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### [Position statement on the effects of new residential development upon the Solent](#)

The potential effects of new residential development in South Hampshire upon the Solent have been widely reported in the media.

The following statement sets out the areas of concern and how Fareham Borough Council is addressing the issues raised.

#### [The importance of the Solent for wildlife](#)

The Solent is internationally important for its wildlife. Each winter, it hosts over 90,000 waders and wildfowl including 10 per cent of the global population of Brent geese. These birds come from as far as Siberia to feed and roost before returning to their summer habitats to breed.

There are also plants, habitats and other animals within the Solent which are of both national and international importance.

In light of their importance, areas within the Solent have been specially designated under UK/ European law. Amongst the most significant designations are Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). These are often referred to as Protected Sites' (PS).

When deciding planning applications a legal duty is placed on the Council to consider whether any impacts from new developments are likely to have a significant effect upon these PS.

This process is known as a Habitat Regulations Assessment.

#### [What is a Habitats Regulations Assessment \(HRA\)?](#)

This is a formal process to assess the implications of any planning proposals that are likely to have a significant effect upon Protected Sites. The assessment is undertaken by councils before any planning decision is made.

The first stage of the HRA process involves formally screening a planning proposal to decide whether or not it will have a likely significant effect upon a PS.

Where a likely significant effect cannot be excluded, the Council is required to assess the effects in detail through an Appropriate Assessment. This Assessment is to establish whether an adverse

effect on a PS can be ruled out or addressed through mitigation.

After the Council has undertaken an Appropriate Assessment, it must consult with Natural England on the Appropriate Assessment it has undertaken.

### What is Natural England's role?

Natural England is the Government's statutory advisor for nature conservation.

The Council is required to consult with Natural England on the Appropriate Assessments it undertakes and to subsequently have regard for any comments it may have.

In February 2019, Natural England updated its advice to local councils to reflect recent European case law and now recommends an Appropriate Assessment is undertaken within the Borough of Fareham for every application for new dwellings.


Natural England has highlighted that increased levels of nitrates entering The Solent (because of increased amounts of wastewater from new dwellings) is likely to have a significant effect upon PS. This is because increased nitrates in the water can cause increased growth of plants and algae which, in turn affects oxygen and light levels within the water, thus affecting other species and habitats.


Natural England further advises that the effects of emissions from increased traffic along roads within 200 metres of PS also has the potential to cause a likely significant effect.

### What has been the implication of the Natural England advice?

All applications for new housing within the Borough (from a single house upwards) will require a Habitat Regulations Assessment.

Some existing land uses (for example intensive agricultural uses) result in high levels of nitrates entering into ground water/water courses which, in turn, lead to The Solent. In these instances, some developers will be able to demonstrate that their proposals will not increase the level of nitrates leaving the site. This means they will pass the Appropriate Assessment.


Natural England have produced a methodology to enable an assessment of nitrate neutrality for new development. [The most recent methodology can be accessed here.](#)  (2 MB)

There is also a [new method calculator](#) which developers can choose to use along with the [non-technical summary](#)  (560 KB).

Where developers are not able to demonstrate that their proposals maintain or reduce the levels of nitrates leaving their site, mitigation measures will need to be identified.

### How is Fareham Borough Council resolving this problem?

The Council has worked hard to find a resolution as, by carrying out its legal duties in one area, namely in considering the effects of proposed developments upon Protected Sites, it is failing in another, which is to make provision for new housing within the Borough in line with the amount specified by the Government.

The potential impact upon The Solent is an issue which involves a number of councils within South Hampshire. All of the affected councils, including Fareham, are members of the [Partnership for Urban South Hampshire](#)  (PUSH), a Partnership which seeks to resolve issues through local authorities working together with other relevant statutory bodies.

A number of mitigation schemes are now coming forward, where mitigation is being achieved by taking land out of agricultural use and putting the land to alternative uses including re-wilding and tree planting.

Fareham Borough Council commissioned consultants to assess whether the effects of emissions from increased traffic along roads within 200 metres of Protected Sites, will have a likely significant effect upon Protected Sites. This work has been completed and you can [read the full report here](#)

 (14 MB).

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