



Inception Meeting note

Project name	Suffolk Water Recycling, Transfer and Storage Project
Case reference	WA0210003
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date of meeting	12 January 2026
Meeting with	Meeting with Essex and Suffolk Water
Venue	Microsoft Teams
Circulation	All attendees

Summary of key points discussed, and advice given

The Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) advised that a note of the meeting would be taken and published on its website in accordance with section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008). Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) could rely.

1. The proposed development

Detailed description of the proposed development

The applicant, Essex and Suffolk Water Limited is part of Northumbrian Water. The proposed development is located within the Suffolk water supply area. The 2024 water resources management plan forecasts a deficit in supply to non-domestic customers.

A non-domestic moratorium is in place for the Hartismere area, with no new non-domestic connections, which constrains economic growth.

The project shall seek a Development Consent Order for two elements:

A new Advanced Water Recycling Plant in Lowestoft, which may include the provision of a new long sea outfall.

New pipelines to move water where it's needed, including a connection from the advanced water recycling plant to the river Waveney; the construction of two new storage service water reservoirs near Sibton Green (the central service reservoir) and Eye (the western service reservoir); connections to the existing Saxmundham water tower and from the water tower to the Sizewell C nuclear power plant.

Pipelines will be buried underground within proposed corridors connecting Lowestoft, Barsham, Sibton Green, Eye, and Saxmundham. Consultation is ongoing on these corridors, and local feedback will help shape the final routes.

The Inspectorate advised that if a new long sea outfall is required for the project, and would require the acquisition or rights over crown land, that the applicant should seek to ensure that agreements are finalised with the crown prior to submission of the application, to avoid the potential for delays.

The project is considered to be a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project, by virtue of a s35 direction made by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) in September 2025.

The Inspectorate advised that any increase to the capacity of the service reservoirs (currently a combined volume of 30 million litres) would require a direction from the Secretary of State.

The applicant gave an overview of its scheme development methodology.

The Inspectorate advised that the applicant should refer to the advice notes in relation to good design principles.

- **Environmental constraints and issues**

The applicant has set up an environmental stakeholder forum. Engagement has been predominantly with the Environment Agency and Natural England. The MMO shall have a greater role once the long sea outfall aspect of the project has been finalised. Historic England has been engaged on the proximity of elements of the project to listed buildings.

The applicant confirmed that surveys in relation to wintering birds and aquatic ecology has been ongoing for several years in order to provide sufficient data to inform the environmental statement.

- **EIA scoping**

The applicant confirmed that it was working on methodology and policy at this stage and would focus on baseline information once a selection has been made on the preferred locations and pipeline corridors.

Following the design freeze, the applicant expects to commence further meetings with statutory consultees in Q2 of 2026 and to submit the scoping request in July 2026.

The Inspectorate advised that a meeting prior to the submission of the scoping request would be helpful and suggested this should take place in April 2026. A meeting after the scoping opinion has been issued would also be beneficial.

The Inspectorate reminded the applicant that once the limits of the project had been defined, that it would require a shape file two weeks in advance of the submission of the scoping request, to allow for the creation of a statutory consultee list.

- **Environmental surveys**

Requests for access to land to carry out surveys has been made to landowners and licences for surveys have been offered to some landowners. In cases where this has not been possible, powers to access land (s172) are being sought through Defra. The applicant hopes to reach agreement with landowners in all cases, where possible.

- **Land and rights: Scope of compulsory acquisition etc powers sought and potential constraints and issues**

The applicant has initially identified approximately 100 landowners which have been notified of the proposals; the applicant has met with circa 60 landowners at consultation events. Three areas of land have been identified for permanent acquisition, with further rights over land sought for the pipeline routes. The scheme is likely to involve special category land and include river and marine interests.

If a new long sea outfall is required, this may involve crown land.

- **Consultation (statutory and non-statutory)**

The applicant gave an overview of its consultation to date, where it has presented various options for the location of the advanced water recycling plant, the two reservoirs and the pipeline corridors.

Non-statutory consultation was carried out between 29 October 2025 to 17 December 2025.

The applicant confirmed that it has been in engagement with stakeholders, including the local planning authorities and National Highways.

The Inspectorate advised that local authorities should be consulted on how best to consult with the local community and could help with identifying hard to reach groups.

The Inspectorate noted that the s35 direction includes the provision of connections to substations under associated development. The applicant confirmed that connections may be required for the Advanced Water Recycling Plant and the two reservoirs, but that any land required to enable these connections would be over land subject to freehold compulsory acquisition. The Inspectorate advised that the applicant should consult with National Grid or any other relevant undertaker to ensure that any connections required to deliver the project are secured, to avoid any potential delays.

Statutory Consultation is planned for June 2027.

- **Submission date**

The application is due to be submitted in April 2028

2. The pre-application service offer

- **The service tier requested by the applicant, including justification**

The applicant's preferred option for the pre-application service is standard tier. The Inspectorate agreed with this selection and advised that the applicant should consider whether any of the supplementary components would be beneficial.

The standard tier allows for up to six pre-application meetings; the applicant was advised to consider at which points in its pre-application Programme these meetings should be held and to clearly identify key issues so that the Inspectorate can provide detailed advice on these matters.

3. Practical Arrangements

- **Confirming the pre-application tier service and invoicing**

A letter confirming the standard tier for the pre-application service shall be sent to the applicant, including an invoice for this service.

The Inspectorate advised that draft documents submitted for review should avoid the month of December for resourcing purposes.

The applicant shall confirm in writing when the project page should be published.

The applicant asked about the potential impact of local government reorganisation. The Inspectorate does not have any specific advice on this matter at this time, however it does advise the applicant to work with local authorities to determine potential impacts on the pre-application programme.

The Inspectorate advised that the applicant should consider how any planning performance agreements with local authorities would transfer over to new organisations.

The applicant advised that it shall publish the project document once it has received feedback from the Inspectorate.

- **Project email account**

The applicant confirmed that personal email addresses should not be used for this purpose.