

Deputation on Nitrate neutrality for meeting of Planning policy committee 4th July 2023

The Borough has a clear need for housing for residents. The Dutch case means the increase in nitrates due to increased overnight accommodation must be mitigated against and the amount of mitigation required increases when brownfield sites are developed.

The solution offered is to enter into a legal agreement with Warnford Park to reserve 3000 nitrate credits. The concern is this agreement will be used by developers to build on greenfield sites.

Can the nitrate credits be reserved for the development of brownfield sites? How many affordable homes have been built in Havant in the past two years compared to the total number of units? Our Council needs affordable housing on brownfield sites to be developed. Are there mechanisms available to reserve nitrate mitigation schemes for brownfield sites?

There are questions as yet unanswered about the efficacy of this scheme.

1. How long is the time between the land being taken out of agricultural production to having a positive impact on nitrate levels? This site is located in the South Downs where it is known that there is a long time for water to percolate through the chalk. Are there any available case studies to refer to examine the evidence for how well this method of nitrate mitigation will work in time to reduce the nitrates from homes? Nitrates from homes will have no time gap before going into the harbour so cannot be built until the scheme is shown to be working without causing further damage to the harbours.
2. Has there been any research to find out the length of the time for a positive impact?
3. If not, who is going to pay for this to be done and when will it be done?
4. Is it wise to enter into a legal agreement with Warnford Park without this information?

How confident can we be that this scheme will deliver the affordable homes that are needed by our residents?

There is a threat that the Government will remove the legal obligation to mitigate against the impact of nitrates. If this is the case, will Havant Borough Council continue to seek nitrate mitigation schemes given the extremely special nature of Chichester and Langstone harbours?

Cllr Rason