



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Sean Woodward
Fareham Borough Council
Civic Offices
Civic Way
Fareham
PO16 7AZ

OFFICE OF THE
EXECUTIVE LEADER

26 JUL 2019

Kit Malthouse MP
Minister of State for Housing

**Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local
Government**

Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF
Tel: 0303 444 3430
Email: kit.malthouse@communities.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/mhclg

Our Ref: 4317816

23 July 2019

Dear Sean,

Thank you for your letter of 28 June to the Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP on behalf all members of the Partnership for South Hampshire (PUSH) about delays to housing development due to the impact of nutrient deposition on designated environmental sites. I am responding as the Minister of State for Housing.

This is an important issue and I am aware of the concern that it is causing across the South Hampshire area. I understand that nutrient deposition affecting the Solent has been an issue for many years, but that the current situation follows recent European Court of Justice cases that have effectively 'raised the bar' for new development in terms of showing it will not cause additional harm. As a result, Natural England have been advising a cautionary approach to granting permission for new housing so that this case law can be complied with, in effect meaning that new development has to show that it will be 'nutrient neutral'. I can see the practical difficulties that this must be posing, especially for small builders.

My officials have had, and will continue to have urgent discussions with Natural England. I was pleased to hear that they issued an updated version of their methodology to local planning authorities and developers on 24 June. Their method for demonstrating 'nutrient neutrality', coupled with the work being undertaken locally on strategic habitat enhancement and the use of 'Grampian conditions' to allow building to start even where full offsetting is still being secured, provide important tools to allow development to continue.

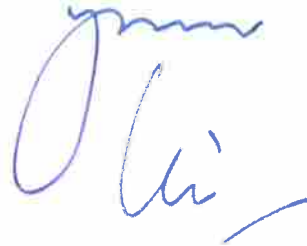
I appreciate the considerable effort that your own councils are putting into this work, but agree that we need to find effective medium-term solutions. I also agree that new development appears to be suffering a disproportionate impact as a result of this problem, so we need to take a wider approach to solving it. We will continue to monitor the impact of the Housing Delivery Test by engaging with those local authorities that are facing challenges, as it is vital that homes are built with the support of communities as part of a plan-led system.

A strategic solution is needed on two fronts – one on the point source of nitrates from housing development via waste water and the other on tackling diffuse sources of pollution, such as from agricultural practices, which as you say, contributes by far the greatest amount of nitrate input into the Solent. Natural England will continue to work with the agricultural sector to reduce loss of nutrients through their Catchment Sensitive Farming programme and my officials will have further discussions with both Natural England and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. There are also potential synergies with the Government's work on a new system of

environmental land management and the promotion of biodiversity net gain, so we must look at this in the round.

I am aware that there have been similar environments in England affected by nutrient deposits where mitigation has been put in place to allow development to proceed. I am confident that with Natural England's support, local authorities will be able to find a pragmatic way forward in the short term, while we work on wider solutions. In the meantime, my officials would be happy to meet with members of PUSH to discuss the issues raised in your letter.

Thank you again for your letter.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kit Malthouse', with a stylized flourish at the end.

KIT MALTHOUSE MP