

## Surface water policy for minor development

### Introduction

#### Who should be interested in this policy?

- Customers wishing to build single properties and household extensions
- Property developers of small housing developments of nine or less
- Homeowners who, for whatever reason, wish to divert existing surface water run-off into a Wessex Water maintained pipe.

#### What is the purpose of this policy?

Rainwater falling onto undeveloped land either evaporates, soaks into ground or over and through the ground to local land drainage (ditches, streams etc).

Development changes this natural arrangement with rainwater running off quickly from impermeable areas such as car parks and roofs. If there is no mechanism for intervention then "surface water" will flow more quickly over ground and in heavier downpours could lead to flooding that affects properties and increase polluting discharge from storm overflows.

The purpose of this surface water policy is to highlight the most effective methods of directing surface water from small developments back to the environment. Best practice is to mimic the natural state of the site prior to development, installing Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) can help achieve this. SuDS are designed to hold the surface water on site (attenuate) and then release (discharge) slowly to the environment through the SuDS hierarchy. Attenuation or storage, is often but not restricted to, the use of underground tanks or pipes.

SuDS attenuation can take a more natural form; green roofs, ponds and swales offer other development benefits for amenity, ecology and water quality. See links to more information at the foot of this policy. Wessex Water supports the use of SuDS in all instances.

All development must consider the feasibility of "release" options through the SuDS hierarchy and demonstrate why the most preferable options for SuDS cannot be obtained.

### SuDS Hierarchy

- a surface water run-off is collected for use
- b discharge into the ground via infiltration
- c discharge to a watercourse or other water body

d discharge to a surface water sewer, highway drain or other drainage system discharging to a watercourse or other surface water body

e discharge to a combined sewer\*

\* combined sewers typically serve large urban areas and are old sewers originally designed to convey untreated water direct to watercourses. These sewers were later redirected to water recycling works where flows are treated prior to their return to the environment. These sewers are coloured pink on the sewer record.

#### Why is this policy necessary?

The National Planning Policy Framework encourages SuDS and use of the hierarchy for major development of 10 houses or more or developments over 1 hectare. We find many smaller developments can present as much flood risk and environmental harm as large developments due to the nature of the catchment, lack of space on site for attenuation and viability concerns.

In our experience many minor applications for development are approved in outline based upon SuDS schemes which will not work in practice. At this point Wessex Water is usually contacted for a surface water connection to a sewer which carries foul water. This forces us to make a difficult decision which could either affect the viability of the scheme or increase the risk of downstream flooding and increase the number of discharges from storm overflows.

Accepting surface water connections to sewers designed to accommodate discharge from baths, toilets, washing machines etc increases the risk of foul sewer flooding, the volume of discharges from sewer overflows and uses up capacity within the system for future foul connections. Furthermore surface water is piped and pumped through the sewer network to Water Recycling Centres for treatment, usually a long way from where the water fell. This disrupts natural water systems increases our carbon footprint and the overall cost to customers.

Some existing houses in the Wessex Water area already drain both foul and surface water to the foul only sewers. This is a historical issue and cannot be used as an excuse for permitting further connections where better arrangements are available. Existing customers can look to retrofit devices to reduce the surface water impact on our sewers and help the environment. Both rain butts and rain gardens are relatively easy to install and can provide other benefits.

## Surface Water Single Households and Extensions

Instances where we will not permit a new surface water connection to a foul water sewer.

- The surrounding ground is suitable for a soakaway.
- There is a watercourse, highway drain, surface water sewer or combined sewer within close proximity of the proposal.
- There is an existing sewer flooding issue downstream of the development.
- There is a storm overflow downstream of the connection which has been deemed substandard or unsatisfactory due to its impact on the environment or users of the environment.

Instances where we will permit a surface water connection to a foul water sewer.

- None of the above are applicable and there is spare capacity in the existing network
- Surface water must be attenuated on site and released to the foul sewer network (where permitted) at flows no more than 1 l/s (this must be designed for all storm events up to a 1 in 30 year event, 6 hour duration; the planning authority may require attenuation storage for up to a 1 in 100 year event).
- There is no storm overflow downstream of the connection which has been deemed substandard or unsatisfactory due to its impact on the environment or users of the environment.

The householder will be responsible for the maintenance of the flow control device and all surface water apparatus within the property boundary

Where a Wessex Water scheme is proposed to alleviate existing flooding or address substandard or unsatisfactory overflows we may permit connection once the scheme is completed subject to fulfilling the rest of the criteria.

## Developments of two dwellings or more.

- The default position is that there must be no surface water connections to the foul sewer network, Development must follow the SuDS Hierarchy. Connection will only be permitted to a public foul sewer where none of the options in the SuDS hierarchy are possible and development is on previously developed land with an existing proven and positive connection to the existing foul water network.
- In these instances flows ideally will be reduced to greenfield run off rates.

## When and how to contact us

We encourage early, pre planning consultation on your development proposals. Please apply for a pre planning enquiry via our [online form](#). There is no current charge for this service.

Where planning has been approved please apply online for a connection.

The above policy will be applied for pre and post planning enquiries.

Our connection charges differ depending on whether surface water is connected to our networks, further details [here](#). Our charging arrangements are updated annually. This policy will be reviewed annually in tandem with the charges.

### Further information on sustainable drainage systems

- [Susdrains](#) - The community for sustainable drainage
- [Wessex Water adoption guidelines](#) (shared drainage and SuDS elements for 2 dwellings or more)

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