

Following Natural England's introduction of the obligation for new developments in the Solent Region to achieve nutrient neutrality, and after more than twelve months of consultations with Natural England, the Environment Agency, DEFRA and numerous Local Planning Authorities - including Havant BC, the Warnford Park Estate, signed the first S106/33 "Mitigation" Agreement with Fareham BC in April 2021. This Agreement enables the delivery of Nitrate Credits (off-setting) to developers in Fareham Borough who cannot achieve nutrient neutrality on their sites. Subsequently, a similar Agreement was entered into with Gosport BC and it is now proposed to complete an Agreement with Havant BC to enable the delivery of Nitrate Credits to development schemes within its own administrative boundary.

The Estate is situated adjacent to Warnford village and has a considerable length of the River Meon flowing through its grounds. The scheme operates on an "on-demand" basis and involves the cessation of agricultural use on designated areas of the Estate and the giving over of the land to low density woodland in perpetuity. This process results in the reduction of nitrates on the land and as a consequence, the River Meon to which the land drains, carries fewer nitrates into the Solent. The scheme also achieves considerable environmental and ecological enhancements. The scheme has the full support of Natural England and is transparent and auditable by the LPA concerned. In addition, the scheme is independently monitored by the South Downs National Park Authority - who are signatories to the Agreement in their capacity as the validation and enforcement authority.

The scheme is of a strategic scale having been authorized to provide in excess of 3,000 Nitrate Credits in its first phase. The scheme can serve developments draining to Budds Farm Waste Water Treatment Works (which serves most of Havant Borough) and as Budds Farm currently operates near the current technological limits of nitrate removal from waste water, the need for off-set schemes in the Borough, such as Warnford Park Estate, is likely to persist for many years into the future. The scheme has a proven track record of success and will provide a valuable resource to enable important developments in the Borough to achieve nutrient neutrality in a way that also results in environmental and ecological betterment.

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