



River Itchen SAC

Nutrient Modelling Summary

Date: October 2026

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Introduction

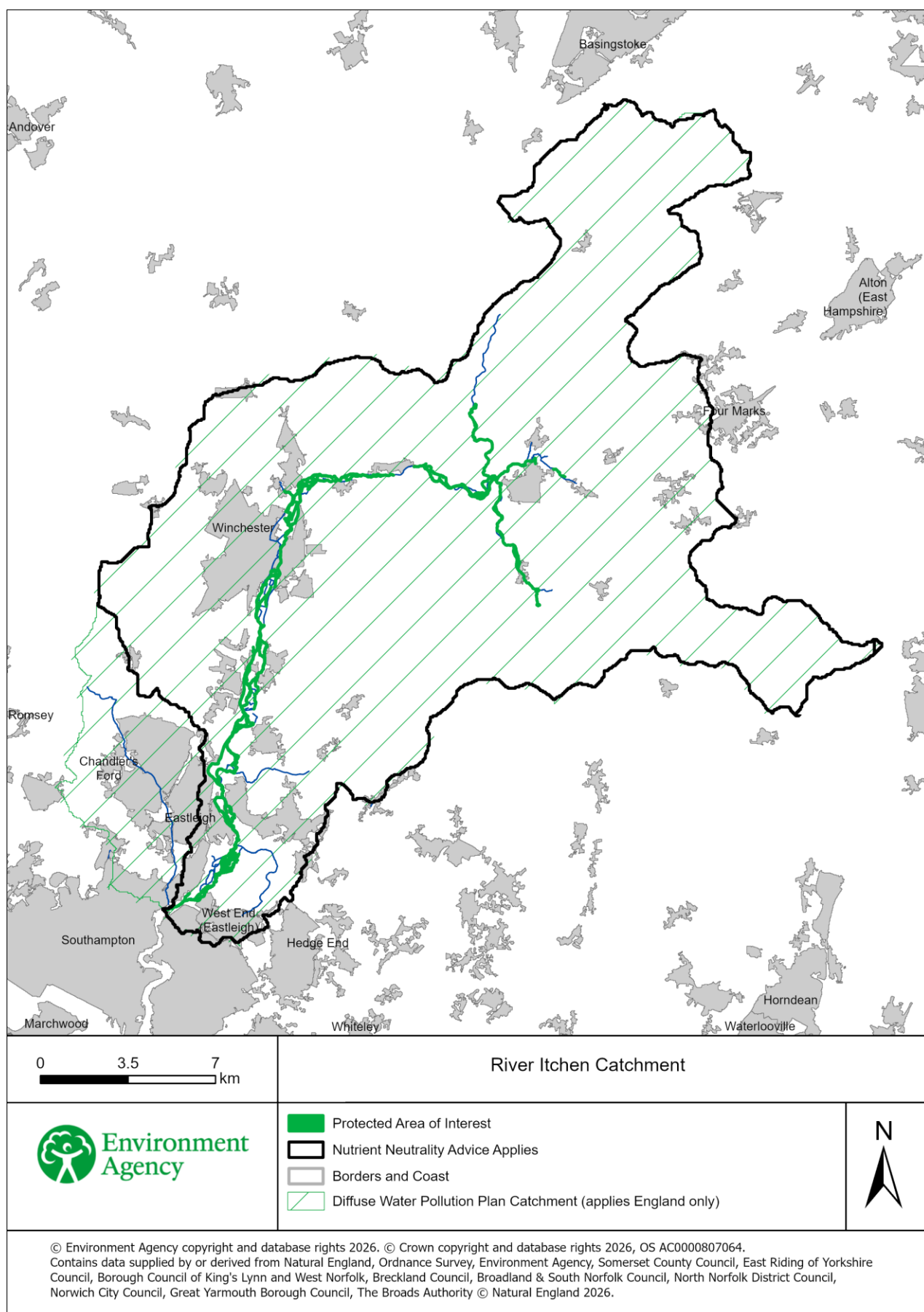
This document provides summary outputs from the Environment Agency's water quality modelling for the River Itchen Special Area of Conservation (SAC) catchment (Map 1). We provide catchment-scale source apportionment information and maps showing the scale of reductions needed to achieve protected area water quality targets. Our outputs will help those working on Diffuse Water Pollution Plans (DWPPs), designing or co-ordinating nutrient mitigation schemes, and working on site restoration. We aim to support a general understanding of the catchment rather than give the level of detail needed to inform specific on-the-ground measures. Our detailed methodology is described in [Catchment statistics for nutrient pollution in protected areas](#).

We used the phosphate Common Standards Monitoring Guidance (CSMG) targets applicable to the River Itchen SAC catchment. Natural England and the Environment Agency agree these targets for water dependent protected areas and publish them on the [Catchment Data Explorer](#).

Alongside Simcat SAGIS models, we used the Farmscoper v5 decision support tool and applied the revised polluter pays principle methodology (v0.17) used during PR24 planning to define the sector share for the point and diffuse sectors.

Our outputs highlight the dominant nutrient sources under a range of scenarios, including future estimates based on planned water company investment up to 31 March 2030 (AMP8) and the wider implementation of rural land use measures.

We have not incorporated additional nutrient contributions from any future development and growth including housing. Any additional future nutrient load will be assessed through the planning process led by the Local Planning Authority or through our permitting process.



Map 1. River Itchen SAC and catchment with protected area highlighted and catchment where Natural England nutrient neutrality advice applies shown.

Models used

We used the Price Review (PR) PR19 and the PR24 [Simcat SAGIS models](#) for this work alongside [Farmscoper v5](#). Simcat SAGIS (Source Apportionment Geographical Information System) integrates ArcGIS-based digital information management and visualisation with SIMCAT (Simulated Catchment), the Environment Agency's water quality model. Farmscoper is a decision support tool that can be used to assess diffuse agricultural pollutant loads and quantify the impacts of farm mitigation methods on these pollutants.

The PR19 Simcat SAGIS model is calibrated to 2010 to 2012 data, following nationally agreed model build and calibration standards across UKWIR (UK Water Industry Research). Outputs from this model are used to establish the sector share under the revised polluter pays principle. Similarly, the PR24 Simcat SAGIS model is calibrated to 2014 to 2020 data, following UKWIR agreed model build and calibration standards. Since publication of the Indicative Catchment Statistics Report (Version 1.2, September 2024) we recalibrated the model to seek to improve representation of the Itchen catchment, the results presented in this report will therefore differ from those presented previously.

The calibration process optimises the agreement between measured and simulated values through reasonable and systematic adjustments to model parameters and input data. We adjust the inputs where there is least confidence, those representing diffuse sources of pollution. The associated project overview document details the datasets included in the models. To assess confidence in the models, we compare the measured and simulated values. While Simcat SAGIS provides a robust framework for decision-making in wastewater investment, we have less certainty in the diffuse load estimates. As a result, we have lower confidence when using the models to assess the outcomes of measures that target diffuse sources, including those used here and in the DWPPs.

Farmscoper has undergone external peer review (Gooday et al., 2014), and the component models and methods used within Farmscoper have been published in the external literature. The assumptions, methods and resulting conclusions are therefore based on sound scientific principles. Farmscoper was developed as an advisory tool to aid policy makers. Farmscoper is now used more extensively and for a wider range of purposes than originally intended, therefore the consequences of assumptions and other uncertainties in Farmscoper outputs need to be considered when decision-making and users need to understand the assumptions, uncertainty, and limitations at the relevant scale of interest.

We used Farmscoper v5 to assess diffuse agricultural pollutant loads and to quantify the impacts of farm scale mitigation methods for a range of scenarios. This applies the agricultural planning assumptions for RBMP cycle 3 for land management measures ([Environment Agency, 2022](#)), as well as information from Defra project WT1594 ([Defra, 2019a](#)) We present outputs for two Farmscoper scenarios in this report to provide estimates of the reduction in nutrient losses from 'full regulation' and 'theoretical maximum' uptake rates in agricultural mitigation measures (Table 2).

Scenarios

The modelling scenarios (Table 1) evaluate the effectiveness of nutrient reductions in point and diffuse sources to meet protected site targets and the diffuse sector share of those targets. In the 2030 Full Regulation and 2030 Theoretical Maximum scenario we have applied the Farmscoper v5 reductions (Table 2) to the rural land use sector inputs. We have based the point sector measures on the AMP8 water industry national environment programme agreed in December 2024 ([PR24 WINEP](#)).

Table 1: Summary description of the point and diffuse measures represented in the Simcat SAGIS Scenarios modelled.

Scenario	Point Sector Measures	Diffuse Sector Measures	Model
Actual (2014 to 2020)*	Observed discharge flow and quality (2014 – 2019). Where not available, defaults used.	Current activities as represented post model calibration.	PR24 Calibration
2030 Optimistic	Water company AMP8 quality permit limits incorporated where applicable**	Current activities as represented post model calibration.	PR24 Calibration
2030 At Permit	All discharges represented at permitted flow and quality values up to and including AMP8**	Current activities as represented post model calibration.	PR24 At Permit
2030 Full Regulation	All discharges represented at permitted flow and quality values up to and including AMP8**	Rural land use inputs reduced by Full Regulation values from Farmscoper V5 (Table 2).	PR24 At Permit
2030 Theoretical Maximum	All discharges represented at permitted flow and quality values up to and including AMP8**	Rural land use inputs reduced by Theoretical Maximum values from Farmscoper V5 (Table 2).	PR24 At Permit

*Previously referred to as the 'recent' scenario.

**Does not include any discharge flow increases that may be required to support growth.

Table 2: Percentage phosphate reductions applied to the rural land use sector in the Simcat SAGIS Scenarios, values produced through Farmscoper V5 modelling.

Scenario	Description	Reductions
Full Regulation	100% uptake of Regulatory measures, 25% uptake of Farming Rules for Water 'reasonable' Regulatory measures and 'current' uptake of voluntary measures.	10%
Theoretical Maximum	100% uptake of all measures in Farmscoper V5.	43%

River Itchen SAC modelled outputs

We estimate the phosphate input load source apportionment for the Itchen to be 39% point source and 61% diffuse source in the Actual (2014 to 2020) scenario. Rural land use (30%) and urban sources (20%) dominate the diffuse sector (Table 3). The source apportionment changes incrementally under the subsequent scenarios. When we apply the Full Regulation and Theoretical Maximum reductions to the rural land use sector, the contribution from the rural land use sector falls from 68% in the 2030 At permit scenario to 23% and 17% respectively.

We estimate the baseline (2009) sector share of the protected site target to be 50% diffuse and 50% point. This gives a sector share of the target of 0.013mg/l for both the diffuse sector and the point sector (Table 4). The estimated diffuse sector catchment average concentration in the Actual (2014 to 2020) scenario exceeds the sector share (Table 4). For the sector share to be met, the diffuse sector concentrations need to reduce by an estimated 61%. With both the Full Regulation and Theoretical Maximum reductions applied to the rural land use sector, the residual reductions needed to meet the diffuse sector share remain high, over 50% as a catchment average (Table 4). The maps show the spatial variation in the reductions needed.

Input load source apportionment

Table 3 shows the estimated phosphate input load source apportionment figures for each scenario modelled. We have greatest confidence in the point sector loads where monitoring data is available. Confidence reduces where the contribution from the sector is based on estimates rather than observed data, such as the diffuse sectors. Apportioning the input loads gives an indication of which sector is the dominant nutrient source.

Table 3: Estimated phosphate input load source apportionment from the catchment endpoint.

Scenario	Point Sources	Rural Land Use	Urban	Septic Tanks	Other
Actual (2014 to 2020)	39.1%	30.0%	19.9%	3.7%	7.2%
2030 Optimistic	28.3%	35.4%	23.4%	4.4%	8.5%
2030 At Permit	46.8%	26.3%	17.4%	3.3%	6.3%
2030 Full Regulation	48.7%	23.2%	18.1%	3.4%	6.6%
2030 Theoretical Maximum	52.6%	17.2%	19.5%	3.7%	7.1%

Catchment average concentrations and reductions

The in-river modelled concentrations arise from the input loads, after the influence of river dilution and natural decay processes in the river have been simulated. Table 4 shows the in-river concentration as a sector catchment average to be consistent with the revised

polluter pays principle methodology used in the PR24 water company price reviews (v0.17).

Apportionment by concentration and by load can be different because inputs from different sources tend to occur under different river flow conditions. Inputs from treatment works occur continuously while diffuse source inputs tend to occur under higher river flow conditions where there is greater dilution available in the receiving water. As a result, a kilogram of phosphorus discharged from a treatment works will have a relatively greater impact on in-river concentrations than the equivalent input from diffuse sources.

Table 4: Catchment average phosphate sector share alongside modelled catchment average concentrations (mg/l) and percentage reductions across all scenarios.

Scenario and Assessment Metric	Diffuse	Point	Total
Baseline (2009) Sector Share of the target	50%	50%	
Catchment average sector share of the target (mg/l)	0.013	0.013	0.025
Actual (2014 to 2020) - modelled sector concentration (mg/l)	0.033	0.007	0.039
Actual (2014 to 2020) - reduction to meet sector share	61%	0%	35%
2030 Optimistic – modelled sector concentration (mg/l)	0.033	0.005	0.038
2030 Optimistic – reduction to meet sector share	61%	0%	33%
2030 At Permit – modelled sector concentration (mg/l)	0.032	0.018	0.051
2030 At Permit – reduction to meet sector share	61%	30%	50%
2030 Full Regulation – modelled sector concentration (mg/l)	0.030	0.018	0.048
2030 Full Regulation – reduction to meet sector share	57%	30%	47%
2030 Theoretical Maximum – modelled sector concentration (mg/l)	0.025	0.018	0.043
2030 Theoretical Maximum – reduction to meet sector share	50%	30%	41%

Maps - modelled reductions needed

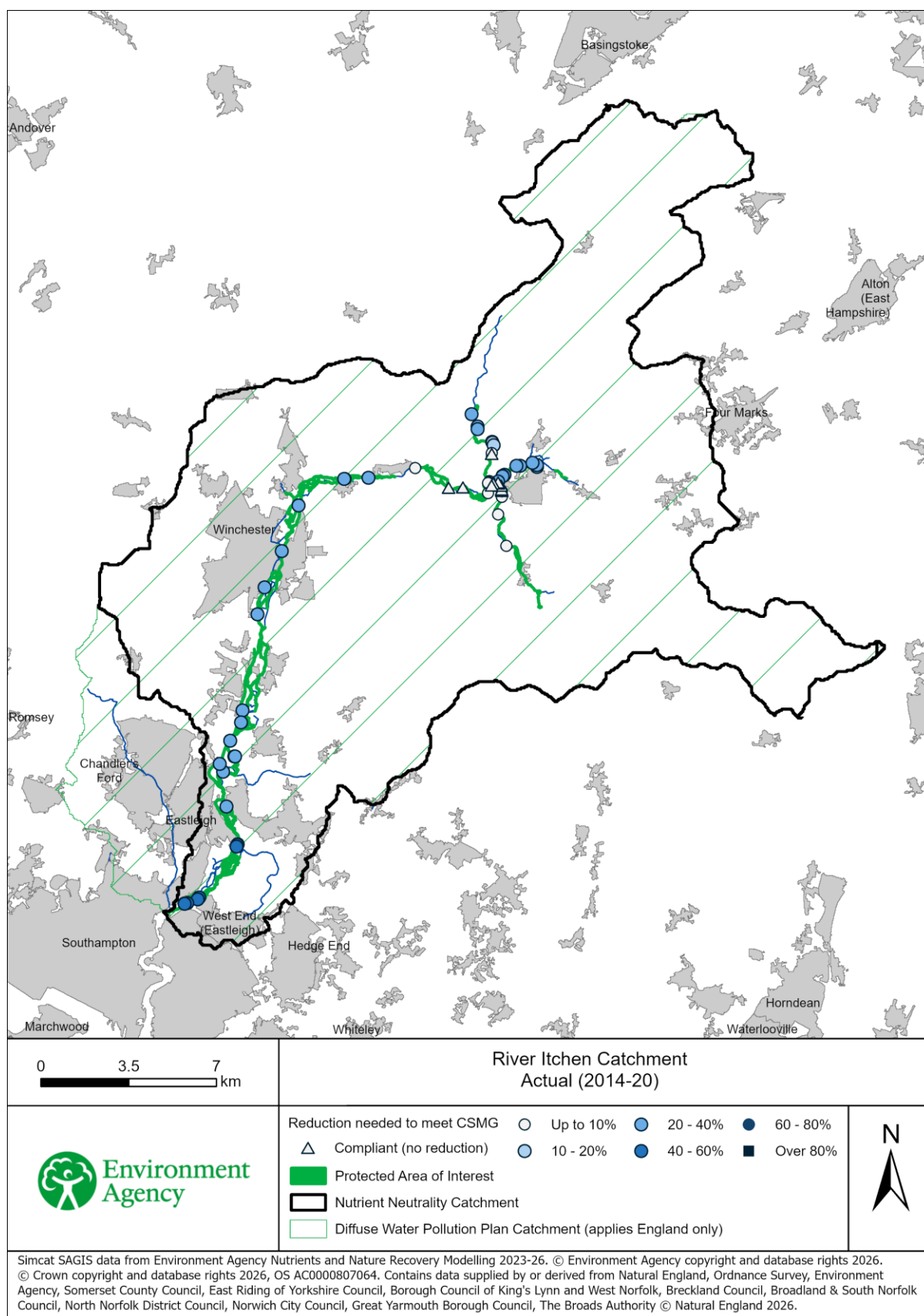
The catchment average information above provides an overview of the sector concentrations and reductions needed at the catchment scale. However, within the designated reaches there are locations where the overall reductions needed to meet the targets are greater or less than the catchment average. We show this detail on the catchment maps.

Maps 2 to 6 show the percentage reduction needed in phosphate total concentrations to meet the CSMG targets in the designated site for each scenario. Maps 7 to 9 show the percentage reduction needed in the diffuse sector concentrations after the rural land use reductions (Table 2) have been applied in the 2030 Full Regulation and the 2030 Theoretical Maximum scenarios. Data is plotted for each modelled plotting point where there is a real-world feature, for example, monitoring point or discharge location.

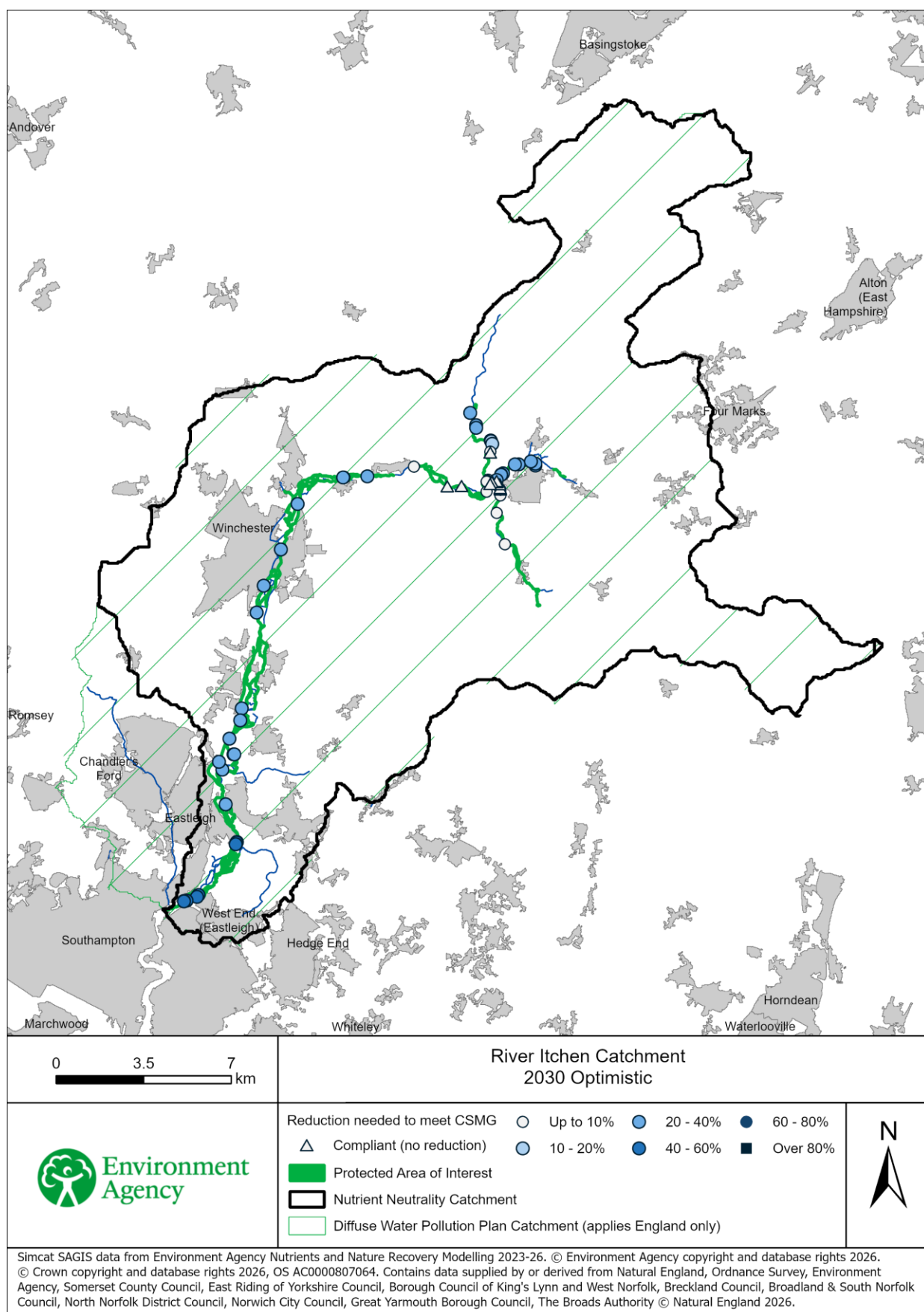
In the Actual (2014 to 2020) scenario there are isolated locations in the upper catchment that meet the overall site targets, however throughout most of the catchment reductions of between 20% and 40% are required (Map 2). Under the same scenario, the diffuse sector reductions needed to meet the diffuse sector share of the target are predominantly between 40% and 60% and over 60% in parts of the headwaters (Map 7).

The 2030 Optimistic scenario estimates the concentrations after the implementation of AMP8 water company investment in the calibration model (Map 3). The estimated reductions required under this scenario are largely the same as the Actual (2014 to 2020) scenario due to the dominance of the diffuse sector. With the Full Regulation and Theoretical Maximum reductions applied to the diffuse sector (Table 2), the estimated reductions needed to meet the diffuse sector share of the targets remain high, 40% to 80% in the headwaters and 20% - 60% in the middle and lower reaches respectively (Maps 8 and 9).

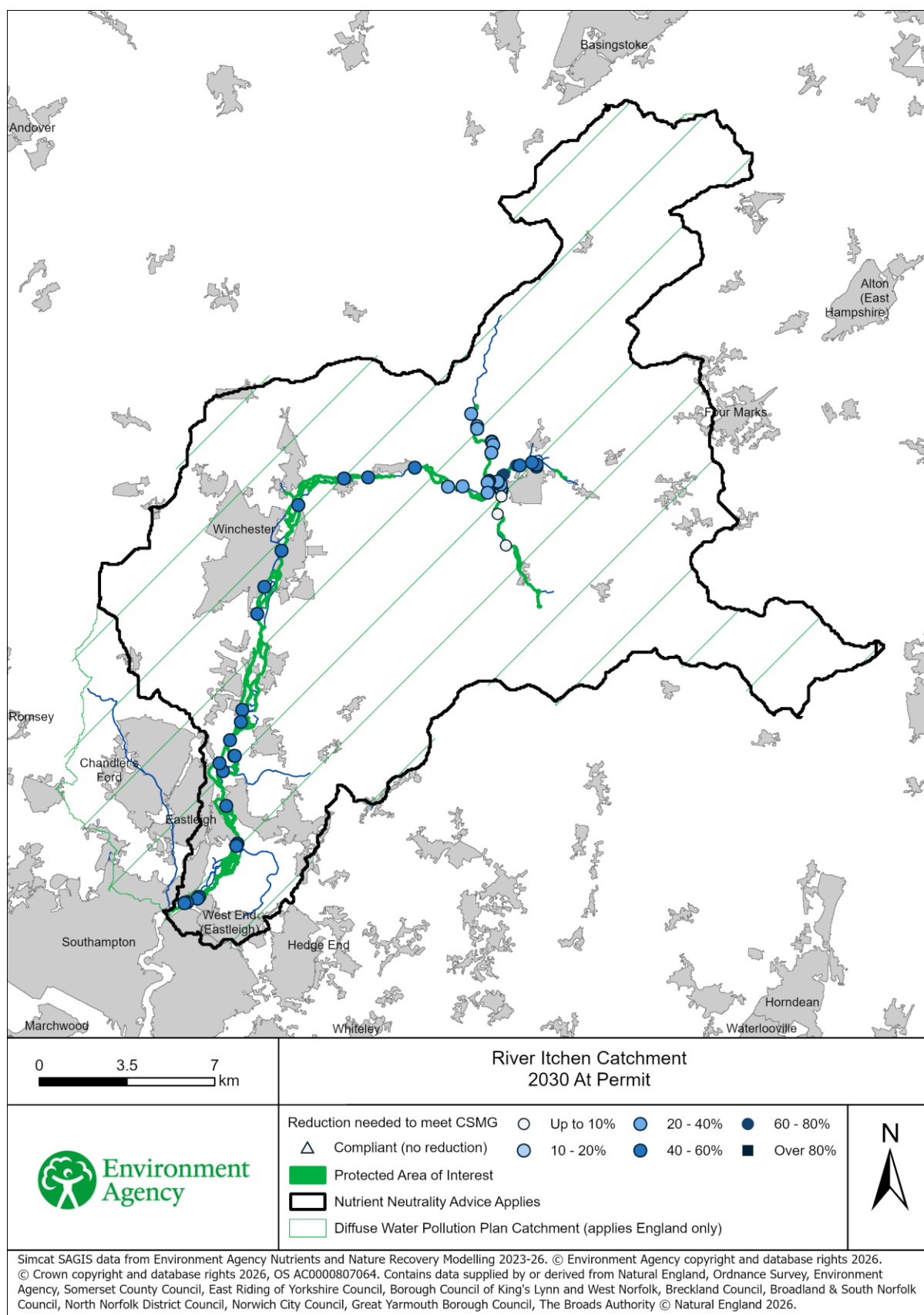
There are locations where the reductions needed to meet the diffuse sector share of the target (Maps 7 to 9) are greater than the reductions needed in total concentrations to meet the overall site target (Maps 2, 5 to 6). This is where the point sector concentrations are less than the point sector share of the target, which creates a degree of 'headroom' for the diffuse concentrations. In some locations, even with the diffuse concentrations above the diffuse sector share, the overall CSMG target can be met as in parts of the headwaters (Map 2).



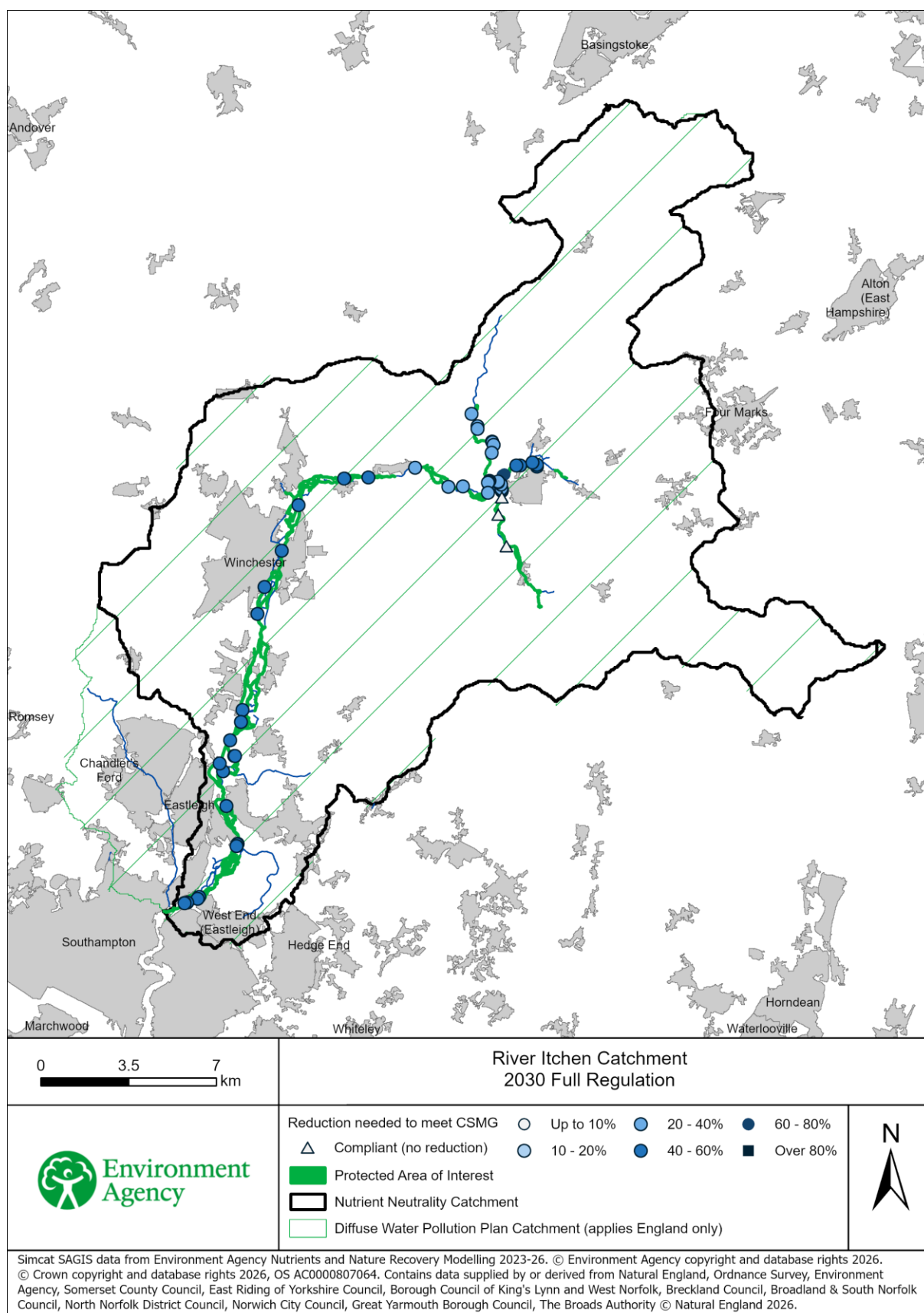
Map 2. Reductions needed in phosphate total concentrations to meet the CSMG target in the Actual (2014 to 2020) Scenario. Some locations in the upper catchment meet the overall target. Estimated reductions of between 20% and 40% are needed throughout most of the site for the target to be met. At the downstream end, the estimated reductions needed are between 40% and 60%.



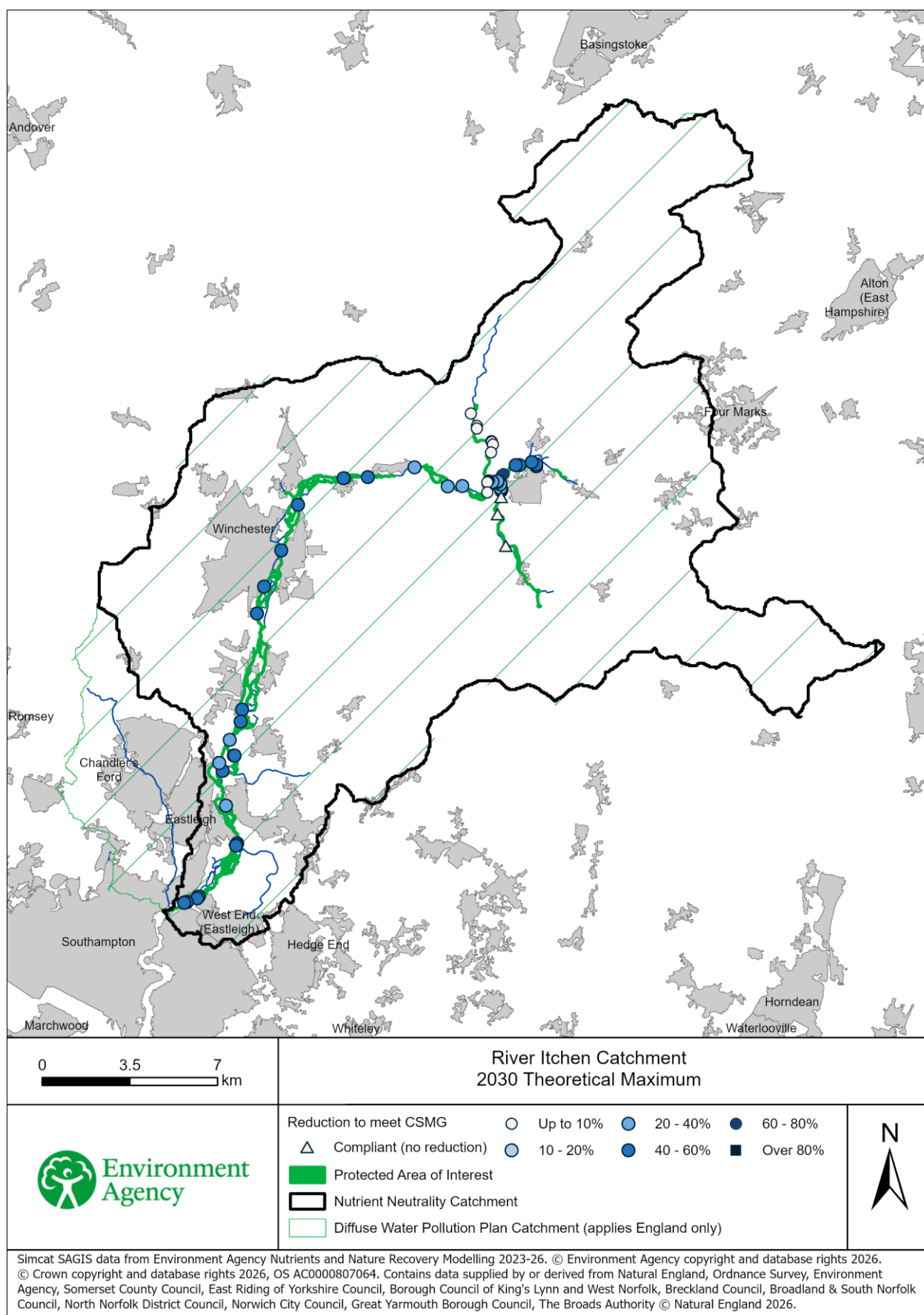
Map 3. Reductions needed in phosphate total concentrations to meet the CSMG target in the 2030 Optimistic Scenario. Reductions estimated to meet the overall target are the same as in the Actual (2014 to 2020) scenario due to the dominance of diffuse sources in the catchment.



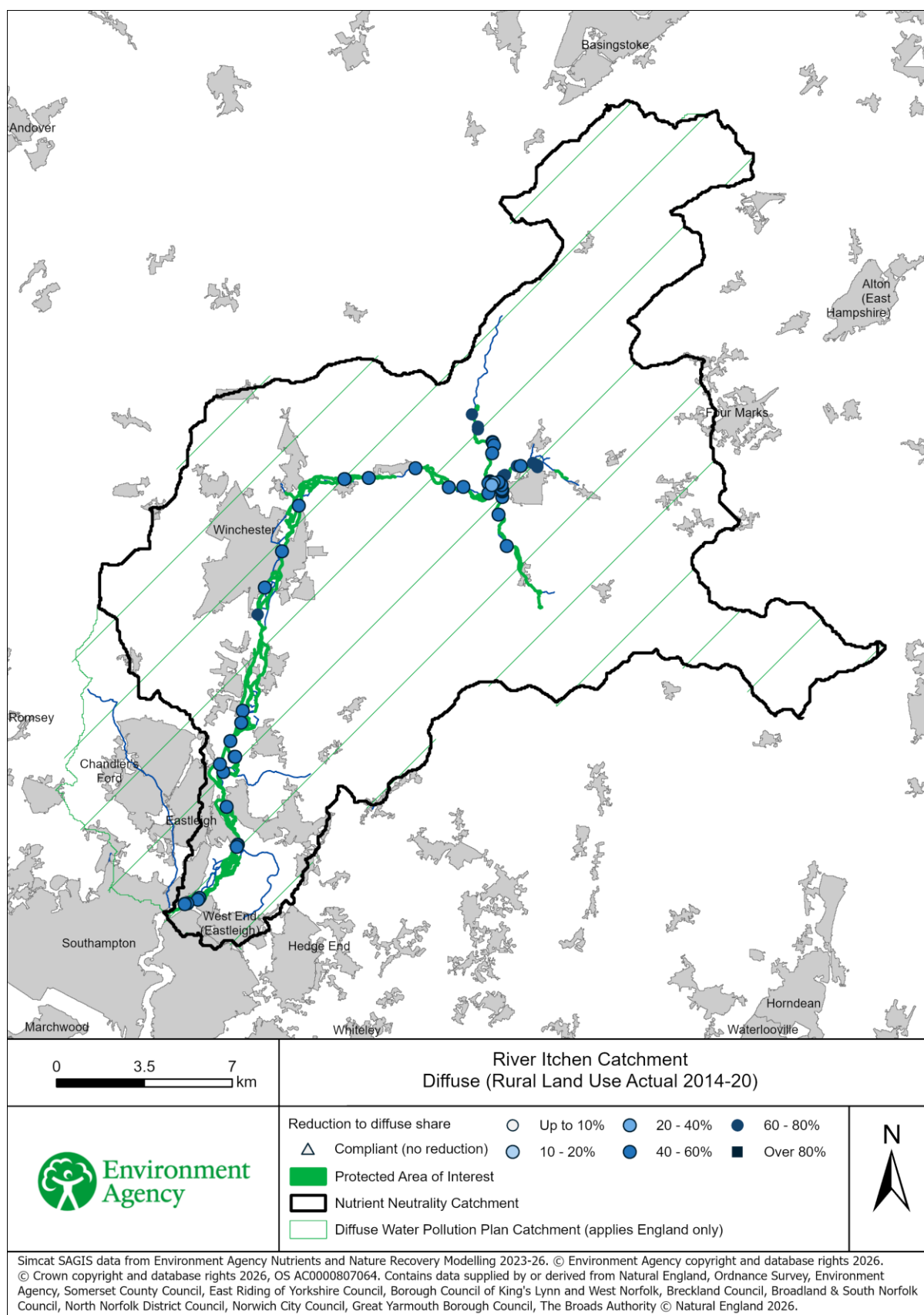
Map 4. Reductions needed in phosphate total concentrations to meet the CSMG target in the 2030 At Permit Scenario. There are no locations in the site where the site target is estimated to be met. Between 40% and 60% reductions are estimated to be needed throughout most of the catchment, with the exception of parts of the headwaters where the reductions needed are between 20% and 40% in the northern headwater (Candover Brook) and up to 10% in the southern headwater (Cheriton Stream).



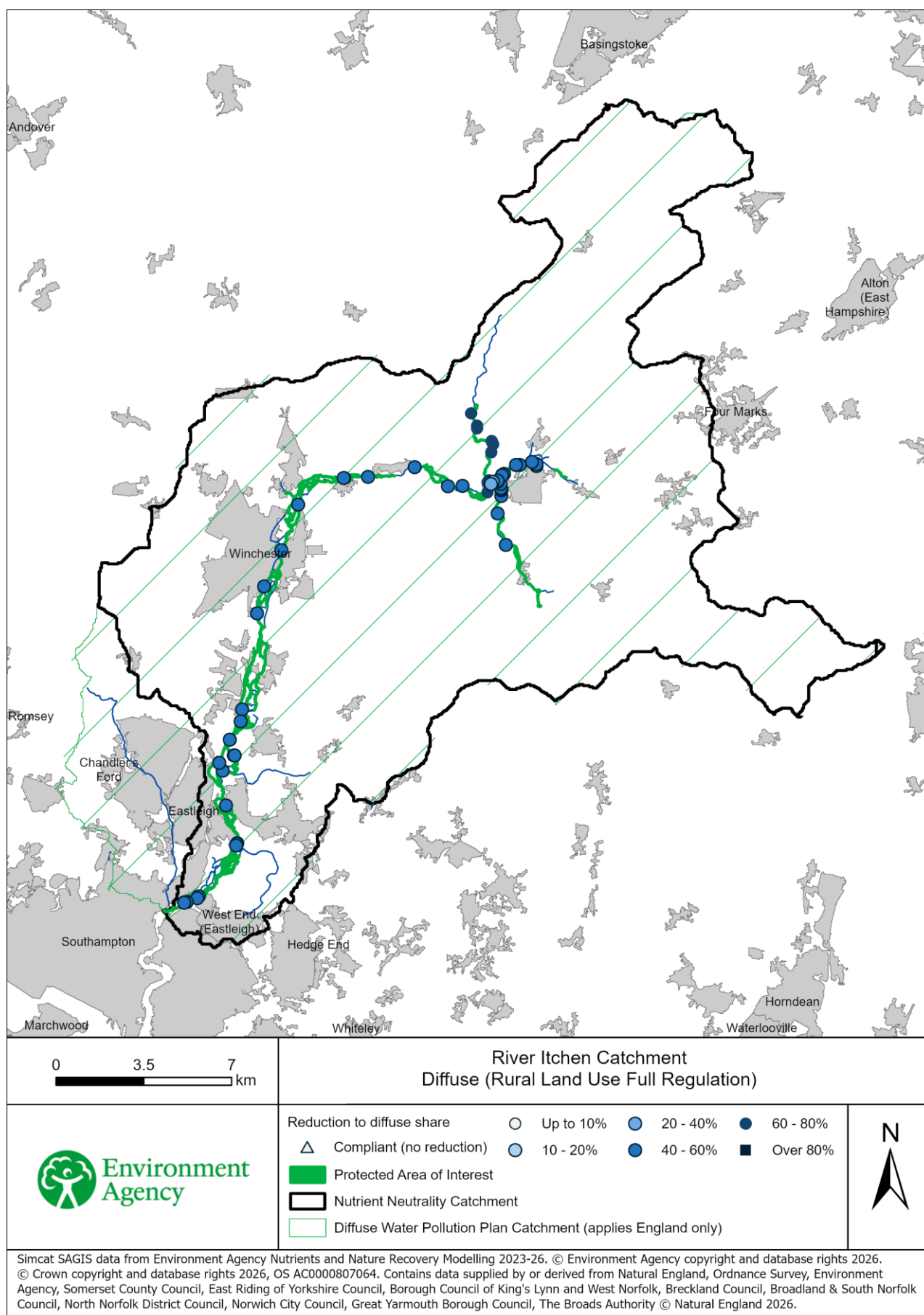
Map 5. Reductions needed in phosphate total concentrations to meet the CSMG target in the 2030 Full Regulation Scenario. Estimated reductions needed are very similar to the 2030 At Permit scenario except for the southern headwater where the target is estimated to be met.



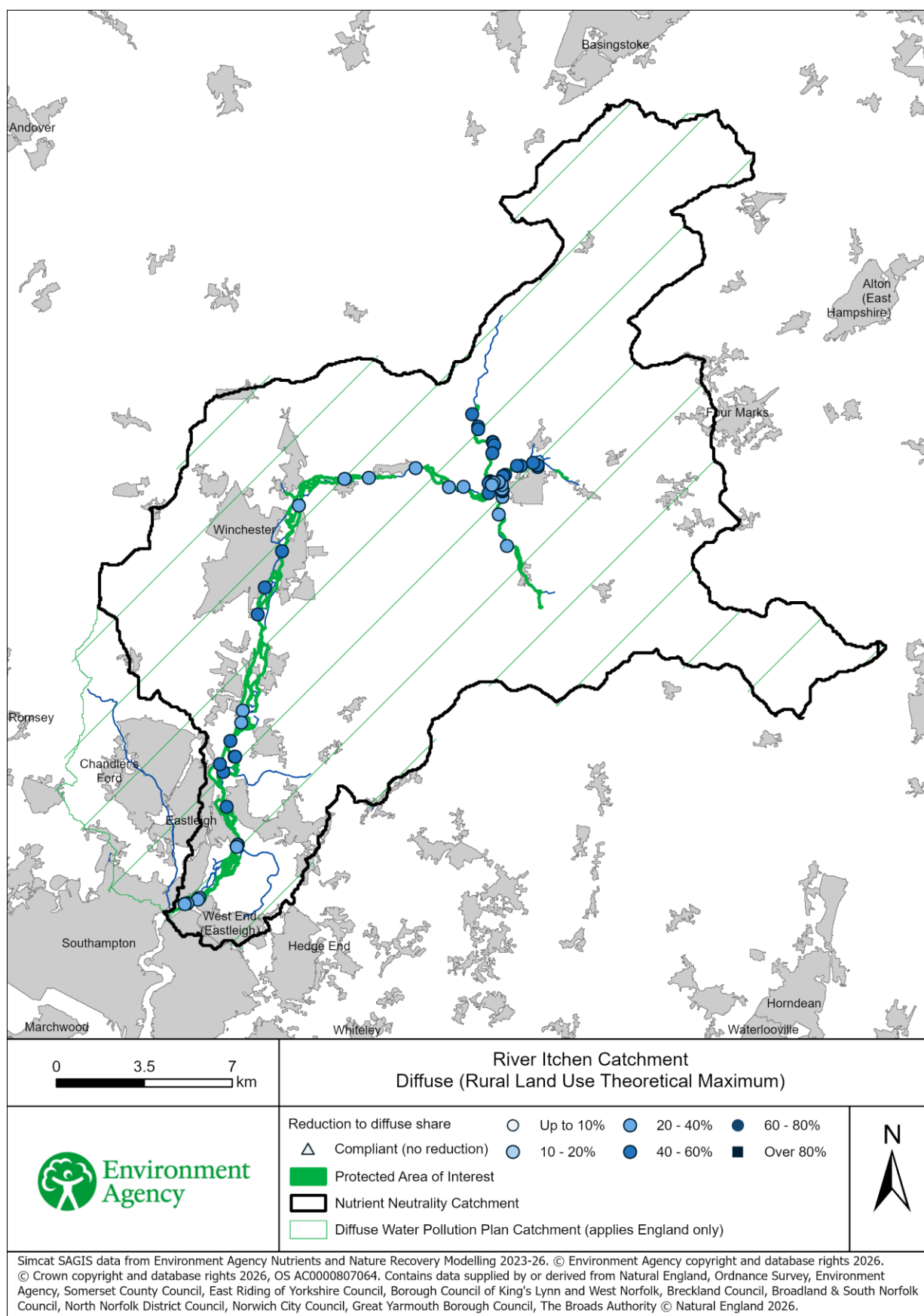
Map 6. Reductions needed in phosphate total concentrations to meet the CSMG target in the 2030 Theoretical Maximum Scenario. Estimated reductions needed are very similar to the 2030 At Permit scenario except for the headwater Candover Stream where reductions of up to 10% are estimated to be needed.



Map 7. Reductions needed in diffuse phosphate concentrations to meet the diffuse share of the target in the Actual (2014 to 2020) Scenario. Diffuse concentrations are estimated to need to reduce by between 40% and 60% throughout most of the site for the diffuse sector share of the target to be met. There are isolated locations in the headwaters where the estimated reductions needed are greater than 60%.



Map 8. Reductions needed in diffuse phosphate concentrations to meet the diffuse share of the target in the 2030 Full Regulation Scenario. Similar pattern of estimated diffuse sector reductions needed as in the Actual (2014 to 2020) scenario.



Map 9. Reductions needed in diffuse phosphate concentrations to meet the diffuse share of the target in the 2030 Theoretical Maximum Scenario. Diffuse concentrations are estimated to need to reduce by between 20% and 60% throughout most of the site for the diffuse sector share of the target to be met. In the headwaters, estimated reductions needed are estimated to be between 60% and 80%.

Input load figures used to calculate source apportionment

Table 5: Estimated phosphate input loads (kg/d) and input load source apportionment after calibration, before in-river processes.

Scenario	STW (kg/d)	Intermittents (kg/d)	Industrial (kg/d)	Rural Land Use (kg/d)	Urban (kg/d)	Septic Tanks (kg/d)	Highways (kg/d)	Background (arising from cress/ fish farms abstractions) (kg/d)	Point (%)	Rural Land Use (%)	Urban (%)	Septic Tanks (%)	Other (%)
Actual (2014 to 2020)	17.39	1.50	1.85	15.91	10.53	1.98	0.05	3.77	39.1%	30.0%	19.9%	3.7%	7.2%
2030 Optimistic	9.37	1.50	1.85	15.91	10.53	1.98	0.05	3.77	28.3%	35.4%	23.4%	4.4%	8.5%
2030 At Permit	14.37	1.50	12.48	15.91	10.53	1.98	0.05	3.77	46.8%	26.3%	17.4%	3.3%	6.3%
2030 Full Regulation	14.38	1.50	12.48	13.53	10.53	1.98	0.05	3.77	48.7%	23.2%	18.1%	3.4%	6.6%
2030 Theoretical Maximum	14.38	1.50	12.48	9.27	10.53	1.98	0.05	3.77	52.6%	17.2%	19.5%	3.7%	7.1%

References

Defra (2019a). A national scale assessment of current and future actions to reduce diffuse pollution of water by agriculture. [Report by ADAS for Defra project WT1594](#): 1-47.

Environment Agency (2022). Water quality: what 3 future environmental land management schemes can achieve by 2027. [Water quality: what 3 future environmental land management schemes can achieve by 2027](#).

Gooday, R. D., Anthony, S.G., Chadwick, D.R., Newell-Price, P., Harris, D., Duethmann, D., Fish, R., and A. L. a. W. Collins, M. (2014). Modelling the cost-effectiveness of mitigation methods for multiple pollutants at farm scale. [Science of the Total Environment](#) (468-469): 1198-1209.

List of abbreviations

ADAS – UK-based independent agricultural and environmental consultancy, previously National Agricultural Advisory Service (NAAS).

AMP8 WINEP – Asset Management Plan 8 (2025 – 2030) Water Industry National Environment Programme - [Water industry national environment programme \(WINEP\) methodology - GOV.UK](#)

CSMG – Common Standards Monitoring Guidance – includes guidance on the appropriate standards and targets for designated sites [Common Standards Monitoring Guidance for Freshwater Habitats | JNCC Resource Hub](#)

DWPP – Diffuse Water Pollution Plan

NEAP-N – ADAS model providing annual 1 km grid loadings of nitrate.

PR – [Price Review https://www.ofwat.gov.uk/regulated-companies/price-review/](https://www.ofwat.gov.uk/regulated-companies/price-review/)

PSYCHIC – ADAS model providing annual 1 km grid loadings of Phosphate.

SAC – Special Area of Conservation

SAGIS – Source Apportionment Geographical Information System

SPA – Special Protection Area

SSSI – Site of Special Scientific Interest

UKWIR – United Kingdom Water Industry Research

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