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The Kentish Stour is a unique and ecologically rare chalkstream environment which (there are just 200 chalkstreams worldwide) requires appropriate planning protections in order to shield it from major impacts from human interventions such as unmitigated water abstraction, inappropriate drainage discharges and physical works which impacts its ability to function as such a unique habitat.

The local plan needs to put in place adequate protections to support such a unique and irreplaceable habitat.

The Kentish Stour supports an important population of Wild Brown Trout and Sea Trout. Salmon are also still rarely encountered and sea trout numbers are a fraction of their original numbers of last century. Fish populations are primary indicators of the health of a river. The salmonid fish species have been under pressure and reducing in the Kentish Stour for many years. Both migratory and non-migratory fish need to achieve passage up the river to spawning grounds in suitable upstream sections of the river and its tributaries. Obstructions in the Stour mean that fish passage can only be achieved at certain locations in high water conditions, this severely limits the potential recovery of the salmonid fish species natural to the river. Chartham Mill is one of those locations and the proposed redevelopment presents an opportunity to remove a barrier which is a considerable impediment to the passage of migratory and non-migratory fish.

Barriers, culverts, hatches and sluices are as great a problem for Brown Trout as they are for Sea Trout and Salmon. It is often assumed that Trout do not travel far unless they are Sea Trout, but resident Brown Trout also migrate upstream to spawn and disperse to find suitable habitat as they mature and establish new territories.

With the new Environment Act there should be opportunities via the planning process to secure significant developer contribution to river improvement including reduction/removal of barriers, removal of highly impactful foul and surface water drainage practices and appropriate riverside biodiversity enhancement.