



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Greg Clark MP  
Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities  
Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities  
2 Marsham Street  
London, SW1P 4DF

Reference No. HW40856

8 August 2022

Dear Greg

Many congratulations on your appointment as Secretary of State.

**I am writing to ask you to look into making water companies statutory consultees in the planning process.**

Over the past 12 months I have been working with Southern Water, Kent County Council and local councillors to improve the wastewater network in Faversham.

While there has been an improvement recently thanks to the joint efforts of Southern Water and Kent County Council clearing blocked drains and so on, it looks like there may be an underlying problem with the capacity of the network, especially with significant new housing being built in and around the town.

Faversham could be in line for thousands of new homes as part of Swale Borough Council's new Local Plan. While final allocations have yet to be confirmed, some proposals would see Faversham and the surrounding villages have to build around 4,000 new homes.

Water companies are often consulted as part of large developments, but they are not statutory consultees in the way that highways authorities are for new housing. This means that while water companies have knowledge and expertise on existing problems in the network and capacity issues, local councils are under no obligation to listen to them.

**I recently met representatives from Southern Water and local councillors, who agreed that giving water companies statutory consultee status for housing developments would be a welcome step.**

I know that Southern Water is working on a major modelling project and the data from this should be ready to present in the autumn. This information will be extremely helpful for local planners and in discussions with the Planning Inspectorate about the capacity of new homes in any given area. However, they cannot be confident that it will be truly taken account of.

I appreciate that any major changes to the planning system would need to be approved by the next Prime Minister, but preparatory work could be commissioned now to get the process underway.

The change I am proposing would not only benefit my constituents, but many other people across the country – and make our planning system more responsive to local needs and concerns.

I look forward to hearing from you.



**Helen Whately MP**  
Member of Parliament for Faversham and Mid Kent