



Department
for Environment,
Food & Rural Affairs

Emma Hardy MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

T: +44 (0) 3459 335577
E: correspondence.section@defra.gov.uk
W: gov.uk/defra

22 May 2026

Dear LPA,

I am writing to draw your attention to an important change in how Anglian Water will engage with planning applications across its operational region, following intervention from Defra's Water Delivery Taskforce.

This Government is clear that water and wastewater infrastructure must support, not block, the delivery of sustainable housing and economic growth. Where water constraints risk delaying development, our priority is to ensure that planning processes focus on how to enable growth in practice, rather than allowing default positions to stall it. Defra's Water Delivery Taskforce was set up for this purpose and, in its first year, has helped unblock over 40,000 homes and £250m of investment while supporting the creation of over 3,000 jobs.

Against this background, and following continued engagement with Government partners, Anglian Water has changed how it engages on large planning applications. In particular, it is moving away from a default position of objecting to developments of 500 or more homes. Anglian Water will now take a presumptively supportive approach where there is clear Local Planning Authority (LPA) support and continued funding in future water industry investment periods, recognising that many large sites will be built out over more than one such period and may require phased solutions. Where these conditions are met, Anglian Water will focus its engagement on how development can be enabled in practice. This includes considering appropriate phasing, drainage strategies, and alignment with future upgrade plans.

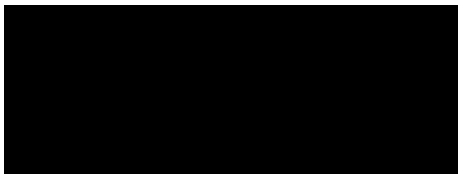
Anglian Water has adopted this change pragmatically, focusing on the largest and most constrained sites, where previous default objections had the greatest impact on delivery. For developments below 500 homes, Anglian Water will continue to engage through existing business-as-usual planning processes. I strongly encourage you to work closely with Anglian Water, particularly on large or complex sites at planning, pre-application, or outline stages, where early clarity can help identify realistic delivery and phasing solutions. I recognise the central role LPAs play in supporting growth and providing certainty to communities and developers. This change is intended to reduce delays caused by default objections, while continuing to ensure that environmental and infrastructure risks are properly managed. This approach will also give greater confidence that large developments can progress where there is local support and a viable route to infrastructure provision over time. Anglian Water intends to issue a follow-up guidance note to LPAs setting out in more detail how this strategic site process will operate in practice.

More broadly, Government continues to work with regulators and water companies to address barriers where water needs are constraining growth. We remain open to hearing from LPAs where issues cannot be resolved through normal engagement, and stand ready to use the Water Delivery Taskforce to help you deliver essential housing and industry. I hope this letter provides clarity on Anglian Water's approach and reassurance that water should not be a default barrier to sustainable growth.

We are currently developing a coordinated communications approach on this issue, which we expect to roll out in early June. To support a clear and consistent message across all parties, please do not make any public comment until we have confirmed the approach and timings with you.

Yours sincerely,

Minister Hardy



EMMA HARDY MP

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs