# Landlord pulls out of four Norwich housing projects over nutrient neutrality disputes



Dan Trivedi, a landlord and property developer, has publicly voiced his frustration with Norwich City Council, claiming their handling of nutrient neutrality regulations has severely hampered housing development in the area. He has pulled out of four planned projects, citing bureaucratic inefficiencies and a lack of viable solutions to nutrient neutrality challenges. Trivedi described the council's system as a “cowboy system” and accused it of incompetently managing the nutrient neutrality regulations that now dictate development processes. This current approach has left several housing projects stranded, including one on Dereham Road and another at Garsett House on Princes Street, both of which have faced significant delays.

Nutrient neutrality, a concept introduced by the UK government in July 2022, requires that new developments must not exacerbate nutrient pollution in protected areas, such as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). As Trivedi pointed out, this effectively stalls housing projects unless developers can definitively prove that their projects will not add to the pollution burden. He argued that while some councils have found "workarounds" to bypass these restrictions, Norwich appears to be failing its developers and residents by pursuing ineffective strategies that fail to unlock housing potential.

The financial implications of these regulations are stark. Nutrient credits, needed for certain mitigation activities such as creating wetlands, can cost between £5,000 and £36,000 per dwelling—an expensive gamble with no guarantee of planning approval. In his assertions, Trivedi highlighted that millions in public funds are being wasted while local government indiscriminately slows down necessary housing growth. He has also expressed intentions to recover costs incurred due to these delays from the council.

Norwich City Council acknowledged the ongoing challenges developers face regarding nutrient neutrality. A spokesperson acknowledged this frustration, stating that they are keen to facilitate sustainable regeneration and more homes for local residents. They are reportedly collaborating with neighbouring councils to create a mechanism intended to allow developers to better address these nutrient neutrality requirements, although specifics remain vague.

The nutrient neutrality legislation has ignited a broader discussion about housing supply in the UK. Recent government proposals aim to amend the existing environmental regulations that have emerged from EU laws. Ministers are considering allowing developers to begin construction on housing projects that may lead to pollution, provided that they finalise mitigation measures before homes are sold. This proposed shift indicates a recognition of the urgent need to increase housing stock in the face of a chronic shortage, particularly amid the Labour party's ambition to build 1.5 million homes before the end of the current parliament.

However, while such changes may expedite housing projects, concerns linger regarding the adequacy of proposed mitigation schemes. Councils across England have expressed worry over the unpredictable nature of these offset schemes, with analyses revealing that up to 20,000 new homes could be delayed annually unless both developers and local authorities can establish effective pollution management strategies.

Adding to the urgency, the government recently announced a £47 million funding initiative to assist local authorities affected by nutrient neutrality regulations. This funding aims to foster the development of new wetlands and infrastructure improvements to mitigate nutrient pollution. Seven councils across England stand to benefit from this support, with the hope that it will unlock stalled housing projects while maintaining environmental protections, thereby striking a balance between development and ecological stewardship.

The Local Government Association has emphasised the importance of collaboration among government entities, developers, the agricultural sector, and water companies to swiftly address the nutrient neutrality dilemmas. They are advocating for a streamlined approach to dramatically reduce the challenges developers face and expedite the housing supply that is so desperately needed.

Overall, Trivedi's experience is emblematic of the struggles many developers face under the current nutrient neutrality regime. As councils, government officials, and industry stakeholders consider their next steps, the road to resolving these issues remains fraught with challenges, yet the imperative for increased housing availability continues to intensify.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4
2. Paragraphs 5, 6
3. Paragraphs 7, 8
4. Paragraph 9
5. Paragraph 10
6. Paragraph 11
7. Paragraph 12

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25164688.landlord-slams-councils-handling-nutrient-neutrality/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/e34aaaf8-451f-4210-9d77-0d479e9de219> - UK ministers are planning to alter environmental regulations to enable housebuilders in England to commence projects that might pollute rivers, provided they undertake mitigation efforts before selling the homes. The current nutrient neutrality rules, derived from EU laws, have required developers to counteract potential pollution, leading to significant delays in housing projects and contributing to a long-term housing shortage. The Labour party aims to construct 1.5 million new homes by the end of the current parliament and proposed changes to these regulations as noted in the King's Speech. The plan involves allowing development to proceed while agreements on mitigation measures, such as creating new wetlands, are finalized. This proposal aims to expedite housing projects while ensuring environmental protection measures are adhered to before residents move in. Although this approach has been welcomed by the Home Builders Federation, concerns remain about potential delays in finding and setting up mitigation schemes. Labour's approach focuses on changing the execution of these rules rather than the rules themselves, aiming for quicker and more efficient compliance.
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/47-million-to-unlock-28000-nutrient-neutrality-stalled-homes> - The UK government has announced a £47 million funding boost to unlock tens of thousands of new homes stalled due to nutrient neutrality regulations. This initiative aims to support the delivery of 1.5 million homes by the end of the current parliament. The funding will be used to create locally led schemes, such as establishing new wetlands and upgrading septic tanks, to ensure sustainable development while protecting the environment. Seven councils across England will benefit from this funding, with building work expected to start shortly. The government recognizes the need to balance housing development with environmental protection, addressing nutrient pollution in rivers and habitats. The initiative also includes support for planning teams to implement pollution solutions across local areas, with £100,000 allocated to the 20 largest sites impacted by nutrient neutrality. This approach seeks to facilitate housing growth without compromising environmental standards.
4. <https://www.localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/planning/401-planning-news/50762-councils-express-concern-at-impact-of-nutrient-and-water-neutrality-on-housing-supply-criticise-uncertainty-over-offset-schemes> - Councils have expressed concern over the impact of nutrient and water neutrality regulations on housing supply, criticizing the uncertainty surrounding offset schemes. The Local Government Association (LGA) analysis revealed that 23 councils had more than 90% of their likely housing areas affected by these laws, with 40 councils having over a quarter of their housing impacted. The LGA estimates that around 20,000 new homes annually could be delayed unless developers and councils can prove they will produce no additional pollution. The current system for implementing nature-based schemes to offset the environmental impact of new housing is described as challenging, lengthy, and uncertain. Councils are calling for collaboration among the government, house builders, the agricultural sector, and water companies to find short-term solutions while reducing pollution at the source.
5. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9850/> - The House of Commons Library provides an overview of nutrient neutrality and its impact on housing development. Nutrient neutrality requires that new housing developments in certain areas should not add more nutrient pollution to the water catchment, particularly in protected habitats sites already in 'unfavourable condition' due to nutrient pollution. The briefing discusses the Habitats Regulations, which establish protections for important sites in England, and the role of Natural England in advising local planning authorities. It also covers the impact of nutrient neutrality on housebuilding, with developers arguing that it has resulted in delays and that agriculture and water companies should be responsible for tackling nutrient pollution. Environmental groups highlight the importance of mitigation measures to address nutrient pollution. The briefing also touches on proposals to amend the Habitats Regulations and the reactions to these proposals from various stakeholders.
6. <https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/nutrient-neutrality-rules-having-huge-impact-on-sectors-ability-to-deliver-homes-76529> - Housing associations have reported that Natural England's nutrient neutrality advice is significantly impacting the sector's ability to deliver new homes due to increased land and development costs. As of last month, 74 local authorities were covered by government nutrient neutrality advice, meaning developments can only be given planning permission if they will not cause any additional pollution to the local area. The Home Builders Federation (HBF) recently claimed that around 120,000 new homes are being delayed by the rules. Amanda Williams, chief investment officer of Aster Group, stated that the guidance around nutrient neutrality is having a huge impact on the sector’s ability to deliver new homes across much of Southern England, with sites identified for development being put on hold with no solution in sight, compounding the housing crisis.
7. <https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/explainer-what-is-nutrient-neutrality-and-why-is-it-stopping-housebuilding> - An explainer article discusses nutrient neutrality and its impact on housebuilding. Nutrient neutrality refers to the requirement that new housing developments in certain areas should not add more nutrient pollution to the water catchment, particularly in protected habitats sites already in 'unfavourable condition' due to nutrient pollution. The article outlines how nutrient neutrality is affecting planning decisions, with councils being advised that no new permissions should be granted unless developments can demonstrate nutrient neutrality or are exempt. It also discusses the challenges developers face in achieving nutrient neutrality, including the need for mitigation strategies such as the establishment of offsite treatment wetlands and upgrading of inefficient treatment plants. The article highlights the immediate impact on planning applications in areas newly affected by expanded nutrient neutrality rules and the need for collaboration among stakeholders to find solutions.