Councillor Barry Lewis
Leader of the Council
Councillor Christopher Woolmer
Lead Member for the Environment
London Borough of Sutton

Email: leadership.office@sutton.gov.uk

The Rt Hon Steve Reed OBE MP
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

Letter sent by email to: **secretary.state@defra.gov.uk**

Date: 22 August 2025

Dear Secretary of State,

We are writing to you today on behalf of the residents of the London Borough of Sutton regarding recent developments at the Beddington Energy Recovery Facility (ERF) in Sutton. The site is operated and managed by Viridor and monitored by the Environment Agency (EA).

A recent Compliance Assessment Report (CAR) issued by the EA has concluded that Viridor breached its permit conditions at the Beddington site. The report states that between September 2022 and March 2024, there were 916 (a combined figure from the site's two waste processing lines) occasions when the site exceeded the daily emissions limit value for the amount of Oxides of Nitrogen (NO_x) going into the atmosphere.

The Council has been told by Viridor and the EA that the number of exceedances does not breach legal air quality limits. We also acknowledge that the UK Health Security Agency concludes that the emissions are unlikely to have caused harm to human health or the environment. However, for our residents who live in the area, this news will still be deeply troubling following other recent incidents and outages at the Beddington site.

What is also concerning is the lack of proper monitoring and scrutiny by the EA of the data they received from Viridor. In order for these sites to run as required legally, it is important that our residents have confidence in the ability of government regulators. This report only contributes to the erosion of that trust.

We are also informed that as a result of these breaches, Viridor's compliance rating at the Beddington site is likely to be downgraded from a rating of A to E. You will understand the impact this will have on residents' confidence in how the ERF is managed.

Despite this report and the downgrading of Viridor's rating, we are aware that the EA is still considering approving plans for Viridor to treat more waste at the Beddington site. The Council is on record as opposing any increases and we are astonished that the EA is still even considering this. This would be the wrong decision in light of this Compliance Assessment Report from the EA itself.

As a much-respected former council leader of an authority neighbouring the Beddington ERF site, and now Secretary of State and MP for Streatham & Croydon North constituency, you will be very aware of the concerns that local residents have about ERF facilities situated within their communities. Therefore, we call on your Department to ensure that:

- the EA publicly reassures residents that there is no public health risk.
- the EA takes strong and appropriate enforcement action against Viridor.
- the EA changes its processes and obtains independent monitoring of these sites that is then made publicly available.
- the EA commits to inspecting the Beddington site more frequently.

We see this as the only way in which public trust can be restored locally.

We would also like a clear explanation from your Department to our residents on three critical points:
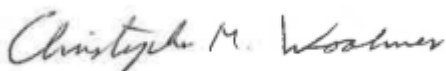
- How will the EA reassure our residents there is no health impact from these exceedances?
- Why is the EA still contemplating giving permission for more waste to be treated at Beddington, especially in light of Viridor's proven breaches and downgraded compliance rating?
- What concrete steps will the EA be taking to ensure Viridor provides transparent and regular communications to residents in the local area, who are now deeply concerned about Viridor's ability to manage the site safely and responsibly?

We look forward to your urgent response to these matters.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Barry Lewis
Leader of the Council

Councillor Christopher Woolmer
Lead Member for the Environment