication to visitors and staff.

Promoting public transport

3.3.4 Initiatives could be implemented as part of the future OTP to encourage the use of buses and rail and promote the connectivity available. The initiatives for visitors and staff could include:

- Provision of bus route, maps and timetabling information online and on public noticeboards within the Site.
- Live information and links to journey planners could be provided at visitor centres and on the Project website (if available)
- Discussions with bus and rail operators to offer fare discounts, especially during school holidays and peak times.
- Partnering with organisations such as the Good Journey (<https://www.goodjourney.org.uk/>) to provide incentives such as a free coffee at the café if visitors travel by public transport.

Travel information pack

3.3.5 All operational staff would be provided with a Travel Information Pack upon induction or commencement of employment. This pack could include:

- Walking, cycling, and public transport route maps to key local destinations and transport interchanges
- Links to current local bus and rail timetables
- Information on site-specific active travel infrastructure (e.g. cycle parking, changing facilities, walking routes around the reservoir)
- Details of sustainable travel services and initiatives supported through the Travel Plan, including:
 - Local cycling groups and regional cycling promotion campaigns
 - Car sharing platforms and regional car club schemes
 - Opportunities for staff to engage with sustainable travel planning or raise transport-related queries with the TPC

3.3.6 Copies of the Travel Pack would also be made available in common areas, such as staff facilities, visitor centres, or community spaces.

Community notice boards and communications

- 3.3.7 Dedicated notice boards would be provided in accessible locations across the Site (e.g. visitor centre, staff building, recreational hubs) to display transport-related information. These could include:
- Local walking and cycling maps
 - Locations of cycle parking and nearby bus stops
 - Bus routes and real time information in relevant locations
 - Updates on sustainable travel initiatives, events, and services
 - Contact details for the TPC
- 3.3.8 The TPC would ensure these boards are maintained and reviewed regularly in collaboration with site management and would also provide transport updates via internal newsletters or email bulletins where appropriate. These communication measures would help reinforce sustainable travel behaviour and maintain staff and visitor engagement with the OTP.

4 Operational Travel Plan Management

4.1 Travel Plan Co-ordinator (TPC)

4.1.1 A TPC is a member of staff who takes responsibility for managing and delivering a Travel Plan. The TPC for SESRO is likely to be a nominated member of the site management team or an appointed consultant. The TPC would be appointed prior to the opening of the site to the public. The typical roles and responsibilities of a TPC are set out below:

- Identifying key milestones, preparing deliverables and a programme to oversee the development and implementation of specific initiatives.
- Giving advice and information on transport-related subjects to staff and visitors.
- Maintaining updated information on sustainable travel online and on noticeboards.
- Liaising with stakeholders including local groups / organisations and any major local developments to maintain communication and enhance coordinated working, where appropriate.
- Coordinating with the different recreational uses on site to manage any group travel needs and provision, such as school trips.
- Undertaking appropriate monitoring of the Travel Plan, including review and revisions as necessary.

4.2 Marketing

4.2.1 A marketing and communication strategy is a key to the success of a Travel Plan. The marketing strategy for SESRO should aim to raise awareness of the key services and facilities implemented as part of the OTP and disseminate travel information and notification of events and facilities provided. The marketing activities could include:

- Provision of website links to journey planners, information and timetables for public transport services on local operators' websites
- Distributing information packs distributed to staff and visitors.
- Taking opportunities to ensure that visitors are exposed to promotional material which can influence their choice of mode, such as displaying information in prominent positions with details included on the Project's website (if available).
- Including discussion of sustainable travel opportunities as part of any social media posts.
- Liaising with local stakeholders and co-ordinating events, such as for National Walking Week.
- Engaging with public transport operators to encourage bus and rail marketing materials to reference the availability of access to the Project

5 Monitoring and review

5.1 Monitoring

- 5.1.1 The future OTP for the Project would be subject to ongoing monitoring to assess the effectiveness of its measures and progress against the objectives set. This process would allow for the potential revision of targets and the introduction of new measures to ensure the Travel Plan remains effective and relevant as site operations evolve. Responsibility for monitoring and implementation would rest with the appointed TPC.
- 5.1.2 Given the timescale before the Project is open to the public, it is proposed that the exact monitoring frequency and methodology would be agreed with relevant stakeholders as part of the OTP nearer the time.
- 5.1.3 Monitoring is likely to include surveys to establish visitor and staff travel patterns at regular intervals. The surveys may include:
- Vehicle counts – potentially through ongoing monitoring, such as car park Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) information, to assist in understanding seasonality and different travel behaviours.
 - Person counts – either from counters at visitor centre doors and other locations, or from specific surveys designed to capture active travel usage at visitor centres and around the reservoir.
 - Visitor and staff questionnaires.
 - Monitoring the uptake and usage of cycle parking and EV charging.
- 5.1.4 In keeping with Oxfordshire County Council's *Implementing 'Decide & Provide': Requirements for Transport Assessments* (2022), it is proposed that a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (MEP) would be agreed with Oxfordshire County Council, secured and implemented through the OTP.

5.2 Review

- 5.2.1 Regular reviews of the OTP would be carried out in consultation with the relevant local planning and highway authorities. These reviews would set out the results from the surveys, including the frequency and nature of operational trips to the Site and the use of on-site parking by staff and visitors, to ensure that travel-related impacts are managed appropriately and do not result in nuisance or unauthorised parking in the surrounding area. They would also consider the need to amend, remove or add measures and initiatives to the Travel Plan to reflect prevailing circumstances and expected future trends.



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