



Northstowe is expected to eventually comprise up to 10,000 homes, with an anticipated population of 24,400. Photograph: Northstowe

Controversial new town could damage chalk streams, warns EA

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The Environment Agency (EA) has warned that proposals to build 4,000 homes as part of the controversial Oxford-Cambridge development arc could “increase the pressure on a system that is already failing environmental targets”.

Plans to create the new town of Northstowe have been in development since 2003, and is expected to eventually comprise up to 10,000 homes, with an anticipated population of 24,400.



In May this year, Homes England submitted outline planning applications for the final elements of Northstowe - Phase 3A and 3B - to South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC). Phase 3A is a proposal for up to 4,000 new homes, a local centre and two new primary schools. Phase B is for a further 1,000 homes.

A public consultation on the application closed in July but in a letter seen by ENDS from the EA said water firm Anglian Water Services would need to supply the new development from within its existing licensed quantities because the catchment is closed to any new water being licensed “for any consumptive purpose”.

In the letter, which was sent to local environmentalist Monca Hone and dated 7 August, the regulator said that current levels of abstraction are already causing environmental damage.

“We recommend any proposed development considers water resources as a key issue and the council recognises the damage of long term increases in abstraction due to growth,” it said.

The EA added that Anglian Water’s river basin management plan showed many water bodies “did not have the flow required to support the ecology and groundwater units not meeting good status”.

“Given the pressure the chalk aquifer faces, we cannot rule out future further reductions in the supplies available to water companies to prevent deterioration of the water-related ecology. The council should seek the water



It was originally proposed that Northstowe would be "an exemplar of sustainability in the use of renewable energy resources and reducing carbon emissions". But in 2008 the then housing minister Yvette Cooper told parliament that Northstowe had not been adopted as an eco-town because the 2007 planning application submitted "predate[s] the eco-towns programme", and because it would not be zero-carbon.

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