

## Guidance note on waste water drainage

The current sewer infrastructure serving the Borough is already under pressure with sewage being discharged into local watercourses at peak times. Significant improvements to capacity are proposed across the Borough over the next few years.

This guidance note is produced for developers to outline what measures should be undertaken to ensure that sufficient sewer capacity is available to enable delivery of their development in a timely manner. It should be read in conjunction with the Council's Drainage Strategy Information which can be found here [Drainage strategy information](#).

### Pre-application engagement

Thames Water Utilities Ltd (Thames Water) is the statutory undertaker for waste water treatment across the Borough. Early engagement with Thames Water prior to the submission of a planning application helps them to:

- understand how their infrastructure and assets are likely to be impacted by any planned development;
- highlight to the Council any infrastructure constraints and phasing requirements and;
- plan for necessary infrastructure

Thames Water offer a free pre-application service which can be accessed via their website Website: <https://www.thameswater.co.uk/developers>

When submitting a major application for residential development (10 or more dwellings), the Council will expect developers to have undertaken pre-application engagement with Thames Water and to provide evidence of it with their application.

This will enable both the developers and the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to understand if any capacity issues exist and the timescales for appropriate upgrades to be delivered. Such discussions will also help to identify and resolve possible problems before an application is submitted and should speed up the consultation process during the course of any application.

Although not a statutory consultee, the LPA will consult Thames Water on all major applications. Therefore, all such applications should be accompanied by a foul water drainage strategy. Where there are concerns about the existing capacity of waste water infrastructure, generally an appropriately-worded condition will be imposed ensuring that the development does not commence until strategies detailing any on and/or off site works have been submitted to, and approved by, the LPA in consultation with Thames Water. Such planning conditions may include reference to a phasing plan and will ensure that the development is not occupied until any necessary infrastructure upgrades have been delivered.

For other applications (non-major and minor), where all other modes of discharge have been exhausted in accordance with the SuDS hierarchy and surface water is proposed to be discharged into foul sewer, the Council will expect developers to have undertaken pre-application engagement with Thames Water and evidence provided of it with their application. A planning condition may be required to secure further details, however, this will not replace the requirement for a pre-application consultation.

## Reducing Demand

One key way of ensuring that the sewage system is not overloaded is to reduce the quantity of surface water entering the sewage system in order to maximise its capacity for foul sewage.

### Sustainable Drainage Systems

The use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) ensure that surface water and ground water is only discharged into the waste water sewer in exceptional circumstances. Para. 175 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that 'major developments should incorporate sustainable drainage systems unless there is clear evidence that this would be inappropriate'.

Any application for major development should be accompanied by the following information:

- Plans and specifications of SuDS proposals
- Calculations of discharge and run-off rates, water storage capacity and demonstration that these meet the requirements of the site
- Details of any off-site works required
- Management and maintenance plan for all SuDS

See also the Council's Guidance Note on drainage strategies [Drainage strategy information](#).

It should be noted that positive connection of surface water to a public sewer will only be consented by Thames Water when it can be demonstrated that the hierarchy of disposal methods have been examined and proven to be impracticable.

The disposal hierarchy is set out below:

- 1) rainwater use as a resource (for example rainwater harvesting, blue roofs for irrigation)
- 2) rainwater infiltration to ground at or close to source
- 3) rainwater attenuation in green infrastructure features for gradual release (for example green roofs, rain gardens)
- 4) rainwater discharge direct to a watercourse (unless not appropriate)
- 5) controlled rainwater discharge to a surface water sewer or drain
- 6) controlled rainwater discharge to a combined sewer.

Where connection to the public sewerage network is required to manage surface water flows, TW will only accept these flows at a discharge rate in line with CIRIA's best practice guide on SuDS or that stated within the sites planning approval.

### Water Efficiency

A further way of mitigating impact on sewage infrastructure is through promoting water efficiency. Policy LP55 Sustainable Construction of the adopted Bracknell Forest Local Plan (2024) indicates that 'all new dwellings shall meet the water efficiency standard of 110 litres/person/day'.

Applications should be accompanied by a statement, setting out how, through the use of water efficient products, this standard will be achieved.

In instances where this information is not provided, a condition will be imposed on any planning permission requiring the submission and approval of the required details.