

Fens Reservoir Consultation 3 Landscape Comments

Prepared for: Fenland District Council

Date: December 2025



1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report includes comments prepared by Robert Browne CMLI, in response to a brief from Fenland District Council. Comments respond to the information provided within the Fens Reservoir Consultation 3 document library.
- 1.2 Wynne-Williams Associates (WWA) is a landscape and arboricultural practice registered with the Landscape Institute with many years' experience in landscape design, landscape management and landscape planning.

2 Main Reservoir Site

- 2.1 The Consultation 3 main reservoir layout does not address concerns previously raised on multiple occasions regarding the ammonite form. In fact, the latest design exhibits even less variation than the Consultation 2 layout, showing minimal deviation from the generic ammonite shape. While earlier discussions acknowledged several procedural constraints limiting the use of a less regular form, we request that this issue be revisited. In our view, introducing greater irregularity would create a more engaging experience for visitors and encourage fuller use of the reservoir's perimeter.
- 2.2 The reduction of the proposed peninsula area appears to diminish the user experience. Earlier versions included an active peninsula that disrupted the regularity of the ammonite form and provided valuable opportunities for interaction with the water. This is an element that now appears to be limited to the recreational lagoon only.
- 2.3 The proposed mound features have potential to become key landmarks within the wider landscape, which is important given that the main water body will not be visible from surrounding areas. However, there are ongoing concerns regarding design. The general consensus is that it would be beneficial to incorporate a focal element to draw visitors to the summit of the main mound, such as a small observation structure or locally inspired sculpture.
- 2.4 The latest plans identify two potential areas for solar arrays. We are concerned about the proposed siting of panels to the north of the reservoir, as these could heighten the predicted landscape and visual effects of the development. From an LVIA perspective, floating solar arrays would be preferable, and opportunities to visually break up the massing of PV panels would be welcomed.
- 2.5 We acknowledge that some progress has been made in illustrating how the surrounding landscape can accommodate the proposed development scale. The illustrative sections, presented at an earlier consultation meeting, showing the varied visitor experience along the embankment, were encouraging. However, these sections were not included within the Consultation 3 information. The description of 'scallops' and the accompanying diagram show promise, but it is our opinion that more is needed to demonstrate how the reservoir will sit within the wider landscape context. Photo visualisations will be key to achieving this. It would also be useful to receive information on the proposed planting along outer embankments and the intended

phasing for installing this. Any opportunities for advanced planting would be welcomed.

- 2.6 From a design perspective, the current proposals show minimal variation to the landscape strategy along the outer banks of the main reservoir. A similar treatment is indicated for most of the perimeter. There is concern that this will lead most visitors to stay close to the primary hub, without venturing to the eastern part of the main reservoir. It would be useful to see more activation of eastern areas to encourage further engagement from future visitors. Part of this may include sporadic play provision or an arts trail. Further information is welcomed.
- 2.7 There is a brief mention of the potential for an area of woodland planting to the north of the main reservoir site. This idea has potential and we would support further exploration.
- 2.8 We are also pleased to see the indicative inclusion of an amphitheatre within the scheme. This is certainly desirable and we would encourage the design team to be bold with the scale and location of this feature.

3 Water Treatment Works

- 3.1 The consultation information shown for the water treatment works demonstrates a good level of consideration for landscape and visual effects. The screening strategy appears to be suitable and it is our opinion that the landscape does have capacity to accommodate the proposals without undue consequences.
- 3.2 However, the proposed location of the community orchard appears to need more work. The lengthy walking distance from the closest crossing point along the A142 may reduce the level of engagement from the local community. Opportunities for a closer crossing point would be welcomed.

4 Associated Water Infrastructure

- 4.1 The amount and nature of associated water infrastructure is likely to have significant landscape and visual effects. We expect this to be considered in detail within the EIA. This will include the long sections of proposed pipeline, which will leave a lasting impression on the wider landscape in the form of sterilised surface easements. Large facilities such as the service reservoirs and multiple treatment and pumping stations are likely to be locally prominent. Once again, visualisations showing predicted change will be necessary.
- 4.2 Previous comments made regarding the type and phasing of proposed screen planting to the main reservoir site also apply to associated infrastructure. It would be valuable to understand the nature of planting and whether there are opportunities for advanced planting.

5 Required Action

- Reconsideration of the ammonite shape to increase potential for engagement with the water across more of the reservoir.
- Provision of photo visualisations illustrating how the reservoir will appear in the wider landscape.
- Further consideration of the mound feature and creating a more distinctive landmark.
- Provision of more detail regarding the design code. This could be indicative chapters or headings, with examples provided.
- More information is required on the intended phasing of landscape installation, highlighting opportunities for advanced planting.
- Opportunities for greater activation of the eastern part of the main reservoir site would be beneficial.
- Greater understanding is needed on the intended play strategy for the main reservoir site.
- Exploration of an additional pedestrian crossing point closer to the community orchard, adjacent to the water treatment works, would be welcomed.
- Greater detail needed on the likely surface disruption to be caused by underground pipeline routes.
- Visualisations showing predicted change caused by associated water infrastructure elements.



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