



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Steve Reed OBE MP
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Reference No. HW70565

17 March 2026

Dear Steve

I would like to thank Baroness Taylor of Stevenage for replying to my letter of 2 February to you calling on the Government to significantly reduce the housing numbers for the two planning authorities that cover my constituency due to the lack of water.

Baroness Taylor outlined various actions the Government is taking to ensure a resilient water supply. Since then, it has been brought to my attention that South East Water has sent the attached letter to Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (which borders my constituency) saying:

From our review of the latest housing forecast figures, which have been increased to meet government targets and provided to us by local authorities within our supply area, we have identified that we cannot accommodate additional growth beyond what was assumed in our Water Resources Management Plan 2024 (WRMP24) in areas where we do not have a supply-demand surplus.

Specifically, in the Tonbridge and Malling area, where we currently lack available headroom in our supplies, we would be unable to accommodate any growth exceeding our WRMP24 forecast assumptions throughout the entire planning period. This is because our WRMP24 was developed to balance supply and demand based solely on the growth forecasted and provided to us in recent years.

This highlights a major contradiction between the Government's assurances and the opinion of water companies on the ground. There will be serious consequences if houses are built and there is not enough water to meet demand. South East Water are already transporting water from the South West in lorries for customers in my constituency and the recent outages caused wide-spread misery.

Until the Government can guarantee a sufficient water supply for any significant increases in population I call on you to significantly reduce the housing numbers for Maidstone and Swale (the two planning authorities that cover my constituency) and refuse the Highsted Park development of 8,400 houses when it crosses your desk in the early summer.

I would also like to reiterate my invitation to you to visit my constituency. I would like you to meet residents who suffered during the recent water outages and hear from local representatives about their serious concerns about water contamination and shortages.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Helen Whately', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Helen Whately MP
Member of Parliament for Faversham and Mid Kent