

<b>Agenda Item No:</b>	<b>8</b>	
<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	<b>12 December 2022</b>	
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>FDC Formal Response to Fens Reservoir Consultation</b>	

## 1 Purpose / Summary

- The purpose of this report is to inform and seek agreement from Cabinet on the FDC formal consultation response to the proposed Fens Reservoir to be located north of Chatteris.

## 2 Key Issues

- Anglian Water and Cambridge Water announced in October 2022 that they are proposing to build a large new reservoir (a little smaller than Grafham Water) in an area north of Chatteris and east of the A141.
- The reservoir is needed to enable sufficient water supplies for future growth in the region in the face of a changing climate and to avoid damage to the natural environment.
- A non-statutory public consultation is currently underway to seek views on the proposed reservoir which closes on 21st December 2022. A link to the consultation can be found here: [Welcome - Anglian Water - Fens Reservoir](#)
- The details of the reservoir's design and associated facilities are at the very earliest stages of development and consequently this is a high-level consultation.
- Two further (formal) consultations are planned for 2024 and 2025 prior to the submission of an application for a Development Consent Order to the Secretary of State. The size of the reservoir is such that it is a National Strategic Infrastructure Project (NSIP) is to be determined independently by the Planning Inspectorate rather than FDC's Planning Committee.
- If approved and constructed, it is forecast that the reservoir will be operational by around 2040.
- The reservoir will be a major investment in the district which has the potential to provide significant benefits for local people, businesses and the natural environment as well as being a catalyst for future growth.
- This report briefly explains the background to the need for the reservoir, some of the key issues arising from it and the potential impacts on the district and residents.
- FDC's formal response is subject to Cabinet's approval of this report and the attached documents comprising answers to the set consultation

questions and a letter (presently in draft form) from the Leader of the Council.

- Appendix 1 sets out FDC's formal response to the set questions asked.
- Appendix 2 comprises a draft letter from the Leader of the Council.

### 3 Recommendations

- That Cabinet approves the Council's formal response to the Fens Reservoir consultation and the draft letter from the Leader of the Council, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth and recommends to Full Council that these be agreed.
- Where any changes might be required that these be delegated to the Corporate Director in consultation with the Leader of the Council, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth.

Wards Affected	All, but particularly Manea, Doddington and Wimblington, Slade Lode, Birch, Wenneye, and The Mills.
Forward Plan Reference	
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Chris Boden - Leader of the Council Cllr Dee Laws - Portfolio Holder for Planning Cllr Ian Benney – Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth
Report Originator(s)	Gareth Martin - Senior Development Officer - Planning Policy Nick Harding - Head of Planning Jo Blackmore - Head of Corporate Support
Contact Officer(s)	Carol Pilson - Corporate Director Gareth Martin - Senior Development Officer - Planning Policy Nick Harding - Head of Planning Jo Blackmore - Head of Corporate Support
Background Papers	

## Report:

### 1 BACKGROUND AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

- 1.1 Anglia Water and Cambridge Water have been seeking a site in the northern part of Cambridgeshire and western part of Norfolk to locate a new reservoir which will cover approximately 5 sq. km (a little smaller than Grafham Water).
- 1.2 The reservoir is needed to guarantee water supplies in the future taking into account projected population growth, the changing climate and future

agricultural demand, and the need to ensure that the environment, including river ecological systems, are not adversely affected.

- 1.3 Development of the reservoir is being speedily progressed through the RAPID process where three water regulators (OFWAT, the Environment Agency and the Drinking Water Inspectorate) work to ensure new infrastructure best meets the needs of its customers. There are five 'gates' to the process with Gate 2 having been reached in November 2022.
- 1.4 The need for a reservoir in this area is recognised in the emerging draft Regional Water Resources Plan for Eastern England being produced by Water Resources East. The purpose of the plan is to better understand and address the environmental and water resource needs of the region. In addition to a reservoir in the Fens, a new reservoir is also proposed in South Lincolnshire.
- 1.5 A total of 81 potential sites in the area were initially considered. This list was subsequently reduced to 16 and then finally to a shortlist of 4 locations. Two of these were in East Cambridgeshire, one in Norfolk and the fourth within Fenland, north of Chatteris.
- 1.6 The main criteria for selection included the underlying geology and construction costs but also a range of other matters such as potential benefits to local communities and the environment. The criteria were produced in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, including FDC, through the Fens Water Partnership and following Member briefings. The Fens Water Partnership has been in discussions with the proponents of the scheme over the past two years to agree the best site for the reservoir.
- 1.7 In October this year, the site north of Chatteris was announced as the preferred site. The main body of water is to be east of the A141, north of the Forty Foot (or Vermuden's) Drain, west of the Sixteen Foot Drain and south of Block Fen Drove with supporting infrastructure and facilities provided to the south and north of the main site and along the Forty Foot Drain as far as the Ouse Washes.
- 1.8 This consultation is non-statutory, but Anglian Water and Cambridge Water are keen to hear the views of local people and organisations, particularly regarding:
  - the principle of development in the area
  - what are considered to be the main effects of this development
  - how any detrimental effects may be lessened
  - opportunities that the reservoir might bring to the area.

## **2 Considerations**

- 2.1 The location of the reservoir will directly impact a number of residents and businesses as they will be required to move permanently from the site. Businesses directly affected include the North London Sky Diving Centre and a number of farms. The proponents have contacted all landowners and are in discussions about purchasing the land in line with the statutory processes.

- 2.2 Whilst it is regrettable that these homes and businesses will be lost, the location of any significant new infrastructure inevitably impacts on one or more landowners and this needs to be balanced against the wider benefits of the scheme.
- 2.3 The height of the proposed reservoir embankments will impact on the Fenland landscape. In pre-consultation discussions through the Fens Water Partnership, the likely heights of embankments were reported to be between 10-15 metres. The current consultation specifies potential heights of up to 20 metres. However, it will only be through detailed design work that the heights of the embankments will be finally established.
- 2.4 It should be possible to lessen any impact on the landscape by ensuring the embankments slope gently upwards rather than being constructed as a solid vertical barrier. In addition, if the shape of the reservoir were to have a more naturalistic form rather than the predominantly straight-line structure suggested in the consultation, this would also reduce its impact on the landscape. In addition, suitable strategic tree planting is likely to reduce its visual impact.
- 2.5 The likely disruption during construction will also need to be considered. Construction is currently programmed to last for around ten years, from 2029 to 2039. This has the potential to have an impact on the surrounding highway network although the site is adjacent to the A141 which should provide relatively easy access. To lessen the impact on road traffic, it will be important that all key infrastructure improvements in the area are provided at the earliest stages of construction.
- 2.6 The nearby location of the Whitemoor Yard Rail Recycling Centre in March with its proximity to the A141 provides an ideal opportunity to transfer materials and equipment to the reservoir. There is also potential to explore the opportunity to transfer materials and equipment to the site in an environmentally friendly way via the major waterway network adjacent to the site.
- 2.7 Despite these adverse impacts, the reservoir has many potential benefits and could have a significantly positive impact on the district. It offers an unprecedented opportunity for place making which, if fully realised, could be transformational for the district.
- 2.8 In addition to providing a guaranteed water supply resource for this area and Cambridge, the development of the reservoir could see improvements in the ecological status of rivers and other water bodies in the region and provide opportunities for Nature Recovery Strategies and Biodiversity Net Gain as required by the Environment Act 2021. It could assist with carbon sequestration and, depending on its design, it could be constructed and operated in ways that will contribute to achieving Net Zero.
- 2.9 The reservoir has the potential to become a major visitor attraction in the region, similar to Rutland Water and Grafham Water, and to provide a recreational resource for local residents and visitors to the area. There are likely to be many opportunities for a range of leisure activities which could positively contribute to the health and well-being of local people. Provision of a visitor centre and education facilities would become another valuable

resource for local people providing leisure, educational and employment opportunities. However, it will be important to ensure that access to this resource is retained in perpetuity for local people irrespective of a change in ownership or other circumstances.

- 2.10 As a visitor attraction, the reservoir should help stimulate the local hospitality industry as well as other businesses. In its construction phase the reservoir has the potential to provide employment for local people and in its operational phase training opportunities in water management. As details of the reservoir are worked up, it will be important to lobby the proponents to secure these benefits for local residents.
- 2.11 The reservoir should provide significant improvements to the local infrastructure. In addition to necessary highway improvements, residents of local settlements should be able to access the site safely and conveniently by walking and cycling with details being developed with the proponents.
- 2.12 The site of the reservoir is directly on the route of the potential rapid transit system from St Ives to Chatteris and March. An investigation study is included in the draft Fenland Transport Strategy recently subject to public consultation - see maps on pages 66 and 68, and Action TS015 on page 67 at this link: [ATS \(amazonaws.com\)](https://www.amazonaws.com)
- 2.13 The reservoir is likely to provide additional weight to the case for the rapid transit system which not only will help rebalance the lack of public transport infrastructure in the district and the historic isolation and social deprivation issues that have resulted, but will also provide a direct, sustainable public transport infrastructure option for visitors to the area.
- 2.14 Finally, the reservoir has the potential to be the catalyst for growth in both housing and employment in Fenland.
- 2.15 The announcement of the preferred site occurred after the draft Local Plan had been published for consultation and is therefore not mentioned in the plan. However, in moving to the submission stage of the Local Plan next year, policies will be included setting out the Council's objectives for the site which will be subject to further scrutiny by Cabinet and Council.
- 2.16 FDC officers have worked successfully in partnership with Anglian Water, Cambridge Water and other stakeholders to date and will continue to do so to ensure that the full potential of the reservoir for the district and local people is realised.

### **3 Effect on corporate objectives**

- 3.1 The potential benefits that the reservoir can bring are fully aligned with the Council's corporate objectives which, amongst other things, embrace growth for the area to improve the health, well-being, and provide development opportunities for Fenland residents.

### **4 Community impact**

- 4.1 The reservoir is likely to have a significant impact on Fenland's residents in the short and long term as highlighted above with the potential for many long-term benefits.

## **5 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 FDC recognises that the reservoir could bring many potential benefits to the district and be transformational for the local area whilst recognising the regrettable permanent loss of homes and businesses.
- 5.2 It is recommended that Cabinet members support the proposed site location and will seek, in future partnership working, to ensure that the likely impacts are successfully addressed, and the full benefits realised.

## **6 CONSULTATION**

- 6.1 The details of FDC's proposed consultation response to the set questions are set out in Appendix 1.

## **7 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 7.1 No alternative options considered.

## **6 IMPLICATIONS**

### **6.1 Legal Implications**

- 6.1.1 There are no legal implications associated with the recommendations of this report.

### **6.2 Financial Implications**

- 6.2.1 There are no financial implications associated with the recommendations of this report.

### **6.3 Equality Implications**

There are no specific equality implications associated with the recommendations of this report.

**Fens Reservoir – FDC response to non-statutory public consultation October –  
December 2022 – DRAFT**

**1. Do you have any comments about the pink area we have identified or the effects of us using it?**

Fenland District Council (FDC) is supportive in principle of the broad areas (both pink and grey) identified for the reservoir and associated infrastructure.

FDC welcomes the choice of the Chatteris site for the reservoir over the other three shortlisted sites and considers that it has great potential to provide major long-term benefits for the district.

FDC is supportive of the location of the reservoir near the market town of Chatteris and the villages of Doddington and Wimblington which will enable easy access for local people but without causing detriment to these settlements. It also acknowledges that residents in March to the north and Manea to the east should also be able to access the reservoir by active travel modes.

However, FDC is mindful that there will be significant effects in terms of a loss of homes and businesses, an adverse impact on the landscape due to the potentially high embankments of the reservoir, and disturbance during the long construction period.

**2. Are there ways you think we can improve or reduce any of these effects?**

Yes, Fenland District Council considers there are many ways in which the proposals for the reservoir can be improved and harmful effects reduced.

The details of the reservoir's design in this consultation are very limited and it is therefore very difficult to comment on specific issues. FDC accepts that the details will emerge as the scheme develops and would welcome ongoing dialogue about these through continuing joint working with Anglian Water (AW) and Cambridge Water (CW) including through the Fens Water Partnership. FDC are very keen to work with AW and CW and other stakeholders to ensure that adverse effects are limited and the optimum benefits from the reservoir are realised.

FDC accepts that a number of homes and businesses will by necessity be extinguished. FDC would only support the reservoir in this location should these homeowners and businesses be compensated in full for their losses in accordance with all legal requirements.

It is noted that the reservoir embankments may be up to 20 metres in height. This is significantly taller than the heights discussed in pre-consultation meetings and workshops where heights were given at around 10-15 metres.

Nonetheless the impacts of the height of the reservoir embankments should be able to be successfully addressed through good design.

This can happen by ensuring that there is a variety in the shape of the reservoir i.e. a more naturalistic shape (or shapes) which can be more easily visually blended into the landscape rather than the simple generally square box shape shown in the consultation diagrams, which as proposed will have a negative impact on visual amenity and the wide, open landscape. A more natural shape would also be more visually interesting and create better opportunities for recreation and nature.

In addition, ensuring that the embankments slope gently rather than being a sudden vertical barrier with a 'Great Wall of China' effect, will also assist in successfully assimilating the reservoir into the landscape.

Finally suitable tree planting in particular locations should also assist in reducing the visual impact on the landscape.

Good planning for the construction phase should help reduce any adverse impacts. Necessary highway infrastructure should be provided at the earliest stages of consultation to reduce impacts on the highway network.

Consideration should be given to making maximum use of the nearby Whitemoor Yard Rail Recycling Centre in March with its easy access to the A141 for transferring materials and equipment to the reservoir.

The major waterway network adjacent to the site also provides a potential opportunity to transfer materials and equipment to the site in an environmentally friendly way and this should be explored.

During the construction phase as much supporting infrastructure which could be used as a visitor attraction should be provided at the earliest opportunity. For instance, an education/visitor centre/viewing area from the outset (even if temporary structures) would help inform people about progress. This will help in ensuring continual support for the project and be interesting and inspiring for local people, and particularly the young.

### **3. Do you have any comments about the grey area we have identified or the effects of us using it?**

In terms of the grey areas shown on the consultation maps all of the comments made by Fenland District Council to Questions 1 and 2 (pink area) are also relevant.

FDC has no objections in principle to the grey areas being used for facilities in association with the main reservoir site.

The majority of the land shown in grey falls within Flood Zone 3a (High Risk) of the Environment Agency's Flood Map (Rivers and Sea). As such care will be needed on the types of buildings and facilities that can be provided in these locations in accordance with national and local flood risk guidance.



Buildings and facilities should also take into account of the relatively flat, open nature of the area and how these might be successfully assimilated into the landscape.

Care is also required to not have any adverse impact on the adjacent Wimblington Common Gravel Pits (County Wildlife Site) north of Block Fen Drove.

A number of public footpaths traverse the site (both grey and pink areas) and currently effectively form a continuous loop around the whole area. Wherever not needed for construction purposes, these should be incorporated into a new public rights of way (active travel) network which allows circumnavigation of the reservoir and associated facilities in its entirety.

Where facilities are to be provided to the south of the Forty Foot Drain a sufficient number of foot /cycle bridges should be provided over the Forty Foot to allow safe and convenient access to the main reservoir site.

It is noted that the associated facilities will be required along the Forty Foot Drain as far as Welches Dam adjacent to the the Ouse Washes. FDC would want to see the existing public rights of way along the Forty Foot Drain retained and upgraded for all types of active travel purposes (walking, cycling, horse riding).

Welches Dam itself will need upgrading and repair and FDC would be seeking for this to be re-instated for use by navigation craft.

There is also an opportunity to provide a marina adjacent to the reservoir along the Forty Foot, potentially on the south side of the drain to enable easy access to facilities in Chatteris.

It will be important to ensure all supporting infrastructure and facilities are realistically funded and delivered prior to the operation of the reservoir.

Furthermore, providing an education/visitor centre/viewing area from the outset will be important to inform people about the construction of the reservoir as it happens. These will help ensure interest and support from local people.

#### **4. Are there ways you think we can improve or reduce any of these effects?**

Yes, Fenland District Council's response to Question 3 explains how the effects can be improved or reduced and in summary are:

- Ensure developments take heed of and are compatible with national and local flood risk policy and guidance.
- Avoid adverse impacts on the wide-open landscape through sensitive design and location of buildings and facilities.
- Link to, but do not adversely affect surrounding businesses, tourist destinations and protected nature areas.

- Provide active travel routes to fully circumnavigate the reservoir and associated facilities.
- Provide all necessary supporting infrastructure to link the grey and pink areas to include foot/cycle bridges in appropriate locations.
- Upgrade Welches Dam to be fully operational and useable by navigation craft.
- Ensure all associated infrastructure is realistically funded and delivered prior to the operation of the reservoir.
- Provide an education/visitor centre/viewing area from the outset during the construction of the reservoir to ensure interest and support from local people.

**5. Is there anything else you think we should know about the areas we have identified?**

The archaeological value of the area is currently unknown, but due to the geology and ground conditions the Fens are rich in archaeological deposits. Flexibility should therefore be built into the design and construction phases to ensure that any finds can be properly recorded and wherever possible retained in situ as standalone features and/or incorporated into the visitor/heritage centre.

**6. As part of this consultation we have provided a very early concept design for the reservoir to help stimulate thought and discussion. This will be developed further as the project progresses taking into account your feedback, so we are keen to understand your initial views. Do you have any comments on the early concept design at this stage?**

As proposed the early concept design is not inspiring. At the outset of the project Fenland District Council was advised that the ambition of Anglian Water and Cambridge Water was that the reservoir should be innovative and exciting and the design exemplary and ground-breaking. However, FDC considers that the proposed concept design does not satisfy these ambitions.

A more naturalistic design would be much preferred and would help reduce the visual impact of the projected heights of the reservoir embankments on the landscape. FDC would welcome opportunities to discuss the design with AW and CW and other stakeholders through the Fens Water Partnership as further details emerge.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the vast majority of the local landscape is man-made through the historic drainage and farming of the traditional fen and comprises many straight features (roads and drains), the reservoir provides an ideal opportunity to introduce a more naturalistic feature within this flat, straight-lined landscape.

A more natural shape would provide a more interesting and exciting feature within the landscape, captivate the imagination, and provide greater opportunities for recreation and nature. In FDC's view a variety in the landscape would be warmly welcomed in this location. A straight-lined design justified by what predominates in the landscape at the present time and particularity with embankments of potentially

up to 20 metres in height might contribute to the utilitarian functioning of the reservoir but do little to stimulate the imagination of people or entice repeat visitors. It would run the risk of being an uninspiring and disappointing body of water to visit.

**7. Below are some of the features we could potentially include as we develop the proposals for the reservoir. Are there any you have a preference for? (Tick all that apply)**

- Wildlife enhancement and conservation (such as for birds and other species)
- Ecological enhancements (such as wetland areas and woodlands)
- Recreational water sports (such as sailing, angling and wind surfing)
- Education facilities (such as nature trails, visitor centres)
- Social and recreational facilities (such as picnic areas, playgrounds)
- Landscape enhancements (such as tree planting)
- Green infrastructure (including cycle paths, EV charging and renewables)
- Creating a recognised visitor destination for local people and tourists
- Local enterprise and economic opportunities
- Water for wider sector uses (such as agriculture and commercial use)
- Other

All of the above are potential opportunities which Fenland District Council hopes will be fully realised. FDC would support other water-based activities such as swimming and scuba-diving as well as camping and caravanning. In developing proposals FDC would want the following to also be taken into consideration:

- Overall, the reservoir should be a lasting positive legacy for the area.
- As a recreational facility it should be available in perpetuity for local people and visitors from elsewhere to use, irrespective of any changes in ownership or other circumstances.
- Provide education and training opportunities for local people in water management.
- Provide employment for local people during construction and as a visitor attraction.
- Provide a heritage centre to explain the history of the Fens and the development of the water management network (both drainage and potable supply) to the current day.
- Be mindful of the historic struggles and achievements in creating the Fens landscape and give reference to these in such things as the design of facilities, the visitors centre and in public art installations.
- Provide upgrades to the local highway infrastructure where relevant.
- Provide active travel routes to circumnavigate the reservoir and associated facilities, including new bridges where required.
- Make the reservoir as widely and easily accessible as possible by active travel modes (walking, cycling, horse riding etc) particularly to local settlements including March and Manea by new and safe (off-road with safe crossings) walking and cycling routes and with links to existing pedestrian cycle pathways such as the route from Ely to Sutton along the A142.
- Provide new, and link to existing equestrian routes

- Provide tourist facilities to include an adjacent marina accessed from the extensive drainage and navigation network operated by the Middle Level Commissioners and the Environment Agency.
- Link to the existing tourist attractions and businesses in the locality e.g. the Skylark holiday accommodation, and nearby Stonea Iron Age camp to the north of the site.
- In its construction utilise the adjacent extensive waterway network for the movement of materials wherever possible. Also utilise Whitemoor Yard Rail Recycling Centre in March for the import and export of materials.
- Incorporate renewable energy opportunities into the reservoir's design.
- Seek opportunities to utilise the extensive size and surrounding area of the reservoir in water quality improvements.
- Be mindful of the opportunity to link to and provide a dedicated stopping off point to the potential Rapid Transit System proposed to link St Ives with Chatteris and March and potentially onto Wisbech. A study to investigate such a project is now included in the draft Fenland Transport Strategy being produced jointly by Cambridgeshire County Council, FDC and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority. If found feasible it is almost certain that the route would pass by the reservoir. See maps on pages 66 and 68, and Action TS015 on page 67 at this link: [ATS \(amazonaws.com\)](https://www.amazonaws.com)
- Be mindful of the role the reservoir might play in emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Biodiversity Net Gain as required by the Environment Act 2021.
- When considering water supply sources for the reservoir, subsequent supply elsewhere, and how flood risk management might be improved, take a 'whole system' approach to solutions taking into account the entire river and drainage system in the region and the impacts the reservoir might have on these elements. In this way the interrelationship of these elements can be fully understood, and informed solutions achieved.
- Explore how and where carbon sequestration and peat restoration can be incorporated into the reservoir's design and the associated facilities to be provided.

**8. Do you have any have any additional feedback about our proposals that you have not included above?**

**Doubling Nature**

The proposed reservoir is a very significant step for the doubling nature here in Fenland and could be an excellent opportunity to provide more wildlife corridors to other locally important County Wildlife Sites such as the local fishing lakes near Skylarks and internationally important sites with designations of RAMSAR, SPA SAC SSSI that are nearby. There are also opportunities to improve access to tourism in a new way in Fenland and increase nationally and internationally important wildlife populations.

## **Invasive Species in the area**

Mitten crabs are slowly working their way here. This site could provide a wildlife corridor to Doddington/ Wimblington village and Chatteris and plague residents. They undermine flood defences, damage fishing equipment, and eat nearly everything in their path, and they nip. They are edible so perhaps they could be served in a restaurant there.

## **What will be done to prevent the introduction of other invasive species from recreational activities to Fenland?**

Will Fishermen/ boaters/ recreational water sporters have a place to decontaminate their equipment before and after use to help stop the spread of Crassula helmsii, zebra mussels and killer shrimp and others to Fenland? If not, the problem species could financially cripple the site and wider area costing millions to de-clog pipes for water and sewage, filtering equipment, ditches and rivers. It is nearly impossible to keep under control once on a site, not to mention the ecological impact of the pests and the spread to other places.

## **Transport**

From a Transport perspective, FDC supports the development of the Fen Reservoir in principle and welcome the opportunities it can provide for Fenland. It is suggested that there is potential for a range of transport opportunities across several modes of travel.

### Walking & Cycling

We would like to draw your attention to the Fenland Walking, Cycling and Mobility Aid Improvement Strategy that was adopted by FDC Cabinet in October 2022. Further details can be found from the following website link:

[Fenland Cycling, Walking and Mobility Aid Improvement Strategy - Fenland District Council](#)

This new strategy includes ambitious proposals for new active travel infrastructure across Fenland.

The location of the reservoir proposal aligns closely with recommendations and ambitions set out in our Fenland Cycling, Walking and Mobility Aid Improvement Strategy to which we would like to draw to your attention. A segregated walking/cycling route along the A141 corridor (page 31) and the proposal for a controlled crossing on the A142 at Fenland Way, Chatteris (Appendix 3) are essential opportunities to maximise walking and cycling to the site. Connecting surrounding communities to the reservoir, through new or improved walking and cycling links is also a key priority, particularly for Chatteris, Doddington and Wimblington given their proximity to the site. To maximise the potential for travel by sustainable transport, wider connectivity should be explored to March and Guyhirn along the route of the

A141 as well as to Manea Railway Station for access to rail travel and to the Ouse Washes Nature Reserve at Welches Dam.

We strongly support options to encourage and enable walking and cycling as the first choice for accessing and exploring the Fen Reservoir. We therefore recommend and encourage the provision of cycle hire facilities on site and suggest this include mobility scooters to support disabled access. Opportunities to extend hire/loan provision of cycles to residents in surrounding towns and villages on a longer-term basis could also support access to education and employment in the area.

There is also an opportunity to provide infrastructure (bridges and linking bridleways) to link national cycle routes 11 and 63 which should be considered.

#### Vehicle Access, Car Parking & Bus Services

Car parking provision at the reservoir, including options to accommodate buses and coaches is essential to enable people with mobility issues and people who live further away to access the site. Provision to introduce or improve public transport to the site should also be explored. The site access point for these vehicles and how this affects traffic on the A141 will be an important consideration. It is recommended that early conversations take place with Cambridgeshire County Council as the Local Highway Authority. Highway proposals need to be developed in line with their requirements.

#### Highway Network

A concern from our perspective is the effect increased HGV activity and higher traffic volumes to and from this development will have on the highway network, particularly during the construction phase. A detailed Transport Assessment should be submitted to Cambridgeshire County Council which includes a review of the suitability of surrounding roads and includes mitigation measures to minimise the impact of construction traffic. Contact should be made with Cambridgeshire County Council at the earliest opportunity to understand their requirements.

We acknowledge that the project for the Fen Reservoir is currently at a very early stage. However, we feel this is an ideal time for us to engage given the size and significance of this project and the impact it will have on Fenland. We therefore welcome the opportunity to meet and discuss the project either face to face or via TEAMS at your earliest convenience.

### **9. How did you hear about the consultation?**

- Received information to my address
- Social media
- Online advertising or search

- Local media news story or advertising
- Posters or information points in the area
- Notified by someone else
- Other (please provide details)

Through the Fens Water Partnership meetings.

**10. Did you find the consultation materials informative in helping to provide feedback on our proposals?**

Yes, to a degree. As this is a high-level consultation it is difficult to comment in detail on matters which at this stage can only be speculated on.

**11. Do you have any comments on your experience of the consultation overall, or things we could have done differently?**

Work better with FDC's (and other organisations') Comms Teams to ensure the consultation and especially consultation events are more widely publicised at the outset. For the welcome pop-up events use locations with the highest footfall. For instance, Sainsburys in March on a Saturday morning is probably the busiest location in the town rather than the marketplace where the pop-up event was held.

**DRAFT Letter from Cllr Chris Boden, Leader of the Council, Cllr Dee Laws, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Cllr Benney, Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth**

**Re Fens Reservoir consultation – October to December 2022**

To: Anglian Water and Cambridge Water

Fenland District Council (FDC) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation for the location of the proposed reservoir north of Chatteris.

The Council supports the choice of Chatteris over the other three short listed sites and considers the reservoir could be a lasting positive legacy for the district.

FDC regrets that the reservoir will result in the permanent loss of long-established homes and businesses in the area and would expect, as a minimum, that all statutory processes for compensation for affected property owners are followed.

However, FDC also recognises that the proposed reservoir constitutes a significant investment in the area, unprecedented for the Fenland district in recent times. The Council recognises that this facility, when built and operational, will help to guarantee future water supplies both for this area and Cambridge, as well as helping to mitigate against the changing climate and provide environmental and social benefits.

The Council welcomes the potential benefits that will result, including the recreational benefits for local people and the likely positive impact on the health and well-being of residents. It also welcomes improvements to the local infrastructure that will be required and will seek to ensure that these are provided at the earliest phases of construction.

The Council sees it as essential, irrespective of a change in ownership or other circumstances, that the reservoir will remain as a resource for local people in perpetuity and will seek guarantees that this happens.

The Council is also mindful that the benefits are all 'potentials' and that a substantial amount of further work and investment from a variety of sources will be required for these to be realised in full.

We recognise that the partnership approach established by yourselves, which has included a wide range of stakeholders through the Fens Water Partnership and associated workshops, has helped to ensure the most appropriate site, taking all relevant constraints into consideration, has been selected. FDC would strongly urge that the successful partnership approach continues in working up the details of the design of the scheme.

We recognise that this is a non-statutory but important public consultation and would be keen to continue to have ongoing input in how the scheme develops including through further rounds of formal consultation.

Your sincerely,

Cllr Chris Boden – Leader of the Council  
Cllr Denise Laws – Portfolio Holder for Planning  
Cllr Ian Benney – Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth