

Castlehill Aquagreen:

A summary of findings from the consultation December 2020

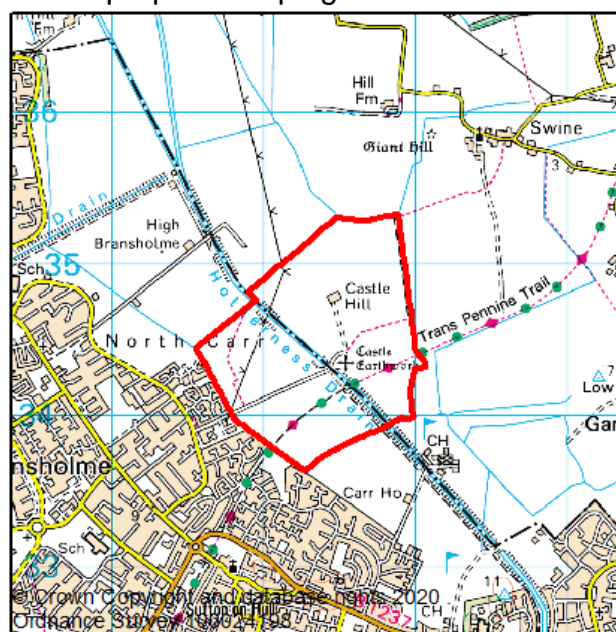
Background to the scheme

As part of the Holderness Drain Flood Alleviation Scheme, the Environment Agency has been developing proposals for an aquagreen (flood storage area) on land at Castlehill. This aims to reduce flood risk for homes and businesses in the Holderness Drain catchment, mainly in the North Carr and Sutton areas of Hull. It will involve building a new drain and low embankment on the site to create an area where excess water can be stored during a flood. It can then be released slowly back into the drainage system, after the peak of the flood has passed.

Under normal conditions the aquagreen will function as a greenspace, providing new habitats for wildlife and recreational space for people. Designs for the site include new areas of woodland, meadow, scrub and reed bed, a network of footpaths, seating and ponds. More information about the proposals, including a plan showing all the proposed features for the scheme, can be found at:

<https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/yorkshire/holderness-drain-castle-hill-consultation/>

Fig 1: Location of the proposed aquagreen with boundaries marked in red



The Public Consultation

At the end of August 2020 we carried out a public consultation to find out the views of stakeholders on the proposed aquagreen. The consultation period ran from 24th August to 28th September 2020.

Over 1,350 households on the eastern side of Hull were sent information about the proposals by post: this included two newsletters, a map and a feedback form. A 'Citizen Space' project website was also launched to provide information online and enable web based responses. In total 119 responses were received: 83 postal and 36 online. Most of these were from individuals, with comments received from three organisations.

The consultation asked four key questions:

- What features do you like about the scheme?
- Are there any features you don't like?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the design?
- Do you support this proposal?

Findings:

The majority of respondents (80 of the 119) were supportive of the scheme whilst 30 people were not. Of these, 21 were uncertain about it and only a small number (9) did not support it.

What people liked and disliked

The most popular features in the proposed design included:

- New habitats created for wildlife (84%)
- Motorbike barriers along some paths (76%)
- More greenspace for recreation (73%)
- Improvements to the site of the Castle Hill monument (72%)
- A network of footpaths and bridleways around the site (71%)

The least popular feature was the proposed new access point from the Bransholme estate (45%).

The main issues raised in connection with the scheme included:

- Illegal motorbikes and antisocial behaviour happening on the site already but potentially exacerbated by the scheme (45 consultees) ;
- The proposed new footbridge could potentially increase traffic and parking issues in the area and attract more antisocial behaviour (16 consultees)
- How the site will be maintained once built (10 consultees);

- Security issues for some residents if Sutton Cross Drain is filled in (10 consultees);
- Height of the new embankment resulting in loss of views and privacy (8 consultees).

In conclusion, it is clear from all the additional comments made by respondents that there is strong support for the scheme and considerable enthusiasm for the opportunity to create new greenspace on the site. Benefits to both wildlife and people are seen as good reasons for doing so. However, this is tempered by the awareness of existing problems, particularly those of illegal motorbikes and antisocial behaviour, the issue of future maintenance and the potential impact of a new access point to the site. A small number of consultees do not support the scheme and do not want it built for these reasons.

How we have used the information from this consultation

After reviewing all the feedback from the consultation, we have made changes to the design of the scheme as follows:

Access for motorbikes will be restricted at the main entrances to the site, using a variety of methods. We propose to install barriers in certain key locations, including near to the Castle Hill monument. At the same time we want to make it possible for wheelchair users to visit the site and so need to design entrances to enable them to access it.

Antisocial behaviour: We want to minimise opportunities for antisocial behaviour on the site. This includes keeping the number of access points to a minimum and locating paths so that they avoid the edges of the site, where possible. We won't include fencing, lighting, CCTV, wooden seating or other features that could be easily vandalised.

A new footbridge: We have decided we will not install a new footbridge to the site from Bransholme as this was not a popular suggestion;

Other facilities for visitors: We will not provide parking or other facilities that would encourage additional traffic into the area.

Sutton Cross Drain: the existing Sutton Cross Drain will remain in situ; we have no plans to remove it and it will not be filled in.

A new embankment: We are reviewing the design of the new embankment to reduce possible impacts on privacy and security for property owners living near to it. There won't be a footpath along the top of it, for the same reason.

Maintenance of the site: The design of the scheme has been changed to minimise the need for maintenance after it is built, but also to ensure the site can be adapted to include new features as it develops over time. In addition, we are working with Hull City Council and East Riding of Yorkshire Council to investigate possible funding sources for maintenance.

You can read a more detailed description of these changes in the full report, which can be downloaded from the Holderness Drain website:

<https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/yorkshire/holderness-drain-castle-hill-consultation/>

What happens next?

Following this consultation, we will finalise our designs for the aquagreen and then submit a planning application to both Hull City Council and East Riding of York Council in 2021. This will offer another chance for residents and other stakeholders to view and comment on the proposals, via the local authorities' online planning portals. We also intend to hold a virtual public meeting in the first quarter of 2021 using Zoom and will update the Castlehill aquagreen webpage to provide information about this.

Any Questions?

If you have any questions about these proposals, please email us at HoldernessdrainFAS@environment-agency.gov.uk

Partners and Funding Providers

This scheme is a partnership project, led by the Environment Agency and supported by Hull City Council, East Riding of Yorkshire Council, Highways England and the Humber Local Enterprise Partnership's Local Growth Fund Programme.

