Planning Inspectorate

Preliminary meeting note

Application:	Hampshire Water Transfer and Water Recycling Project
Reference:	WA010002
Time and date:	10:00, 11 November 2026
Venue:	Fareham Innovation Centre and virtually via Microsoft Teams

This meeting note is not a full transcript of the preliminary meeting. It is a summary of the key points discussed.

1. Welcome and Introduction

Wendy Mckay (WM), welcomed those present and introduced herself as the lead member of the panel of Examining Inspectors and Sharon Bennett-Matthews (SBM), Maria Rokicka (MR) as panel members to examine the Hampshire Water Transfer and Water Recycling Project application.

WM explained the appointment was made by delegation from the Secretary of State (SoS) for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Lead Examining Authority (ExA) explained that the ExA would be examining the application made by Southern Water Services Limited ('the applicant') before making a recommendation to the Secretary of State who will decide whether an order granting development consent for the proposed project, which is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), should be made.

Wendy Mckay explained the purpose of the preliminary meeting (PM) and noted that the examination will commence after the PM closes.

The ExA confirmed that all documents and submissions received and accepted during the examination will be published on the project-specific page of the National Infrastructure Planning website.

2. Audio recording

The video recording of this PM is available on the National Infrastructure Planning website and can be accessed here

3. Examination process

The ExA briefly explained the examination process under the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008), further info can be found:

- 'Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: What to expect at a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project event'

- 'Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: Registering to speak at, or attend, an event'

4. Initial assessment of principal issues

The ExA explained the purpose of the initial assessment of principal issues (section 88 of the PA2008), which can be found in annex C of the Rule 6 letter of date and asked for any observations on them.

Upper Itchen Restoration Community Interest Company outlined that their issues relate to the need and purpose of the project. They highlighted that they are short of water in the Itchin area. So asked that the beneficial areas of the project be considered as principal issues. They requested that the beneficial impact on the test and Itchin is considered. The ExA confirmed that they are considering those matters.

Havant Friends of the Earth and Havant Climate Alliance asked the ExA to include carbon emissions and energy consumption be considered as principal issues due to the high carbon emissions that would be produced and the climate change impact. They also highlighted energy usage and impact on the area and whether any feasible options for energy efficient technology should be included as alternatives.

The ExA highlighted to attendees that even if an issue is not a principal issue they may well still be important and relevant and therefore still be examined.

Save Our South Coast Alliance (SOSCA) & Water Matters Community highlighted the letter from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) in PDA-004 (paragraph 2.2.2) which indicated that upon publication of WRMP24 need should not be revisited through the examination. However as WRMP24 has not yet been published ‘need’ should be examined as a principal issue. That DEFRA letter has been critical of how alternatives have been considered. Therefore, it is important that both need and alternatives are examined as principal issues with issue specific hearings for each. Water Matters Community asked for 4 points to be included within the examination. Lack of consultations with the community or consultations on alternatives at the performative stage or statutory consultation process for the water resources planning and lack of consultation with Rowlands Castle Parish Council. If not considered as a principal issue they would hope that lack of consultation would still be examined separately. They also questioned whether alternatives were considered in 2021.

In addition they ask that the securing mechanisms and controls on the risks of the scheme are able to be examined as principal issues and for an Issue Specific Hearing be held on that. They also asked for Carbon and Energy to be considered as a principal issue. Finally they also requested that the principal issues have 9 sub-categories added.

Portsmouth Water Ltd indicated that the importance and legal complexity of the issues raised will require issue specific hearings as outlined in written representations. The time needed for compulsory acquisition hearing, including the impact of taking land next to George Reservoir.

The applicant highlighted DEFRA’s letter dated 13 August 2026 in PDA-004 that the WRMP24 should be published within 4 months which is Southern Waters intention ie by 12 December 2026. Therefore this does not need to be examined. Paragraph 1.4.5 of

the National Policy statement for water resources infrastructure says that 'Need' will not be revisited. The SoS will assess the scheme on that basis. The applicant there does not feel 'Need' is a principal issue.

The applicant responded to Ms Viney of Water Matters Community with regards to inadequate consultation and highlighted relevant consultations that were carried out. The applicant also highlighted the national policy statement that states principal issues should not consider issues that don't relate to land use planning. Environmental protection are all addressed in the national policy statement so are not principal issues

5. Examination Timetable

The ExA noted requests, already received in writing, to amend the draft examination timetable contained in annex D of Rule 6 letter and also welcomed further suggestions from the parties in attendance.

All comments received were duly noted by the ExA and considerations will be reflected in the rule 8 Letter.

The examination timetable can be found in the rule 8 letter published on 17 November 2026.

6. Hearings and site inspections

The ExA clarified the purpose of:

- Issue specific hearings
- Compulsory acquisition hearings
- Open floor hearings
- Accompanied site inspections
- Unaccompanied site inspections

The ExA sought comments on the arrangements for the above events. These were duly noted and considered by the ExA.

Further information relating to hearings and site inspections can be found:

- 'Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: What to expect at a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project event'
- 'Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: Registering to speak at, or attend, an event'

7. Procedural decisions

The ExA clarified the procedural decisions made under section 89(3) of the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008) and asked for any observations.

Procedural decisions can be found in annex f of the Rule 6 Letter.

Mr Andrew Newbery requested that the applicants draft statement of common ground with Portsmouth Water be submitted and published.

Portsmouth Water outlined that the statement of common ground is intended to be submitted at the relevant deadline listed in the Examination Timetable. The applicant

confirmed they are working with Portsmouth Water to submit this at the relevant deadline. This may either be deadline 1 or 2.

ASI

Martin Burton - asked whether a site visit Lower Itchin river below Otterbourne where the main abstraction from surface and ground water occurs. Endangered atlantic salmon are most at risk in this area from the low flow if there is a drought and increased extraction rates from the proposed site. The ExA agreed to consider this.

Portsmouth City Council outlined that in their submission PDA-007 locations 2 and 3 listed can be unaccompanied site inspections, while location 1 should be accompanied.

The applicant had no comments to make on these proposals.