



WATER DESIGN ENGINEERS

— Solving water in the landscape —

THE OFFICIAL GUIDE TO

**THE UK'S ONLY FULLY DOCUMENTED
AND SYSTEMATISED NUTRIENT
NEUTRALITY COMPLIANCE PROCESS**

WATER DESIGN ENGINEERS

NNAMS

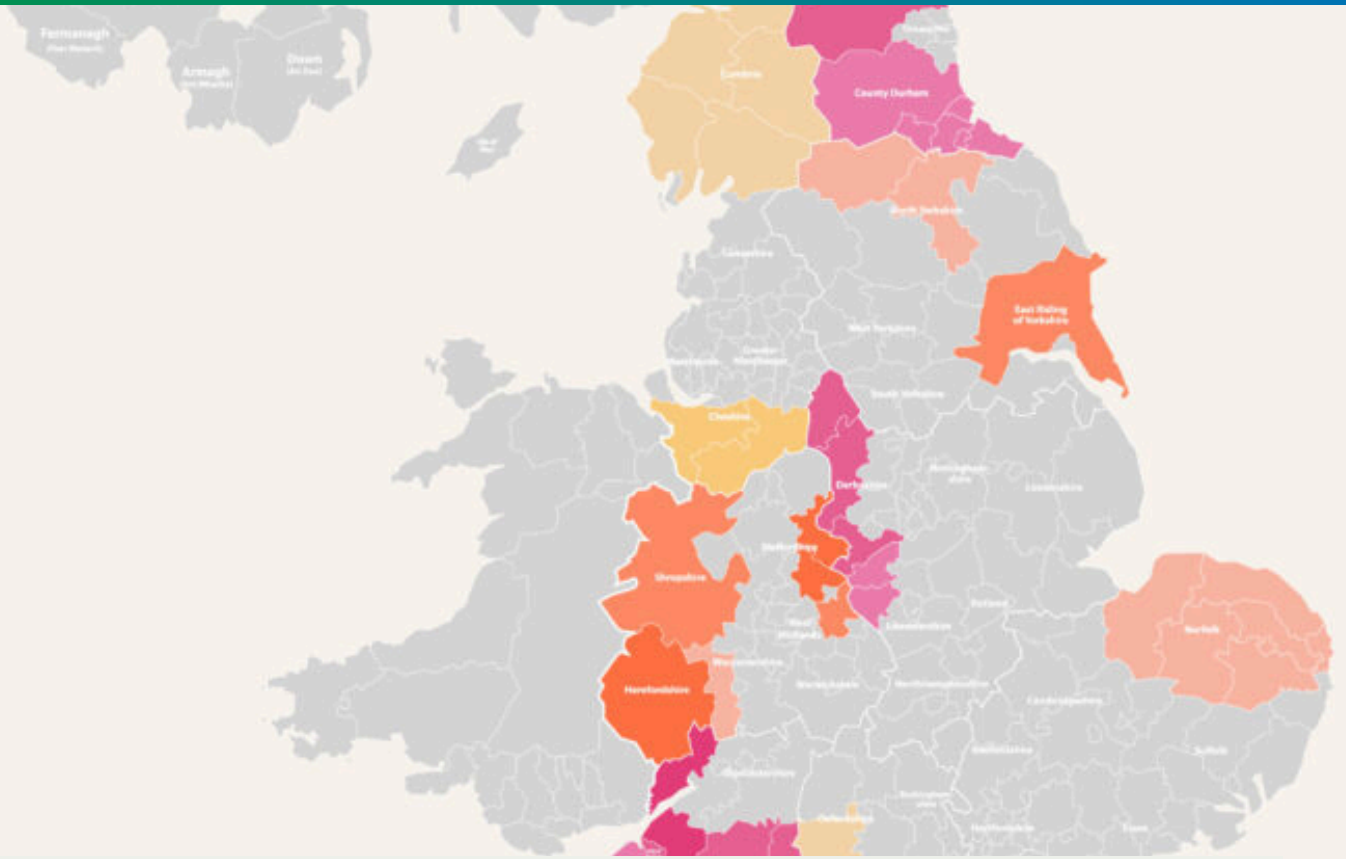
NAVIGATOR™



Taking you from uncertainty, delay, and the risk of planning refusal...
To full nutrient neutrality compliance, delivering confident submissions,
clear mitigation strategies, and approved planning outcomes.

“

We remove nutrient neutrality headaches — without jargon, back-and-forth with LPAs, or unexpected planning delays.



Introducing the NNAMS Navigator™

Your Navigation through
Nutrient Neutrality Headaches.
From delayed applications and
rejected submissions... to
approved strategies and
confident planning outcomes

HOW CAN WE HELP YOU

How Can the NNAMS Navigator™ Help You?

Let's be honest, nutrient neutrality wasn't even on the radar for most planning consultants until it suddenly became everywhere. Now, it's a validation blocker. A source of delay. A technical challenge that's hard to plan for, and even harder to explain to clients.

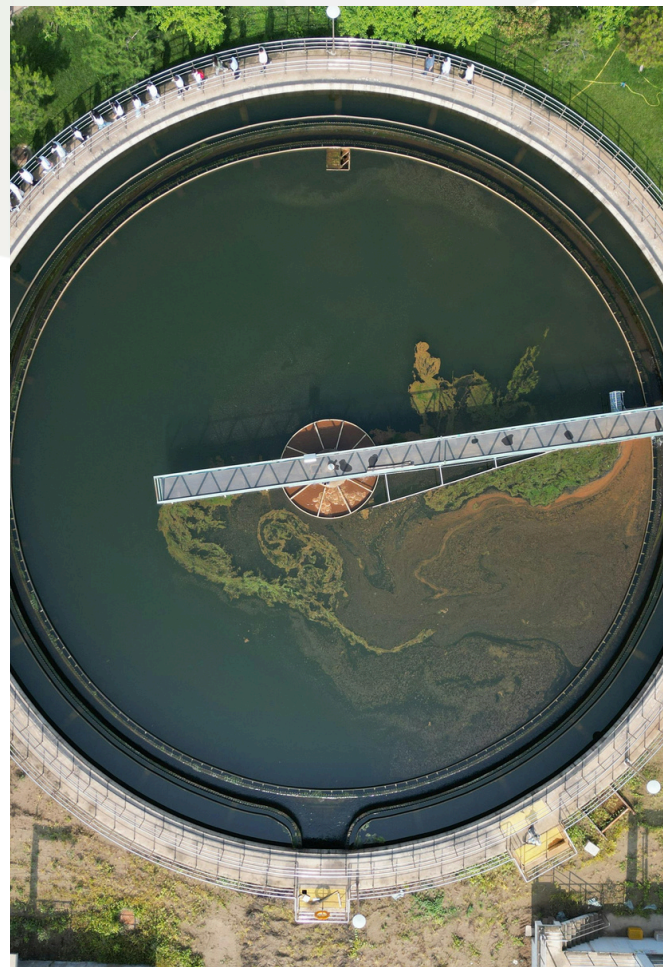
You're already managing dozens of moving parts. Nutrient neutrality often feels like an extra layer of complexity added without warning. The terminology is dense. The requirements aren't always clear. The guidance appears to shift, not just between catchments, but also between case officers.

This isn't about blame. It's about bandwidth. LPAs have been tasked with handling complex

environmental assessments with limited support often without access to engineering expertise. That puts you in a difficult position: trying to interpret requirements that aren't standardised, deliver strategies that meet ecological thresholds, and still get your application validated.

The **NNAMS Navigator™** exists to take that weight off your desk.

It's not a black-box calculator or a generic download. It's a structured, transparent process that gives you confidence, not confusion. You'll know exactly what applies, how the calculation works, and what mitigation is both feasible and acceptable under the current rules.



HOW CAN WE HELP YOU

How Do I Know If I Need Help?

Only you can answer that. But in our experience, most planning consultants already had a quiet suspicion that something wasn't quite right, even before they called us.

Maybe a validation checklist included unexpected nutrient neutrality requirements.

Maybe your last submission came back with cryptic comments from the LPA.

Maybe your client is asking for clarity, and you're not sure how to give it.

Or maybe the site was previously reviewed by another consultant, and you're left unsure whether their approach still holds up.

These moments aren't failures. They're signals.

They tell you that the topic has moved beyond casual knowledge and that guessing is no longer an option. With LPAs under pressure, the margin for error has shrunk. And the expectation for evidence, structure, and justification has grown.

The good news is that you don't have to carry this burden alone, and you don't have to master it overnight.

The **NNAMS Navigator™** was built for precisely this point: when the stakes are real, the questions are mounting, and you need a clear, confident way forward before time runs out, or cost creeps in.



Where Do You Fit on the NNAMS Navigator™ Competency Scale?

Understanding your own level of familiarity with nutrient neutrality can help you decide whether to handle the task yourself or bring in support to protect your client, your time, and your reputation.

Here's how we often see the journey unfold:

✓ **Unconsciously Unaware**

"I didn't realise nutrient neutrality applied to this site."

You're unaware of the requirement or assume it's already been handled by someone else.

The risk: validation failure, last-minute rework, or a delayed planning decision.

✓ **Consciously Uncertain**

"I know we need to deal with it... but I'm not sure how."

You're aware of the issue but unclear on the process, the calculations, or what the LPA expects.

The risk: wasted effort, invalid assumptions, or rejection based on insufficient evidence.

✓ **Consciously Competent**

"I can complete the assessment — but I still double-check everything."

You've handled NNAMS before, but every case feels slightly different. Catchments vary, LPAs differ, and it's still a drain on your time.

The risk: slow delivery, inconsistent outcomes, or nervousness in defending your work.

✓ **Strategically Aware**

"I understand the process — and I choose to work with a specialist to get it right."

You know how nutrient neutrality works. But you also know your time is better spent on strategy, not spreadsheets. You want support that's structured, defensible, and ready to stand up to scrutiny.

Wherever you are now, the NNAMS Navigator™ can support you with a structured process, grounded in real-world experience, and focused on planning success.

COMPETENCY SCALE

Where Do You Fit on the NNAMS Navigator™ Competency Scale?

From unawareness to full **systemisation**, the journey reflects your growing confidence, control, and efficiency in tackling NNAMS requirements.

Unconsciously Unaware

Unaware of the requirement or assume it's covered — risking validation failure or costly delays.

Consciously Uncertain

Aware of the issue, but unclear on process, calculations, or LPA expectations — risking errors or rejection.

Consciously Competent

Can complete assessments, but it's slow and inconsistent — each case still feels different.

Strategically Aware

Understands the process and chooses expert support to save time and ensure quality.

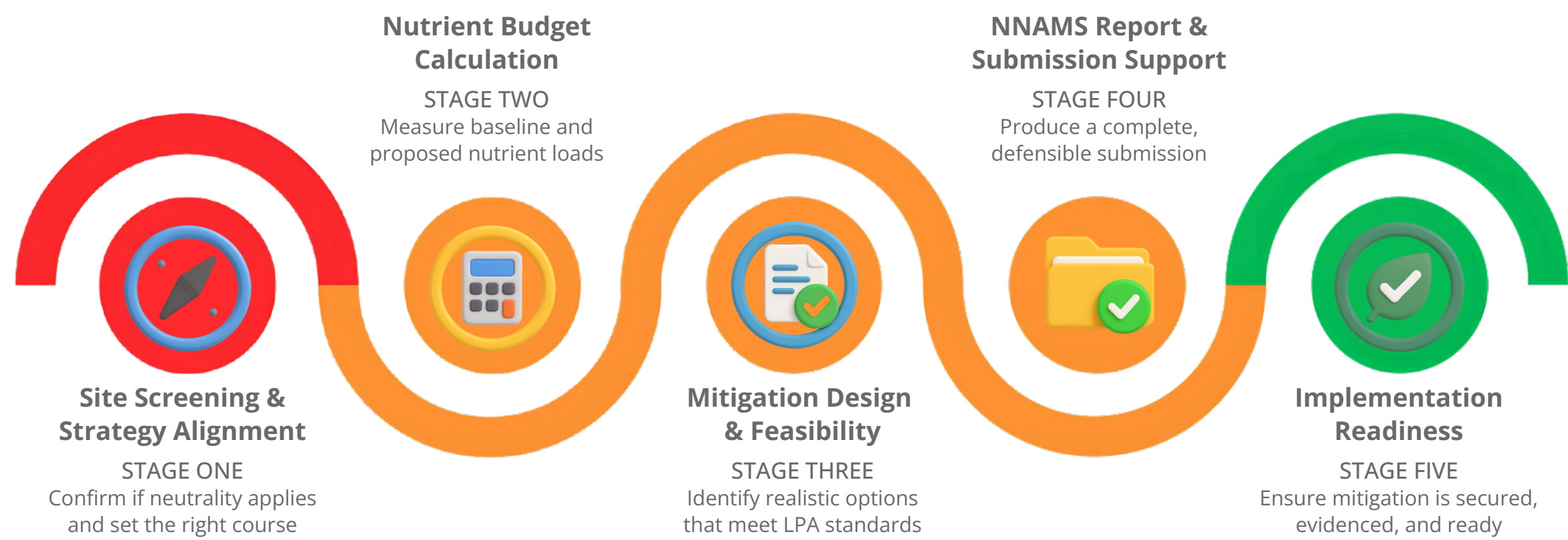


Consequence Rating



Unaware that nutrient neutrality applies. Delays, and costly rework.

Partnering with NNAMS experts ensures standardisation, assurance, and clarity.



Consequence Rating



Unaware that nutrient neutrality applies. Delays, and costly rework.

Partnering with NNAMS experts ensures standardisation, assurance, and clarity.

STAGE ONE - Site Screening & Strategy Alignment

Stage 1 – Site Screening & Strategy Alignment

- Catchment
- Trigger
- Alignment
- Validation
- Direction



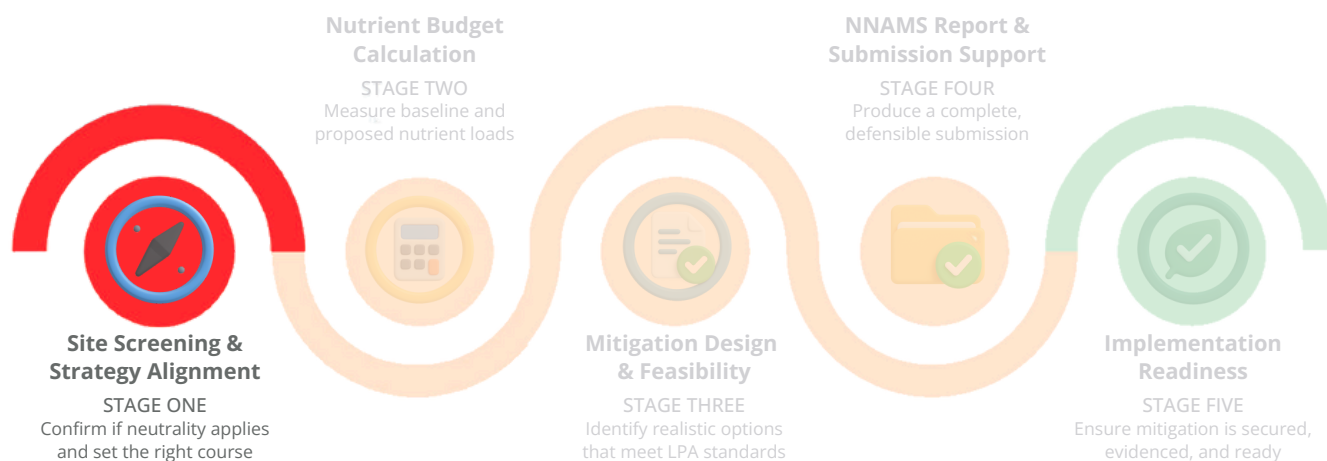
WHY THIS MATTERS

The first, and often most overlooked, question is whether nutrient neutrality even applies. It's tempting to assume the issue is irrelevant or already accounted for. But the rules are nuanced, and catchment boundaries don't always follow intuitive lines. One side of a road might be in, the other side out. Sites that drain to wastewater treatment works (WwTWs) are sometimes exempt and sometimes not, depending on flow pathways, permit levels, or LPA interpretation.

Starting without clarity here wastes time and creates risk. Entire reports are sometimes drafted before realising neutrality wasn't triggered. Or worse, it was triggered, but missed, resulting in validation failure, rework, or planning delays.

Understanding the correct trigger points means reviewing the nutrient catchment, identifying whether phosphorus, nitrogen, or both are relevant, confirming the wastewater destination, and checking the LPA's current position. It also means knowing when Natural England's advice applies, and when local policy layers on additional requirements.

This stage matters because it sets the foundation. If the site doesn't require neutrality, the project can move forward. If it does, the strategy needs to begin here, with correct assumptions, clear boundaries, and a plan to stay ahead of validation and consultation risks.



STAGE ONE - Site Screening & Strategy Alignment

HOW WE SOLVE IT

We begin by gathering key site information, including postcode, planning boundary, wastewater treatment pathway, and existing land use. Using our internal GIS mapping system, combined with the latest Natural England catchment overlays, we determine whether the site falls within a nutrient neutrality zone for phosphorus, nitrogen, or both.

We don't rely solely on LPA lists or historic advice notes. Those are useful, but not always up to date. Instead, we verify the wastewater outfall location and check which WwTW serves the site. We then review the permit status of that treatment works, along with its connection to protected habitats.

If neutrality is not triggered, we provide formal confirmation and recommend language to include in your planning submission, so it's clear the issue has been considered, not ignored.

If neutrality is triggered, we advise on the appropriate reporting route, confirm which nutrients apply, and set the mitigation target. We also flag common LPA-specific nuances, such as whether a full NNAMS is needed at the outline stage or just a statement of intent.

By the end of Stage 1, you'll know whether nutrient neutrality applies, how it applies, and what path you're on, with no guesswork, no assumptions, and no wasted time.



STAGE TWO - Nutrient Budget Calculation

Stage 2 – Nutrient Budget Calculation

- **Baseline**
- **Load**
- **Accuracy**
- **Evidence**
- **Clarity**



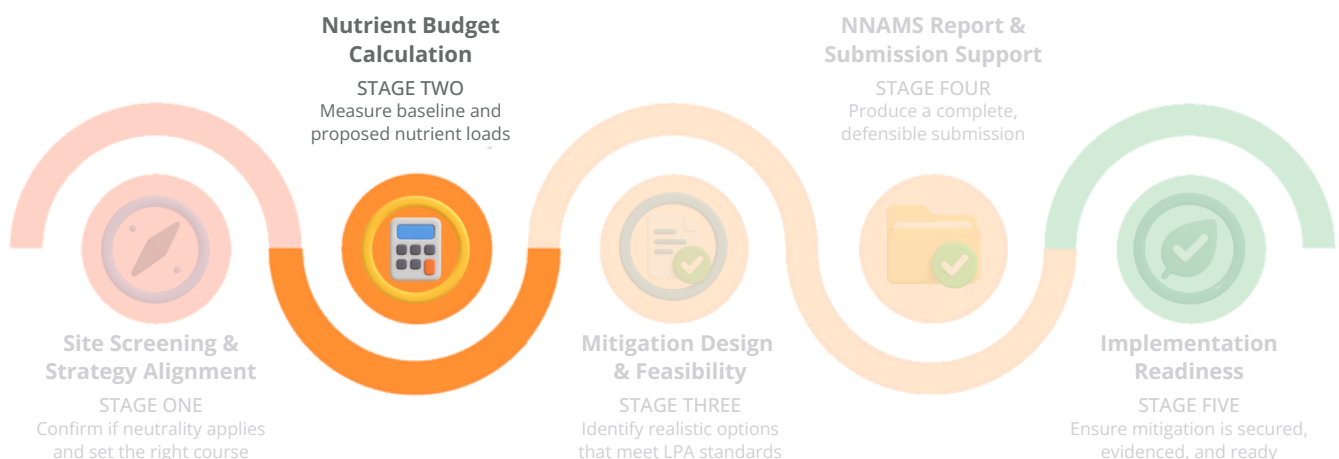
WHY THIS MATTERS

If nutrient neutrality applies, the next step is to quantify the impact. This involves understanding how much nitrogen or phosphorus is currently leaving the site and how much will be generated by the proposed development. This is where the process shifts from policy into numbers.

The challenge is that while the maths looks simple on the surface, the outcome hinges on multiple inputs: baseline land use types, post-development surfaces, occupancy rates, wastewater pathways, and rainfall assumptions. A small error in any one of these can invalidate the entire assessment.

Adding to the complexity, different LPAs use different calculators. Some refer strictly to Natural England's version. Others issue local spreadsheets with modified assumptions. Some allow manual override with justification, others don't.

This stage is often where consultants either overestimate the load (resulting in unnecessary mitigation costs) or underestimate it (leading to refusal). Both are avoidable. You need a calculation that is transparent, defensible, and tailored to the correct local approach. This isn't about getting a number that looks favourable, it's about getting a number that stands up to review, avoids delay, and becomes a solid foundation for whatever mitigation strategy comes next.



STAGE TWO - Nutrient Budget Calculation

HOW WE SOLVE IT

We start by mapping the existing land use, field by field, parcel by parcel, using aerial photography, local land classification datasets, and any information you provide about site history. From this, we assign nutrient export rates in line with the relevant calculator's baseline categories.

Next, we model the post-development land use. We break down your site layout into hardstanding, roofs, soft landscaping, and public open space, allocating each to the correct calculator category. We apply the correct occupancy rates and wastewater pathway (on-site or WwTW), and make adjustments where specific LPA guidance or precedents apply.

We use our own internally built calculator that mirrors the logic of Natural England's spreadsheet, but with additional audit features, flagging gaps or inconsistencies. This allows us to produce a transparent, step-by-step calculation with clear assumptions and traceable logic.

If the LPA requires their own version, we complete that too and provide commentary to explain any values that differ or require clarification.

By the end of Stage 2, you'll have a clear nutrient budget, showing exactly what the uplift is, how it was calculated, and what the mitigation requirement will be. It's defensible, complete, and tailored to pass review.



STAGE THREE - Mitigation Design & Feasibility

Stage 3 – Mitigation Design & Feasibility

- Options
- Viability
- Offsetting
- Deliverability
- Certainty



WHY THIS MATTERS

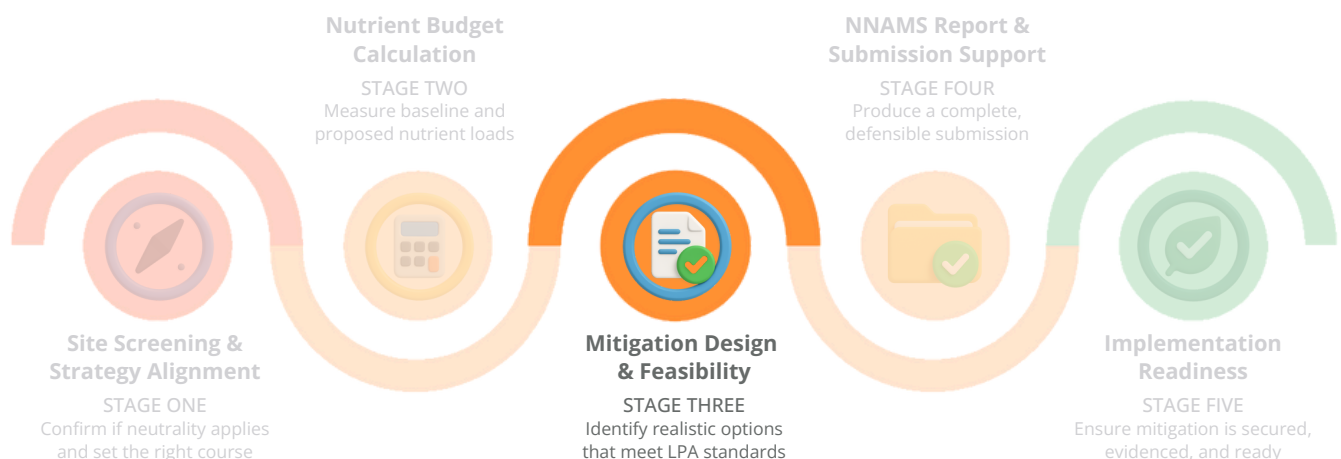
Once the nutrient budget shows an uplift, mitigation becomes mandatory. Without it, the application cannot proceed. But not all mitigation is viable, and not all options are accepted in every location. This is where projects often stall: the numbers are known, but the strategy isn't.

There's no single list of approved solutions. Some LPAs support orchard planting, others don't. Some accept off-site offsetting schemes, while others prefer on-site measures. And some mitigation techniques (like SuDS retrofits or wetland proposals) require not just space, but legal certainty, delivery mechanisms, and evidence of long-term maintenance.

This stage matters because the wrong mitigation strategy, even if well-intentioned, can cause unnecessary delay. You need a solution that fits the site, meets policy, and aligns with what your LPA will actually accept.

It's also important to consider deliverability. Can the client legally secure the land? Is the strategy affordable and scalable? Does it require third-party involvement or landowner agreements?

Mitigation can't just look good on paper. It must work, technically, legally, and practically, in the eyes of the LPA, the EA, and Natural England if consulted. That's why this stage is not just about design, it's about real-world feasibility.



STAGE THREE - Mitigation Design & Feasibility

HOW WE SOLVE IT

We start by reviewing all viable mitigation options, tailored to the site's location, nutrient type, and budget. This includes:

- ✓ On-site land use change (e.g. wildflower meadows, woodland, or nutrient-stripping planting)
- ✓ SuDS retrofits with proven nutrient attenuation potential
- ✓ Septic tank upgrades (where applicable)
- ✓ Off-site land offsetting (third-party or developer-owned)
- ✓ Strategic wetland creation (where appropriate)
- ✓ Nutrient credit schemes (if available)

We assess each option for deliverability: legal control of land, proximity to the development, alignment with catchment boundaries, and level of certainty required. We also evaluate which options are likely to be accepted based on your LPA's policy, previous case feedback, and any engagement history.

Once we identify a viable strategy, we calculate the mitigation capacity, ensure it offsets the nutrient load, and document it in a way that supports both validation and determination. If multiple options exist, we'll present them with pros and cons, so you and your client can make an informed choice.

By the end of Stage 3, you'll have a feasible, site-appropriate mitigation strategy, with evidence, logic, and a clear path to implementation. It won't just meet the rules. It will stand up to review and help move the application forward.



STAGE FOUR - NNAMS Report & Submission Support

Stage 4 – NNAMS Report & Submission Support

- **Structure**
- **Justification**
- **Submission**
- **Feedback**
- **Approval**



WHY THIS MATTERS

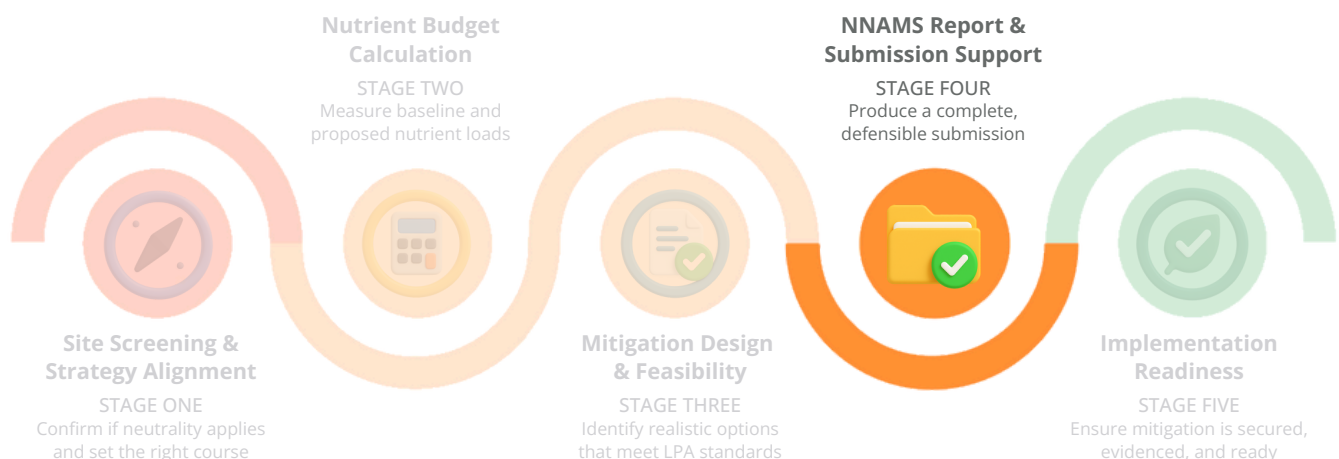
A good strategy means nothing if the report doesn't clearly explain it. This is where nutrient neutrality submissions often fall short, not because the work hasn't been done, but because the reasoning hasn't been communicated effectively.

Many LPAs are under-resourced and handling highly technical submissions without specialist support. That means that if a report is ambiguous, overly complicated, or missing key details, it's unlikely to be accepted. And with Natural England no longer directly reviewing most applications, the responsibility for interpretation falls heavily on the planning officer, who may not be an ecologist, a hydrologist, or an engineer.

That's why the quality of the report matters as much as the strategy itself. It must be logically structured, evidence-based, and free from unnecessary complexity. It also needs to respond to known LPA preferences and anticipate likely queries before they arise.

A clear, well-written NNAMS report accelerates validation, reduces back-and-forth, and gives planning officers the confidence to support approval.

It's not just about meeting the requirements. It's about making it easy for others to see that you have.



STAGE FOUR - NNAMS Report & Submission Support

HOW WE SOLVE IT

We prepare the full NNAMS report, including all calculations, assumptions, site plans, and supporting evidence. The document is structured in a clear, logical format, starting with the planning context and screening outcome, moving through the nutrient budget, and culminating in the mitigation strategy.

We ensure that each stage of the assessment is fully explained and justified, so it can stand on its own without needing clarification. We include appendices for land use mapping, calculation sheets, and mitigation evidence, all of which are tied directly to the numbers and assumptions in the main report.

If the LPA has a preferred format or has provided feedback on previous submissions, we incorporate those expectations into the structure. We can also provide a standalone summary statement for use in planning, covering letters, or validation checklists.

Once the report is submitted, we remain available to respond to LPA queries and provide clarification if needed. Our goal is to reduce the pressure on you and to support the planning officer in understanding what's been proposed and why it works.

By the end of Stage 4, you'll have a complete, defensible NNAMS submission, one that's ready for validation, structured to support approval, and built to minimise delays.



STAGE FIVE - Implementation Readiness

Stage 5 – Implementation Readiness

- Securing
- Documentation
- Discharge
- Evidence
- Delivery



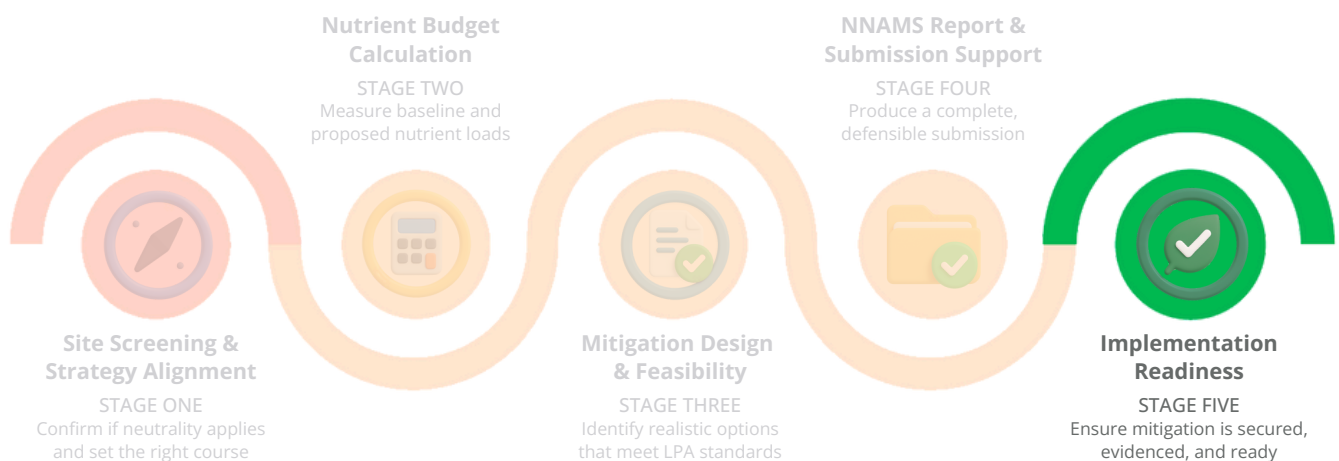
WHY THIS MATTERS

Obtaining NNAMS approval is a significant milestone, but it's not the end of the journey. Most LPAs will condition the nutrient neutrality strategy, meaning it must be secured, implemented, and sometimes monitored post-approval. If those steps aren't clear, the development can stall again at the discharge stage.

We've seen cases where a strategy was accepted in principle, but the mitigation couldn't be evidenced. Or where a legal agreement was needed, but landowner consent hadn't been formalised. Sometimes the mitigation relied on third-party land or a proposed wetland, but no delivery pathway had been secured.

Planning officers aren't just looking for calculations. They're looking for certainty. Certainty that the strategy will be delivered, that the mitigation is real, and that it will continue functioning for the lifetime of the impact.

This stage matters because it closes the loop. It turns a good strategy into an implementable one, with supporting documentation that the LPA can rely on to discharge conditions and defend decisions if challenged. Without this final step, even the best report risks delay. With it, you move smoothly from approval to delivery, with confidence and clarity at every step.



STAGE FIVE - Implementation Readiness

HOW WE SOLVE IT

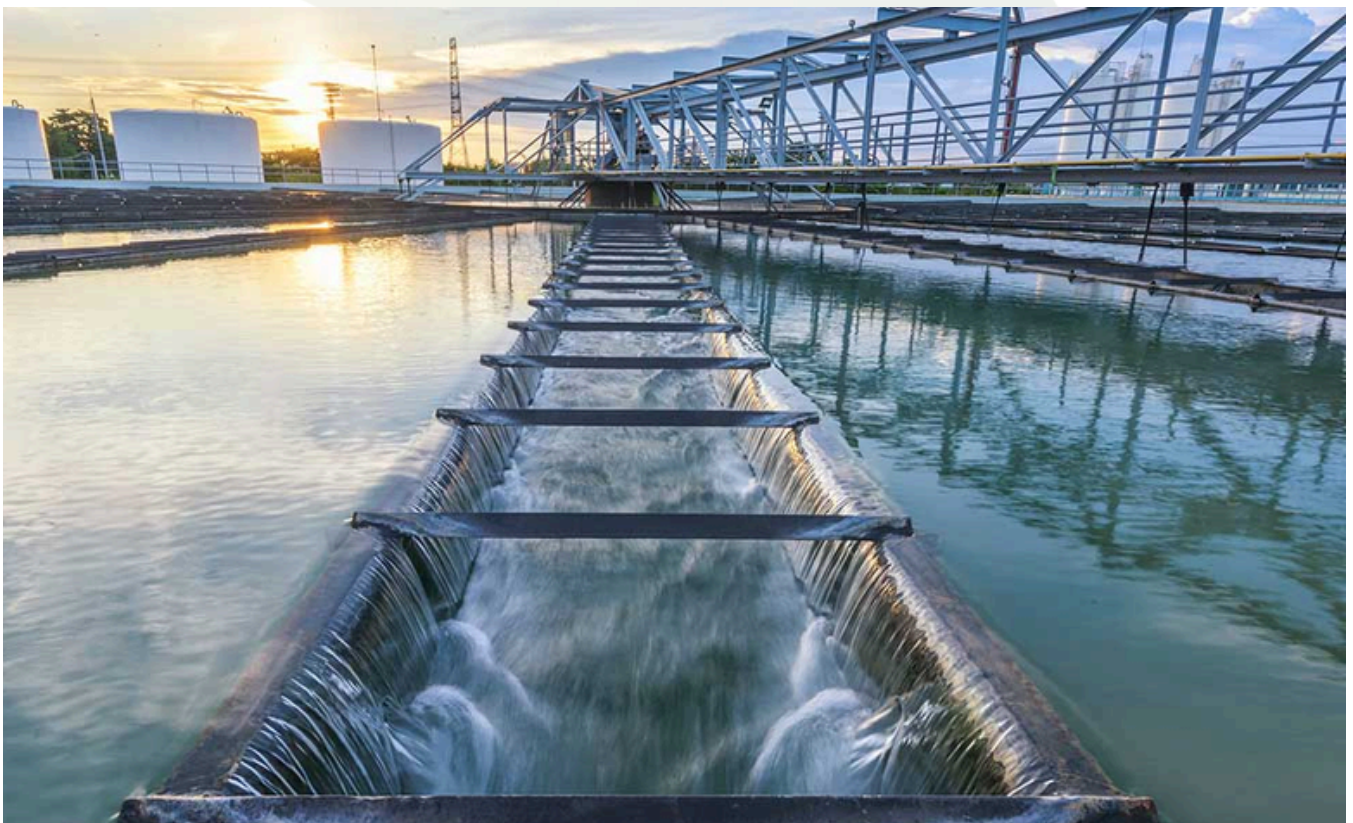
Once the NNAMS is approved, we help you prepare for the implementation phase. This includes drafting the supporting documentation the LPA will expect at discharge or legal agreement stage, such as template landowner letters, heads of terms for s106 agreements, or planning condition response notes.

If the strategy includes land use change, we provide the relevant evidence package to confirm control and use. If third-party mitigation is used (e.g. nutrient credits or wetlands), we coordinate with the delivery body to obtain formal confirmation of availability and offset capacity. Where required, we also produce tracking tables and site plans to support LPA documentation.

We guide you on what to submit, when to submit it, and how to respond if the LPA requests further clarity, all while keeping the technical burden off your desk.

We can also support early engagement with the LPA during determination to flag the implementation pathway, helping reduce uncertainty and avoid last-minute conditions that are difficult to discharge.

By the end of Stage 5, you'll have everything in place to secure, implement, and evidence the mitigation strategy, so that approval leads to delivery, not further delay.



WHAT WE WILL DO FOR YOU?

How can this improve your project and your peace of mind?

Here's What Happens When You Complete the 5 Stages:

- ✓ **Stage 1:** You understand whether neutrality applies and what it means for the site, with early clarity that keeps your project on track.
- ✓ **Stage 2:** You've calculated the nutrient load and know exactly what you're dealing with, using data the LPA will accept and logic that stands up to review.
- ✓ **Stage 3:** You've designed a feasible mitigation strategy, presented with options, and then finalised with a clear, site-specific path that meets policy.
- ✓ **Stage 4:** You've submitted a complete NNAMS report, structured, justified, and built to move through validation with minimal friction.
- ✓ **Stage 5:** You're ready to implement, with mitigation secured, documentation in place, and confidence that conditions can be discharged.

The **NNAMS Navigator™** helps you eliminate the unknowns and replace them with a clear, trackable path to compliance, so you can lead your planning submission with confidence, not caution.



IMPLEMENTATION



REPORT SUBMISSION



MITIGATION DESIGN



BUDGET CALCULATION



SITE SCREENING

A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO WATER PLANNING

How Is Water Design Engineers Different to Everyone Else?

Water Design Engineers is a technical consultancy dedicated to solving water-related planning challenges, from nutrient neutrality to SuDS, water features, and wetlands. This is not an add-on to our work. This is our work.

What makes us different isn't just what we know, it's how we work.

We've built the UK's only fully documented, systemised NNAMS delivery process. That means our assessments aren't one-offs or improvised spreadsheets, they're based on a repeatable framework that's logical, compliant, and tailored to the real-world expectations of LPAs and regulators.

We understand that you're already under pressure. Our role is to take the weight off, without drowning you in technical detail. We'll ask for what we need, we'll deliver what's required, and we'll stay with you until the job is done.

We don't speak in circles. We don't pass the blame. And we never leave you guessing. We're engineers by training, but we're consultants by mindset. That means we know how to get the details right and how to communicate them clearly to the people reviewing your application.

If your client is counting on you to get it right, we'll help make sure you do.





START YOUR NNAMS STRATEGY SESSION

READY TO GET STARTED?

Submit your site we'll check if neutrality applies and give you a no-nonsense view of what's likely required.

[CLICK HERE](#) 

 +44 (0) 1903 944 400

 info@waterdesign-engineers.co.uk

 waterdesign-engineers.co.uk