

Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026

Council Statement CS19 (CD 25.67)

Council Response to MF7 (Water Resources)

May 2014

Introduction

MF7 Water Availability

The Swindon Water Cycle Study (Document CD8.36) states (paragraph 4.1.4) that the uncertainties about the availability of water for Swindon are not material considerations for the Local Plan and that Thames Water and the Environment Agency consider the demand for water to 2026 can be met with a combination of demand management measures and planned water resource infrastructure schemes.

What are these measures and schemes? Are they affordable, deliverable within the plan period and by whom?

Council Response

1. Water resources in the Swindon Area are primarily the responsibility of Thames Water Utilities Ltd (TWUL). Swindon is part of the Swindon and Oxford Resource Zone (SWOX-WRZ). Every five years, water companies in England and Wales are required to produce a Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP). TWUL published their revised draft WRMP14 covering the 25-year period from 2015 to 2040 in December 2013 [CD8.42]. The revised draft Plan includes amendments as a result of representations received to the public consultation on the draft Plan and updated and new information.
2. The previous WRMP for the period 2010-2035 (WRMP09) was subject to a public inquiry in the summer of 2010, largely in relation to the issue of the planned Upper Thames Resource Proposal at Abingdon (the "Abingdon Reservoir"). Following publication of the Planning Inspector's recommendations, and consultation with the Environment Agency and stakeholders, in May 2011 Defra issued instructions on the amendments needed to be made to the draft WRMP09 such that it met the minimum requirements recommended by the Planning Inspector. This was completed and the WRMP09 was subsequently approved by Defra in July 2012. Defra also identified which of the Inspector's recommendations needed to be addressed as part of WRMP14.
3. The water resources programme from 2010 to 2015 (AMP5) was agreed with Ofwat as a part of the Price Review process undertaken in 2009 (PR09). AMP5 included a number of demand and supply side measures to ensure continuation of supply in the short-term. These included leakage reduction, optant and progressive metering, water efficiency customer engagement and removal of constraints on water resource developments. TWUL are on track to maintain supply security to 2015 as set out in Section 2 of WRMP14. By 2015 the balance of supply is forecast to be positive by 27 ml/d for the SWOX area (Table 2-6 of WRMP14).
4. For WRMP TWUL calculate a baseline demand for each water resource zone, factoring in a number of components, such as population increase, personal water usage climate change and water efficiency measures such as domestic appliance design and building regulations. TWUL use the latest local authority planned growth in dwellings as the baseline for population and dwelling growth. In ensuring supply exceeds demand TWUL also assess uncertainty and risk and build in "headroom" into the forecasts to take account of this.

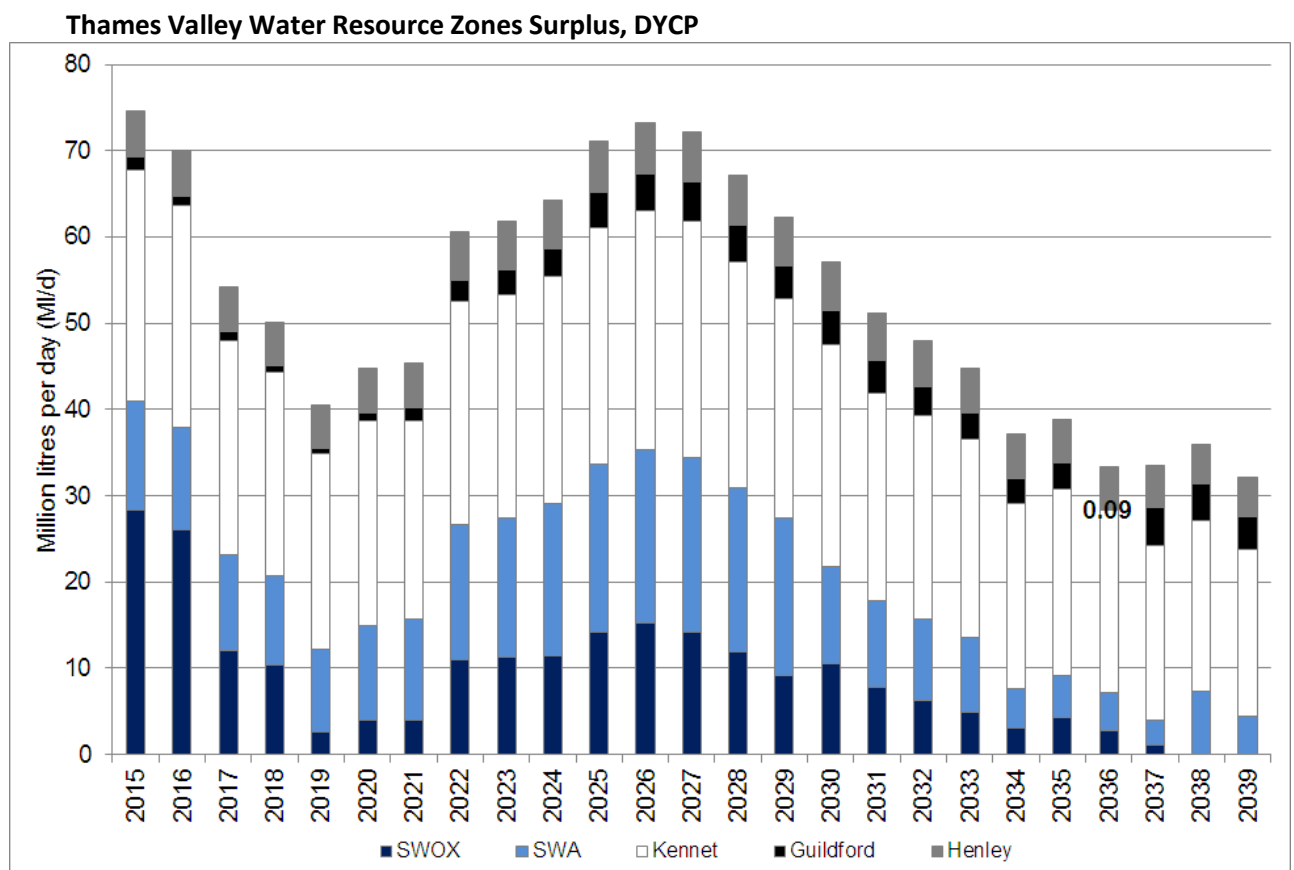
5. For the Swindon and Oxfordshire WRZ, TWUL predict a deficit on a dry year critical period growing from 0 MI/d in 2020 to -33 MI/d by 2040. (Table 6-2 of WRMP14)
6. To meet this deficit, WRMP14 proposes a similar package of measures for the period 2015 to 2040 as for 2010-15 to enable security of supply. The key features of the preferred plan are:

Short-term (2015-2020)

- Promotion of water efficiency activity to help customers use water wisely and promote behavioural change that will stem the underlying increase in water use in the baseline forecast. TWUL also propose to undertake trials of innovative tariffs to inform the planned roll out across the water supply area commencing in 2022/23.

Medium to Long-term (2020-2040)

- Start rollout of 'full' meter penetration of household customers from 2020. Install 82,531 progressive household meters in the period 2020-30. Achieve total SWOX household meter penetration of 92.7% by 2030. TWUL propose to use smart meter technology as this gives the best ratio of cost to benefit.
- Rollout innovative tariffs during 2020-2025 to promote water efficiency.
- Transfer from Slough/Wycombe/Aylesbury (SWA) WRZ



7. The figure above reproduced from WRMP14 (figure 9-8) shows that TWUL preferred plan will deliver a surplus of supply for the rest of the period to 2038.

8. TWUL have appraised the costs of their Preferred Plan. The total cost would be £79m across the whole of the Thames Valley area which includes SWOX and four other water resource zones. These costs will be borne by TWUL. Resources for SWOX are not dependent on any individual resource scheme above that identified in AMP5.
9. TWUL are currently awaiting the Secretary of State's decision on the next steps for the plan, ie approval, amendments or further public scrutiny. Ultimately, TWUL will have to ensure supply of water resources is at least in line with future demand forecasts, taking into account environmental constraints.
10. Over the next 5 years TWL intend to undertake detailed studies to examine the longer term large water resource options to ensure the best 'value' solution is selected in time for WRMP19. These studies will cover the following areas:
 - Wastewater re-use
 - Reservoir storage
 - Transfers, including potential third party water supply options

Local Demand Measures

11. As discussed in Issue 6, the Council is proposing the adoption of the Code for Sustainable Homes (CSH) as part of Policy DE2, however this is subject to the Government's recent announcement to progress a Building Regulations only approach for new dwellings, and limit the ability of local authorities to introduce higher standards through mechanisms such as the CSH. The CSH includes water efficiency. This sets a maximum consumption of potable water of 80 litres/person/day for Code level 5/6.