

Sewer adoption – existing sewers

These guidance notes are provided to help you fill in an application form to adopt an existing sewer. This is for private sewers that have been in use for a number of years, not newly constructed systems. The notes should be read in conjunction with the Water Industry Act 1991. The relevant section is Section 102 – adoption of existing sewers.

What is a public sewer?

Most sewers that are shared by more than one property or lateral drains (pipe outside the property boundary but only serving one unit) are public and will be owned and maintained by Wessex Water. There are some exceptions. The only sewers that remain private are those that:

- Serve only a single property within that property boundary
- Are maintained privately as part of a documented property management scheme.
- Do not connect directly to the public system, for example some surface water systems that flow directly to a culvert, watercourse or soakaway.

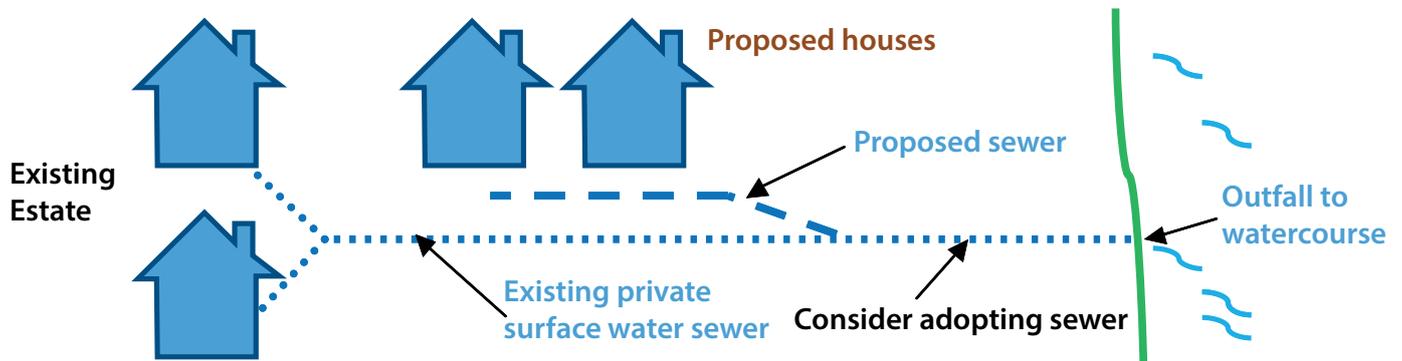
Can I connect to a private sewer?

You do not have a right to connect to a private sewer; it needs to be by negotiation with the owner of that system.

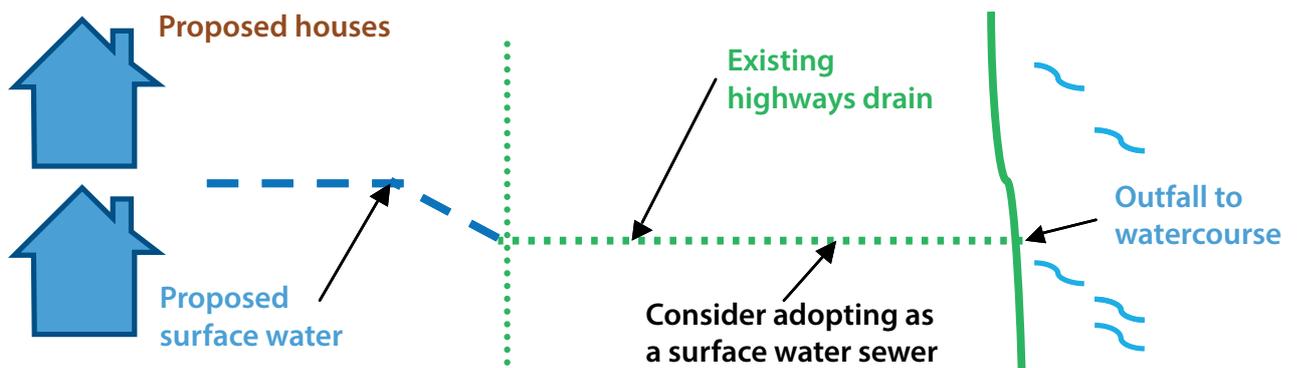
Can Wessex Water adopt a private system?

Yes we can consider adopting a privately owned system so that it becomes part of the public network. The Act requires that we 'have regard to all the circumstances of the case' and 'consider the method of construction and state of repair of the sewer or works.' When a sewer is adopted, Wessex Water is responsible for future maintenance, improvements and agreeing any connections to it.

For instance it may be beneficial for a developer to ask us to consider adopting an existing private sewer or highways drain so they can apply for a connection.



The adoption process firstly involves you carrying out a structural survey of the sewers you want Wessex Water to adopt. We will inspect the system and advise if any repairs are required. When we agree it is an acceptable standard we will serve a formal notice on the current owners and interested parties. After two months if no objections have been raised we will vest the sewers and confirm the system has been adopted as public.



In law, vesting gives an immediately secured right to an asset that cannot be taken away by a third party. With regard to sewer adoption, this means the ownership and responsibility of the asset is transferred to Wessex Water.

What do I need to do?

Step 1 Application

Please complete the sewer adoption application form and return it with the relevant information to the local Developer Services office. Contact details are at the end of these notes.

Step 2 Fee will be confirmed

Wessex Water will determine the suitability of the case, and advise you what the fee will be.

Step 3 Making payment

Payment can be by cheque made payable to Wessex Water Services Ltd, or we can invoice so you can pay by BACS.

Step 4 Survey

You need to provide details to locate the sewer and prove it is in an adoptable condition. You should arrange high pressure jetting to pre-cleanse the sewer, followed by a camera survey. You can arrange Wessex Water to carry this out at additional cost, or choose from our list of suitable CCTV contractors. We will carry out a manhole inspection, but you will need to provide labour to lift the manhole covers and arrange for access or any traffic management.

Step 5 Review and adoption

We will review the information and advise if any repairs are necessary. Once the sewer is agreed to be structurally sound, Wessex Water will serve a formal notice of intention to adopt that asset. The notice is served on the current owner and any interested parties. If no objection is raised within a two month appeal period, we issue a Vesting Declaration to confirm that it is public. The sewer is added to our records and maintained in the future as public

What information do I need to provide?

In order for Wessex Water to assess the scheme, you need to provide the following information:

- Location plan.
- Third party land ownership details (if known), and any relevant information relating to previous dealings with third parties.
- Plan showing sewer and manhole locations, plus pumping station details if applicable.
- Cover and invert levels, pipe material details and gradients.
- CCTV survey report and DVD.
- Confirmation of discharge consent with the riparian owner if a surface water sewer outfalls to a watercourse.

How much will it cost?

On receipt of the application, Wessex Water will advise you an all-in cost, which covers administration, legal and inspection fees. VAT is not applicable on this all-in fee (0%) for either existing properties or new build properties. Indicative fees are:

- £500 for a single length of minor private sewer.
- £1000 for a small private estate.
- £2500 for a larger or complex system, a pumping station, a sewage works, or where adoption is disputed.

You will be responsible for the cost of any remedial work identified.

If a system is in a particularly poor state of repair requiring more than two inspections, you will incur additional Wessex Water staff costs recharged at an hourly basis.

The fee does not include for Wessex Water to undertake a CCTV survey, but we can do this for an extra charge.

Do I need to pay any other charges?

If new properties are being built, then infrastructure and connection charges are payable in addition to sums in respect of the adoption of the existing system. Details are in our Charges information on our website.

Who can carry out the CCTV survey?

Please read our guidance notes about CCTV camera surveys, which include a list of contractors. All contractors listed in those guidance notes hold Wessex Water permit cards. This means their staff have current confined spaces City & Guilds qualifications and are licenced to work in the highway.

You can use a different company, but we cannot guarantee the quality of the survey. Beware of contractors offering a cut-price service. More information is on our website.

Who will carry out the manhole inspection?

You will need to arrange a manhole chamber inspection with the Wessex Water site inspector. Contact details will be given to you when the application is confirmed to go ahead.

What details are reviewed?

We will review the CCTV survey and manhole inspection report, along with other relevant information listed below:

- The pipe diameter must be 100mm minimum.
- Building proximity to the sewer. Is it built over? Is there adequate clearance for access?
- Route should be in the highway, or publically accessible.
- Will the sewer be needed for future development?
- What else is connected?.
- There must be at least two properties connected.
- Pitch fibre pipes are not acceptable.
- Is there adequate capacity?
- Is the sewer in good condition?
- Who currently owns the system and are all owners in agreement with the adoption request?
- Is watercourse discharge consent known?
- Is the request simply to pass a known or ongoing problem to Wessex Water?
- Are the downstream sewers already public?

Private pumping stations are often not constructed to an adoptable standard and can be expensive to bring up to an acceptable condition. They require an extensive review, including assessment for telemetry installation and septicity checks. We can provide more information when you apply.

What happens if the sewer is in poor condition?

If the system is not in an adoptable state, Wessex Water will identify remedial repairs required to bring it up to an appropriate condition. You will be responsible for carrying out the works at your cost, followed by a further inspection and survey to confirm completion.

If remedial repairs cannot be agreed, the adoption is formally rejected and we will provide reasons.

What can I do if I disagree with the decision?

If you are not satisfied with our decision then you should first discuss it with the local Developer Services team. If a solution cannot be agreed you may use the formal Wessex Water complaint system or contact OFWAT for a ruling.

Send your application to:

North - Wessex Water, Kennet Way, Trowbridge, BA14 8RN
Tel: 01225 522682 email development.north@wessexwater.co.uk

South - Wessex Water, Poole STW, Cabot Lane, Poole, BH17 7BX
Tel: 01202 643461 email development.south@wessexwater.co.uk

West - Wessex Water, Riverside, Chilton Trinity, Bridgwater, TA6 3JS
Tel: 01823 225219 email development.west@wessexwater.co.uk

