

**Hampshire Chamber of Commerce**

**Planning and Transport Business Strategy Group**

**Policy paper**

**February 2020**

**Subject: Nitrates**

**Issue**

A slowdown in housebuilding in the Solent area has occurred over the past 2 years owing to planning issues arising from the pollution of coastal waters caused by nitrates and other chemicals.

In August 2018 Natural England, the government's adviser for the natural environment in England, sent advice to all local authorities setting out guidelines about nitrate levels for new development sites. They advised such developments must achieve nitrate neutrality to ensure nitrate pollution is not made any worse through additional pressures on existing water environments by an increase in housing and associated populations.

Natural England provided minimal guidance on how solutions could be achieved and local planning authorities must only grant consents that try to comply with this advice or face the possibility of legal challenge. Local authorities are now developing various new mitigating solutions to achieve nitrate neutrality from proposed developments. These can range from reducing nitrate production in new housing, retrofitting existing housing with better toilets and water use systems, charging tariffs on developments (to plant trees, create country parks etc), to taking agricultural land out of production. These mitigating factors have yet to be accepted in any planning applications and Planning Inspector Inquiries, causing a mounting backlog of developments.

**Considerations**

This is a national issue.

There are concerns about continued development, associated infrastructure provision and population growth adversely affecting the local environment and public health through nitrate pollution and other impacts.

The agricultural industry should not be disproportionately or adversely affected by any mitigating solutions.

The issue covers commercial and residential developments.

**Group policy position**

Hampshire (and in particular the Solent area) requires a large amount of housing and commercial space for an expanding workforce to continue with the area's economic development. This should not be compromised by the nitrates issue.

We recognise the environmental effects of development need to be considered and mitigated and that nitrate levels in all housing and commercial development need to be reduced.

We call upon clear Government guidance to be produced immediately for all local authorities to work with. We want the British Chamber of Commerce to lobby local MPs and Government on this issue as a matter of urgency.

We call upon all local authorities to adopt co-ordinated and accepted standards of nitrates mitigation for all planning permission applications.

We support continued efforts in the agricultural sector to reduce the use of nitrates and other chemicals in their production processes.

Produced by Mark Miller, Chair

17 February 2020