

Failure to Demonstrate Adequate Water Infrastructure

The Secretary of State for Housing, Steve Reed, has recently confirmed (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cn8k2n500zeo>) that “we cannot have a new home built if you turn on the tap and nothing comes out” and that new homes “will not be built” unless the infrastructure required to supply them with water is already in place. This is a clear and authoritative statement of national policy intent.

Given repeated drinking-water supply failures across Kent and Sussex, and ongoing concerns raised by MPs regarding the ability of water companies to meet existing demand, it is evident that the current network is already under severe strain. Indeed, throughout this area, in recent water bills every one of us in South Godstone has been told by SES Water that “We live in an area that has been classed by the Environment Agency as ‘seriously water stressed’”.

No evidence has been provided within this application to demonstrate:

- that the local water network has sufficient headroom to accommodate the proposed development;
- that the statutory undertaker has confirmed capacity for potable water supply and wastewater disposal; or
- that funded, deliverable upgrades are programmed and guaranteed before occupation.

In the absence of such evidence, the proposal is contrary to the Secretary of State’s stated position and fails to meet the basic requirement that essential infrastructure must be secured in advance of housebuilding. In fact, the National Planning Policy Framework requires infrastructure to be planned and delivered in step with development.

The evolving Local Plan from TDC states that “Development . . . will [be] supported by infrastructure, delivered in step with growth”.

Approving this application would risk further service failures, undermine public confidence, risk public health and conflict with the Government’s commitment to ensuring water, energy and transport infrastructure is in place prior to development.

For these reasons, the application is premature and unsound. It should be refused until the applicant can demonstrate, with formal confirmation from the water companies, that adequate water supply and wastewater capacity exist and are fully funded, deliverable, and guaranteed.