



**Anthony Browne MP**

Member of Parliament for South Cambridgeshire  
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Tel: 0207 219 8089

Cllr Bridget Smith  
Leader  
South Cambridgeshire District Council  
*By email only to [cldr.bridgetsmith@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:cldr.bridgetsmith@scambs.gov.uk)*

13<sup>th</sup> December 2021

Dear Bridget,

**Local Plan ‘First Proposals’**

As the public consultation on the First Proposals for the next Local Plan draws to a close, I am writing to restate my concerns about the damaging impact of your administration’s proposal to build 49,000 new houses and flats in Greater Cambridge.

We have already seen serious harm to our region’s chalk streams and the wildlife they support, due to over-abstraction from our chalk aquifer. This is a direct consequence of the high levels of development we have experienced in recent years.

The Environment Agency has now classed the Cambridge Water area as ‘seriously water-stressed’. In November 2020, Stantec’s ‘Integrated Water Management Study’ concluded that your administration’s proposed housebuilding numbers for the next 20 years (a ‘medium’ growth scenario) would need *‘regional scale water supply solutions [that] are operational by the mid-2030s, and suitable interim measures’* but that there is *‘a high uncertainty associated with the interim measures’*.

Against this backdrop, I am alarmed to see your First Proposals confirm plans to build 49,000 new homes in Greater Cambridge over the next 20 years. In South Cambridgeshire, this represents 53% more new homes than the Government suggests are needed. These extra homes will create a huge additional demand for water, but there is no confirmed plan in place for how this increased demand will be met. This an inherently risky and unsustainable approach to planning.

Cambridge Water is looking at bringing forward a new reservoir to serve South Cambridgeshire, but this has not been confirmed and the timescale for its delivery is unknown. It would most likely not be operational until the end of the next local plan period in 2040. In the meantime, interim measures will not be capable of meeting the increased water demand that would be generated by your administration’s house building proposals, without causing huge – and quite possibly irreparable – further damage to our region’s chalk waterways.

Solving our water problems will require a coordinated effort and commitment at national, regional and local level. It is a very complex task, requiring significant time and investment. Until we can be certain that a sustainable water supply can be provided, it is essential that there are strict controls on the level of development.

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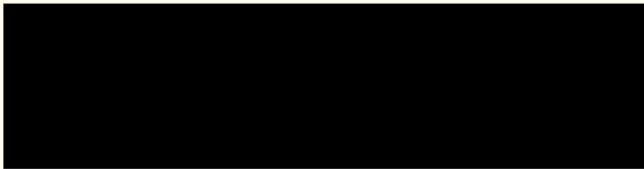
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At this critical juncture, **controlling the level of housebuilding is the single most important step that your administration can take to save our chalk streams and secure a sustainable water supply**. I would therefore urge your administration to:

- reduce its housebuilding target in the Local Plan to (at most) the Government's standard method figure; and
- work with me and others to make the case to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities for a downward adjustment of the standard method figure for Greater Cambridge, until such time as a comprehensive plan to protect the chalk aquifer is delivered by Cambridge Water and the Government.

Yours sincerely



Anthony Browne MP

cc. Stephen Kelly, Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development

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