



# Position Statement

## Nitrates in the Stour

November 2020

Nutrients, including phosphates, entering the water system from a variety of sources, are understood to be causing eutrophication in certain waterbodies within the Stour region.

Natural England has issued advice to Local Planning Authorities on achieving nutrient-neutral development in the Stour region to reduce the impact of additional nutrients, in particular phosphorous, arising from new homes.

The Environment Agency (EA) is the water industry's environmental regulator and defines the environmental permits and associated effluent discharge standards that water companies are required to meet from their Wastewater Treatment Works (WWTWs). Where there is capacity to take extra wastewater flows from new development within existing permit limits, the EA considers the development would be acceptable. Southern Water operates within the regulatory parameters of the water industry, in which permit levels and standards are set and monitored by the EA.

The EA works with water companies and other environmental bodies such as Natural England, to develop the Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP) which includes schemes and investigations to protect and enhance the environment. Many of these schemes will require permit standards from WWTWs to be improved. The latest dataset, issued in March 2020, can be [downloaded from Natural England](#).

In July 2020, Natural England issued '[Advice on Nutrient Neutrality for New Development in the Stour Catchment in Relation to Stodmarsh Designated Sites - For Local Planning Authorities](#)' a Technical Guidance Note on Wastewater treatment capacity for new development in the Stour Area which can be found online. Page 29 includes a decision tree on nutrient assessment methodology for developing land. Natural England can also provide further advice on how to calculate these which is a chargeable service. This report confirms in Table A 1.2 WWTW with planned phosphate permit updates due in 2024. No further investment is needed to treat wastewater to tighter, or new, phosphorous or nitrogen limits in the Stour area at this point in time however the WINEP investigation into the Stodmarsh lakes due to report by 31st March 2022 may indicate if future improvements in effluent quality are required.

Significant investment is usually required to introduce or increase nutrient removal at a WWTW, and this would be funded through the Business Plan for delivery in the period April 2025 to March 2030, which requires the approval of Ofwat, our economic regulator. The justification for this cost would need to come through the regulatory process outlined above and would be included in the WINEP. It is unlikely any improvements required could be delivered before March 2030.

Mitigation options for WWTWs are included in the Natural England Advice document.