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The Examining Authority
The Planning Inspectorate
HampshireWaterProject@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

By email

Dear Examining Authority

Hampshire Water Transfer and Water Recycling Project — Drinking Water Inspectorate representation

I write on behalf of the Drinking Water Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) to provide an overview of our statutory duties and how they apply to the Hampshire Water Transfer and Water Recycling Project, in connection with the examination of the Development Consent Order application. The proposal involves the use of recycled water stored in Havant Thicket Reservoir as a source for subsequent treatment and public water supply.

The Inspectorate has no objection in principle to the use of water recycling as a source of drinking water. Its position on this project is that the water companies must demonstrate that risks to drinking water quality are appropriately assessed and managed, and that water ultimately supplied to consumers will be wholesome and comply with the applicable statutory requirements at all times. The Inspectorate's involvement in the project should not be interpreted as approval of the final scheme design or confirmation of future compliance.

The Inspectorate is the independent regulator of drinking water quality for England and Wales. Its principal role is to enforce drinking water quality and relevant security legislation to protect public health. It does not determine the overall need for the scheme, its economic justification, or its wider environmental effects, and is not the environmental permitting authority for the recycling plant or reservoir.

Responsibility for compliance remains with the water companies under the Water Industry Act 1991, the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2016 (as amended) and other applicable requirements, including the Network and Information Systems Regulations 2018 and the Security and Emergency Measures Direction 2022. Neither development consent nor progression through the Regulators' Alliance for Progressing Infrastructure Development (RAPID) process removes or replaces those obligations.

Through RAPID, the Inspectorate scrutinises the drinking water quality and security aspects of scheme development. Its assessment considers the risks associated with the proposed source and the implications for the downstream drinking water supply system, including supplies from the Otterbourne treatment works. In addition the Inspectorate has also been liaising directly with Portsmouth Water so the risks are similarly understood and can be appropriately mitigated for the Farlington treatment works and supply system. The companies must maintain comprehensive, up-to-date drinking water safety plans and their mitigations will need to protect consumers under both normal and abnormal operating conditions.

The principal regulatory considerations include chemical and microbiological risks, emerging contaminants such as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), the implications of changes in source water for drinking water quality and consumer acceptability, and the security of the supply system. The companies must demonstrate compliance with the applicable requirements, including the requirement to have no deterioration in drinking water quality supplied to consumers. The Inspectorate also expects appropriate engagement with consumers who may receive water derived from the scheme to help mitigate consumer acceptability concerns associated with a change of source.

Compliance with the drinking water quality regulations focuses on the point of abstraction onwards so that the wholesomeness standards are met and public health for consumers is protected. The Environment Agency is responsible for setting and monitoring compliance with any necessary environmental discharge limits into the reservoir. The Environment Agency is also part of RAPID.

At RAPID Gate 3, the Inspectorate considered that the project could progress, while identifying matters requiring further evidence on water quality risk assessment, consumer engagement and security. The Gate 4 submission records that all Gate 3 priority actions had been closed by January 2026. This represents progress in scheme development, but closure of those actions does not constitute final regulatory assurance or discharge the companies' continuing statutory duties.

The Inspectorate's published Information Letter IL/03/2023 sets out its position on the regulatory framework for water recycling and desalination schemes which the Examining Authority may wish to refer to. Regulatory requirements include the relevant Regulation 15 and drinking water safety planning processes and Regulation 31 requirements, where applicable. The Inspectorate has also produced a consumer leaflet on Water Recycling - Drinking Water Inspectorate.

In summary, the Inspectorate has no objection in principle to water recycling. Our role is to ensure that, as with any source, where recycled water contributes to a source used for public supply, the water companies identify and control the risks so that the water that is ultimately supplied to consumers remains wholesome and compliant with drinking water quality regulations. RAPID scrutiny has identified areas requiring further development including additional modelling, treatment controls, water-safety planning and consumer engagement. Progress has been made and the Gate 3 priority actions have been closed and regulatory assurance will continue through the drinking water safety planning and compliance monitoring processes when the scheme is operational. Protection of public health and the quality of water supplied to consumers will remain the basis of the Inspectorate's regulatory oversight.

Yours sincerely



Deputy Chief Inspector of Drinking Water