

# Water supply 'won't cope' with new homes

Water companies are doing too little to prepare for impact of new homes in Ashford, report warns

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address the issues of flooding and water quality.

The report warns that unless the Environment Agency improves how waste water is managed, the quality of water in the River Stour is likely to be a "serious problem".

## Drought

County Hall leaders say the Environment Agency is turning a blind eye to the threat.

Cllr David Hirst (Con), who jointly chaired the inquiry, said the continuing drought meant no more water should be taken from the Stour. He revealed councillors had been unable to determine if either the Environment Agency or water companies had any contingency plans.

"This time next year we could be in a quite critical situation. All sorts of issues need to be addressed before we consider taking more wa-

ter. I am totally unaware the Environment Agency has any 'Plan B'."

The report states: "The overall impression...is that plans for demand management, water resource development and wastewater disposal provision should be more closely linked to plans for growth."

There was little evidence that plans to improve water supplies were "synchronised with, or linked to, the pace of growth in Ashford".

Ashford county councillor Derek Smyth, who was on the panel, said a European directive on water quality coming into force in 2009 would compel the Agency to do more to improve water quality.

"It will not be able to continue in the way it has," he said. The inquiry recommended that KCC takes the lead in setting up a task force dedicated to protecting the River Stour.

A HARD-HITTING report by county councillors has warned water supplies may not be enough to cope with the increased demand caused by the area's rising population and the construction of 30,000 houses over the next 20 years.

The report follows a detailed investigation by a cross-party committee of councillors into the impact of the development of Ashford on both water quality and water supply.

Councillors also hit out at the Environment Agency, saying it too had done too little to