Building over (or close to) a public sewer or lateral drain

What you should do, and how we can help

southwestwater.co.uk

SOUTH WEST WATER

Contents

Thinking about extending your home? We're here to help.

It's our job to collect wastewater from homes and businesses across Devon, Cornwall and small areas of Dorset and Somerset. And to do this we use our vast network of sewer pipes, over 14,000km of them in total. Our sewer pipes take away wastewater to clean it, treat it and return it safely back to the environment, so that we can keep our rivers and seas clean.

Our sewers run under the ground all over our operating area, in streets and gardens, fields and land. So, if you're building an extension, chances are there will be a sewer pipe nearby.

That's why you'll need to let us know if you're planning to extend your home, so that we can make sure your home, and our pipes, are protected, during and after the build.

If you plan to build over, or within 3 metres of one of our sewer pipes or lateral drains, you'll need to let us know so that we can consider your proposal.

This booklet tells you how.

Larger and deeper sewers and larger developments

This booklet deals with alterations to existing residential properties – typically, where a homeowner is planning to build an extension either over or very close to small public sewers and lateral drains, with a maximum diameter of 225mm.

If you're building a new house or extending an industrial or commercial premises we will not provide consent to build over or close to a public sewer or lateral drain.

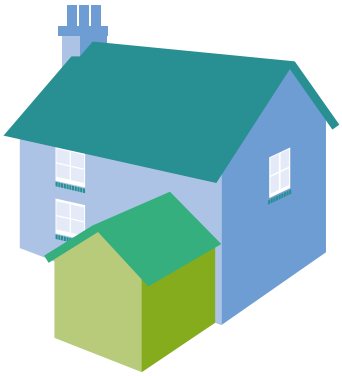
So if you're planning a bigger job, please contact us to discuss your proposals.

Before you start

If you're thinking of improving your home by extending, adding a conservatory, annexe, or garage, you'll need to find out if there are any lateral drains or sewers on your land.

If there's pipework on your land it could affect the position, size and design of your extension. Building over or near a pipe could damage the pipe or your home in the long term, so it's important we work together to find out what pipework is underground.

We recommend you find out where the lateral drains and sewers are well in advance of starting any building work. Ideally, you should know where the pipes are at the design stage of your project – before you start any work. This will help to avoid unnecessary delays, damage to pipes or additional costs further down the line.



Why you need to let us know

We are responsible for all public sewers within our operating area – that's all of Devon, Cornwall and small areas of Dorset and Somerset – this includes the maintenance of them. We need to make sure that building work doesn't damage the sewer (and potentially your home and environment) or make it harder for us to access and maintain a sewer in the long term, resulting in increased costs to all our customers.

Building Regulations approval

While planning your extension, you should have obtained Planning Permission or Building Regulations approval from your Local Authority. Or perhaps you're carrying out work which falls under 'homeowners' permitted development rights', or doesn't need Building Regulations (things like conservatories, car ports and porches sometimes fall into this category).

However, these permits do not give you consent to build over, or close to, our lateral drains and sewers.

Who's responsible for what

As a property owner, you are responsible for drains that serve only your property and are within your property boundary. This includes underground pipes, gutters and downpipes attached to your property.

South West Water is responsible for lateral drains serving only your property which are outside of your boundary and connect to the existing public sewer network, as well as sewers serving multiple properties that are within your boundary. There's a good chance that there are some pipes within your property boundary which are owned by South West Water.

There may be more than one sewer pipe within your property boundary, i.e a foul sewer and a surface water sewer.

If you're building over sewers and drains owned by South West Water, you need our permission first. The diagram below shows some examples of who owns what

Private drain - the drainage system within your property boundary which only serves your property

Public lateral drain - the section of drain which connects your property to the public sewer network and is located outside the boundary e.g. neighbour's garden, the highway or other land

Public sewer - a wastewater pipe which joins more than one property and is connected to the existing sewer network.

How do I know if there's a public sewer on my land?

There are some tell-tale signs that there's pipework within your property boundary. For example, there may be an inspection cover or manhole cover in your garden, such as those below.

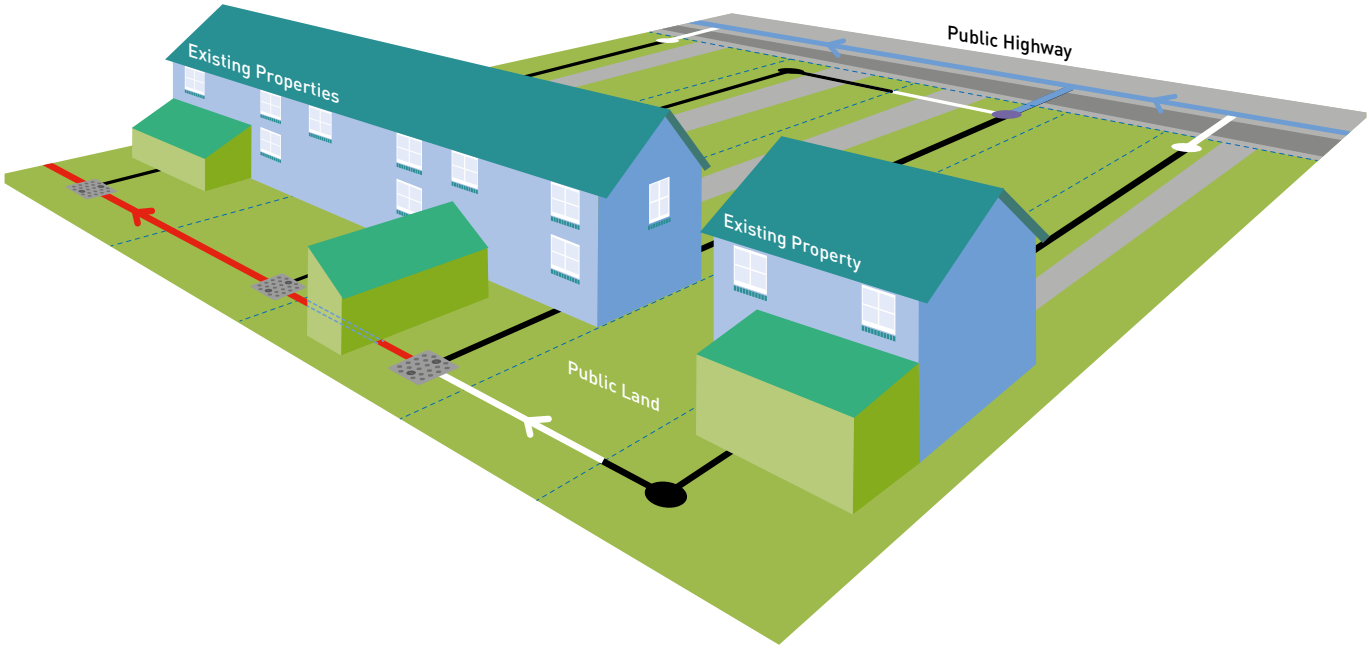
If there are no physical signs of drains or sewers, that doesn't mean there isn't something under the ground. If your property is connected to the public sewer, it's likely that there will be a sewer pipe and/or lateral drain located within your property boundary and you will need permission to build over or close to it.

There are a few ways to find out more:

- Your architect or builder may be able to help you to find out if there's a public sewer or drain within your property boundary
- Details of drainage arrangements may be included within the legal documentation related to your property
- If you want us to help you locate the sewer, contact us for further information. There's a charge for this service - please refer to the Developer Services Charges Scheme on our website

Examples of inspection chamber covers you might find on your property

These are some typical examples of extensions. Sewers and lateral drains can be located anywhere around your property. Before you start work, it's really important to find out where they are.



Key:

- Public manhole
- Private drain - the drainage system within your property boundary which only serves your property
- Public lateral drain - the section of drain which connects your property to the public sewer network and is located outside the boundary e.g. neighbour's garden, the highway or other land
- Public sewer - a wastewater pipe which joins more than one property and is connected to the existing sewer network.

How do I get consent to build over or close to a sewer?

Please note: our consent is required not only for buildings directly over our public sewers and lateral drains but also buildings close to the public sewer network – that is, within 3 metres of the sewer. If you don't gain consent and continue with your build, you may not be able to get the Building Regulations Completion Certificate that signs off your building as complete from the Local Authority or approved inspector, and this could affect the sale of your home in the future.

Here's how to get consent to build over, or within 3 metres of, a public sewer or drain:

Step 1: Review our Build over Sewer consent criteria

These can be found at the back of this document and explain the situations where you'll need consent to build over or close to a sewer or lateral drain, and the criteria you must meet to go ahead with your build.

In some cases extra work may be required to your property before you meet the consent criteria – for instance, you might need to move an inspection chamber or replace some pipework. The consent criteria explains how these changes can be made, so that you can get on with your build.

Once you've read through the consent criteria, you can move on to one of the following steps:

Step 2: Complete and submit the required information

a) **My build satisfies all of the criteria and I do not have to alter the public sewer network i.e. replace a pipe or move an inspection chamber.**

Please complete and return the Declaration of Works form. With the help of the consent criteria, you should be able to answer all of the questions in the Declaration of Works form.

b) **My build does not satisfy the criteria, but it will if I complete some minor alterations to the public sewer network i.e. reposition existing inspection chambers or replace defective pipework.**

Please complete and return the Enquiry to build over/close to public drainage form along with plans showing your proposed building works.

c) **My build does not satisfy the criteria and involves building over/close to a deeper, larger sewer or a building with non-standard foundation arrangements.**

You'll need to complete the Enquiry to build over/close to public drainage form and supply us with plans showing your proposed building works.

Step 3:

Once you're ready to submit your Declaration of Works or Enquiry to build over form, send it to:

Developerservicesassetprotection@southwestwater.co.uk

Or

Developer Services, South West Water,

Peninsula House, Rydon Lane, Exeter, EX2 7HR

If your build does not meet the requirements, it's unlikely that we'll be able to grant consent to build over or close to our sewers. This is to protect both our pipework and your property. We are more than willing to discuss alternative arrangements such as amending your build proposals or diverting the public sewer which would enable your development to proceed.

Before you begin

If there's a sewer where you want to build, it's important to find out what condition it's in.

You can do this by arranging a CCTV survey (we can do this at a charge or you can choose your own contractor) or simply by digging down to expose the pipe. Any evidence you find this way should be stored with the deeds of your house, along with a copy of our Build over Sewer consent.

If you find damage to the sewer or lateral drain, get in touch with us so we can discuss repairs. We also recommend that you keep evidence of the state of your sewers after your work has been completed, so you can show that the sewer has not been affected.

If there's a problem in the future with our sewer or lateral drain as a result of your building work, we may look to recover costs from you.

How much is it going to cost?

Our charge covers the cost of:

- Administration of your declaration
- Site inspection if necessary
- Technical support
- Liaison with Building Control or your approved inspector
- Issuing your letter of consent

For charges associated with the Build over Sewer process, please refer to a copy of our Developer Services Charges Scheme which can be found on our website.

Can I start work before consent is received?
No. If your proposal doesn't meet with our criteria, we may need to agree amendments to your design.

If you've already started work, this could prove costly and difficult to do and will cause delays.

On rare occasions, we may not be able to allow you to build over our sewer. This is in the interest of protecting both our pipes and your property.

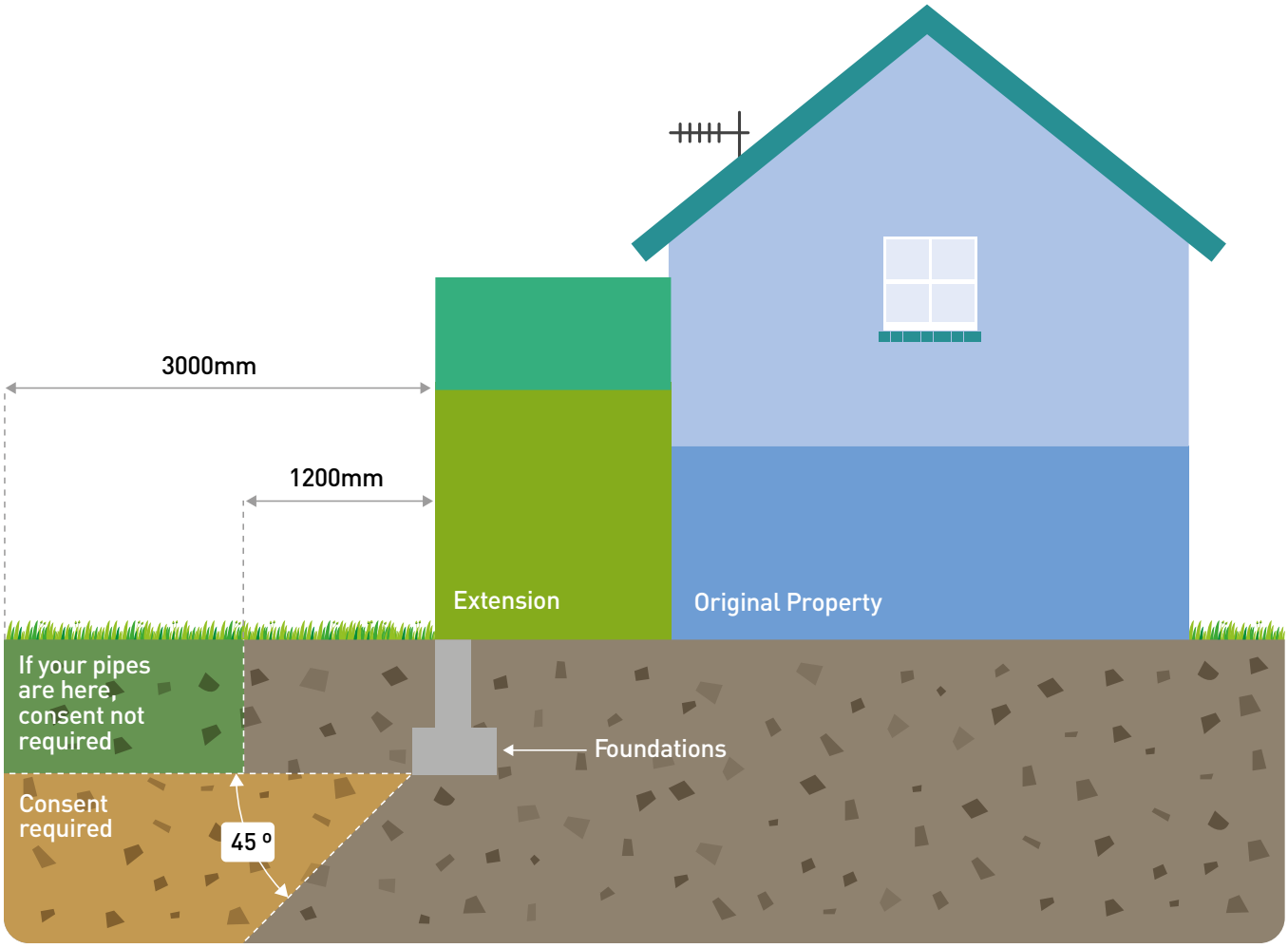
How soon will I be able to start work?
In most cases, we can give our consent within 10 working days. In some cases, we may need further information from you before being able to decide if the project can go ahead, or if it needs to be changed.

Exposed pipe

Broken pipe

Building Close to (but not over)

The diagram below highlights an exemption to these requirements i.e where a sewer is within 3 metres but is particularly shallow.



Our consent criteria

How to secure our approval to build over or close to a public sewer or lateral drain.

This guidance will help you to fill out the Declaration of Works. In most cases, consent to build over will be provided by letter. In some cases consent will need to be given by formal legal agreement.

References to 'pipe', 'pipes' or 'pipework' relate to the public sewers and lateral drains which you're planning to build over or close to.

'Building close to' relates to the extension of an existing property where the new building is within 3 metres of a public sewer and/or lateral drain.

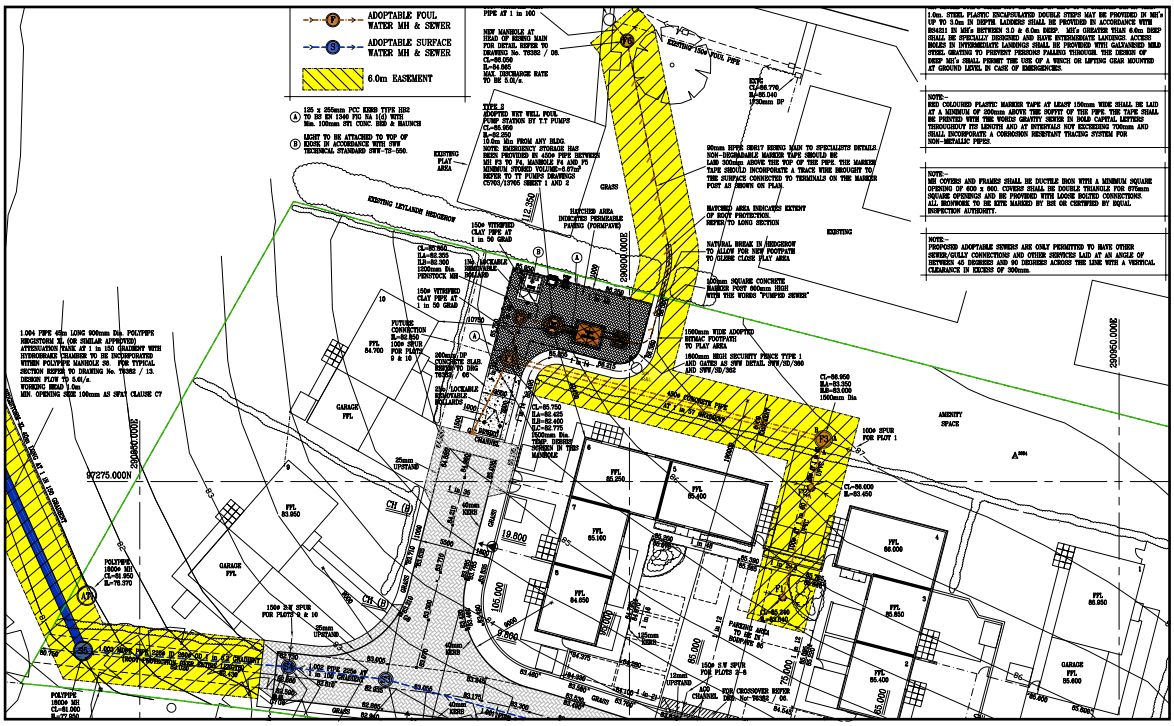
Consent Criteria

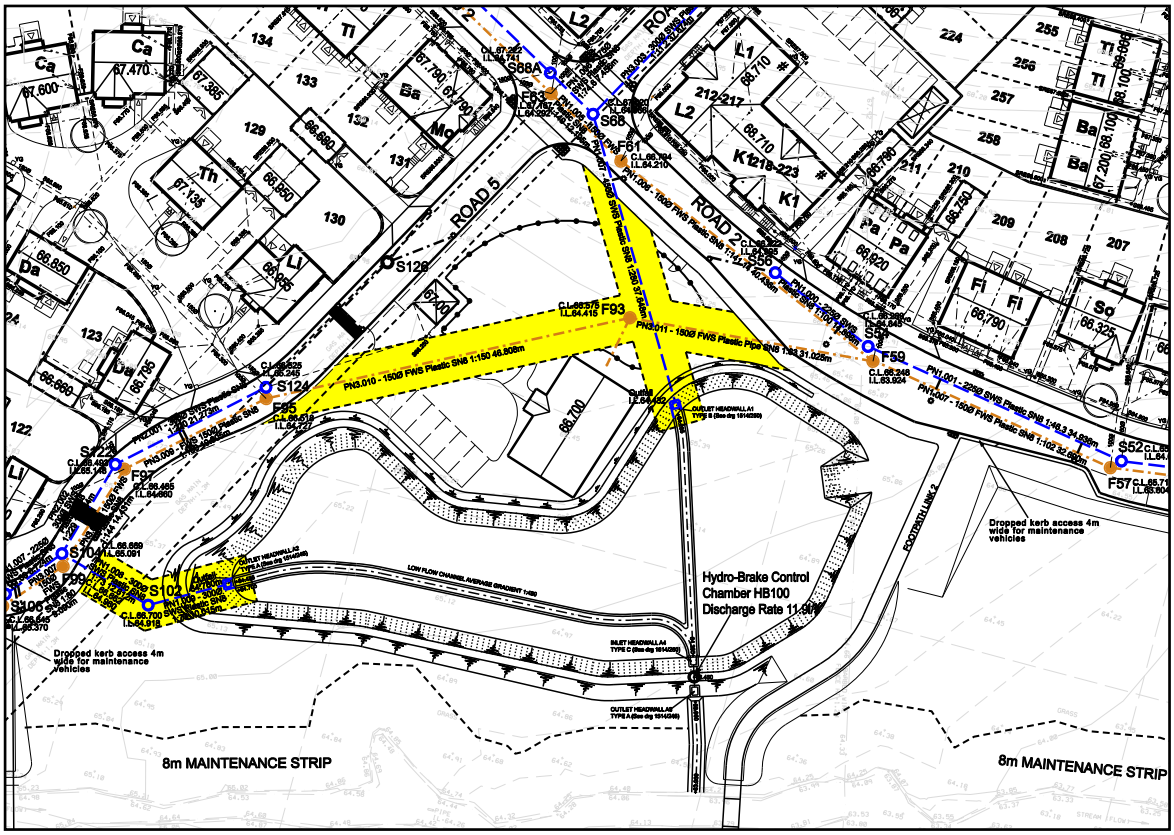
You will need to establish and confirm:		We'll say yes, if...	We'll say no, if...	Further advice:
1.	The type of building works	Your development involves a single or double storey residential extension, conservatory, annexe or garage which is attached to the existing property	Your development involves the construction of a new residential property, the extension of industrial and commercial property or any detached ancillary buildings or structure	We cannot permit a build over/close to for the following: X New residential properties X Extensions of industrial and commercial properties X Detached ancillary buildings or structure X If the pipe to be built over/close to is found to be defective and not repaired X The size of the pipe is greater than 225mm in diameter X The pipe diameter, direction, material or gradient changes beneath the area of the proposed build and cannot be replaced/removed. X If you are unable to relocate the access point, i.e. access is on junction of sewers or a change of direction X Your proposal involves an infill structure from one boundary to another where there are already structures on both sides X Pressurised pipes such as rising mains and water mains.
2.	I/we are not aware of any historic blockages, flooding, odour or other operational issues with the sewer/ lateral drain	You are not aware of any historic blockages, flooding, odour or other operational issues with the sewer/ lateral drain	You have had reason to contact South West Water or another drainage professional as a result of problems with the sewers or lateral drains within your property within the last 12 months and these have not been repaired	
3.	Are you aware of the presence of an easement or restrictive covenants which prohibit building?	You are not aware of easements or covenants which relate to the pipework which you propose to build over/close to	You are aware of easement/ covenants which relate to the pipework which you propose to be built over/close to	**Please see Detail A below** for examples of easement detail on property deeds.
4.	The pipe's condition (where existing pipework is not being replaced)	Pipe is in good condition. This can be established by exposing the length of pipe which will be built over or the completion of an internal CCTV survey	The pipework is found to be defective and is not repaired	This can potentially be resolved if the pipe is replaced. For further information please see our alterations page at the back of this document
5.	The sewer or lateral drain is a gravity flow pipe	The pipe freely flows and is not pressurised	The pipe is a pressurised main	This can potentially be resolved if the sewer can be diverted and the customer is prepared to enter into Sewer Diversion Agreement in accordance with S.185 Water Industry Act 1991. Please see the Developer Services Section of our website for more details.
6.	Depth of the pipe from the existing ground level to the pipe channel (invert)	2m or less	Greater than 2m	This can potentially be resolved if it can be demonstrated that the development does not place any additional load on the pipe. You will need to complete the Enquiry to build over/ close to public drainage form and supply us with detailed information.

continued

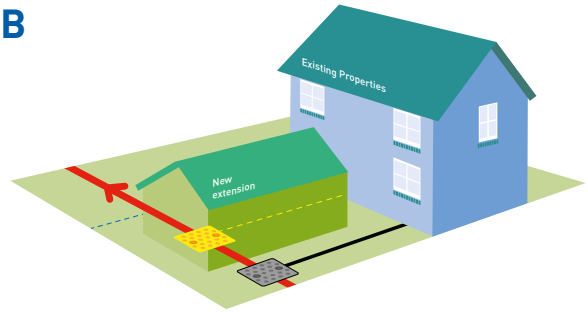
You will need to establish and confirm:	We'll say yes, if...	We'll say no, if...	Further advice:
7. The pipe's internal diameter. These typically relate to standard sizes, 100, 150, 225mm or the equivalent 4, 6, 9 inches	If the pipe has an internal diameter of 225mm (9 inch) or less, consent will be issued via letter, if approved.	If the pipe's internal diameter is larger than 225mm (9 inch)	This can potentially be resolved if either the size or shape of the building works is altered or the sewer is diverted using the Diversion process. Please see the Developer Services section of our website for more details.
8. The pipe material	Clay, plastic	Pitch fibre, brick, asbestos cement	This can potentially be resolved if the pipework is replaced before building works begin, please contact us for further advice on how to proceed.
9. The pipe continuity under the new building	The pipe does not change in diameter, direction, material or gradient beneath the proposed new building	Diameter, direction, material or gradient clearly changes beneath (or close to) the area of proposed build	This can potentially be resolved if the pipework is replaced and/or realigned before building works begin – please contact us for further advice on how to proceed.
10. Existing access points. This relates to manholes, inspection chambers and rodding eyes	Your building will not be over the existing access point and is a minimum of 500mm from the new build	You are unable to meet the minimum 500mm clearance requirement or the existing access will be under the new building	This can potentially be resolved if the affected access can be repositioned or the shape of the build/extension is adjusted to meet this requirement. **See Detail B below**
11. Overall length of pipe (sewer) with no external access. This is only applicable for terraced properties where building works over a sewer are proposed across the whole width of the garden	You do not intend to build across the full width of your garden. If you do, external access to the sewer is available via the adjacent neighbour's garden.	You intend to build across the full width of your garden and your neighbours have also done the same. This will result in a situation where there is no external access to the sewer across three or more adjoining properties.	This can potentially be resolved if suitable alternative access arrangements to the public sewer network can be provided by amending the shape of your building. **See Detail C below**
12. The type of foundation which you intend to use	Your building relies on traditional strip or trench fill foundations. **See Detail D below**	Your building will use another form of foundation design e.g. pad, piling, raft, cantilever, etc.	This can potentially be resolved. A detailed assessment of the foundation and its impact may be needed.
13. Foundation positioning. Distance between the pipe and foundations	The foundation design protects the pipe where it passes nearby. **See Detail E** The foundations which support the wall which do not cross the sewer, must have a minimum 500mm horizontal clearance between the edge of the new foundations and pipe	Your foundation design cannot achieve 500mm clearance from the pipe.	This can potentially be resolved after a detailed assessment of the foundation and its impact on the pipe.
14. Depth of your foundation in relation to the pipe	Your foundations are designed to be at least 150mm below the pipe when located within 1m (horizontally) of the pipe.	Required foundation depth cannot be achieved	This can potentially be resolved if alternative foundation proposals are submitted and agreed. **See Detail E below**
15. Protecting the pipe where walls/ foundation are built and cross over	Your foundation design complies with the Standards set out within H1 Building Regulations and South West Water. **See Detail F**	The minimum lintel requirements cannot be achieved	
16. Distance between the floor of the new building and pipe	Your design incorporates a minimum of 300mm headroom between the underside of the new floor slab and the pipe. **See Detail E below**	Your design cannot provide 300mm of headroom between the underside of the new floor and the pipe.	This can potentially be resolved if the sewer can be diverted and the customer is prepared to enter into Section 185 Sewer Diversion Agreement Water Industry Act 1991
17. The distance from the external face of your build or pipe in metres	If your build and its foundations are deeper than our sewer / lateral drain. **(Please see details E and A** within our consent criteria).	Your building and its foundation are likely to transfer an additional load (weight) onto the sewer / lateral drain via the surrounding ground	Please confirm the distance between our sewer or lateral drain and the external face of builds foundation. If this distance varies, (e.g. the pipe is diagonal to the build), please attach a plan with dimensions to your submission.

Detail A – Easement drawings





Detail B



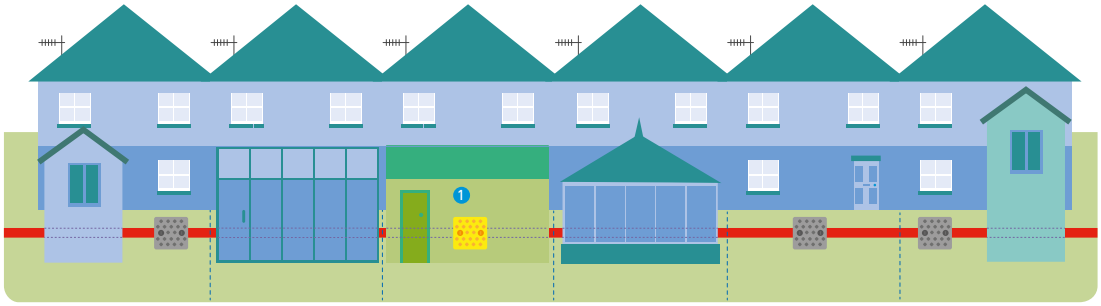
Key:

Existing inspection chamber on the public sewer

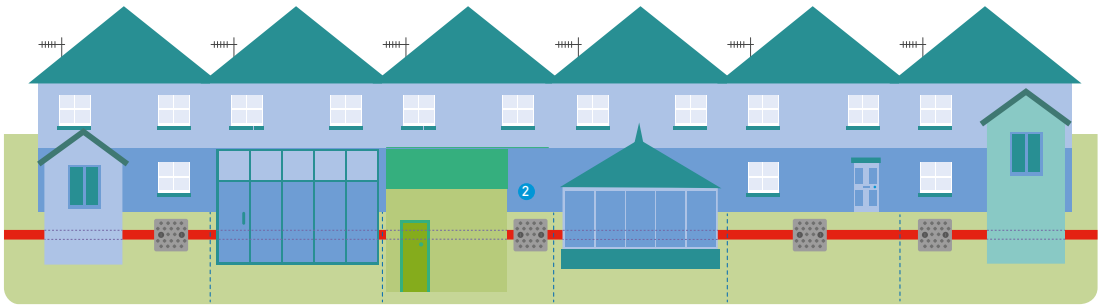
Repositioned inspection chamber on the public sewer

Detail C

NOT ACCEPTABLE



ACCEPTABLE



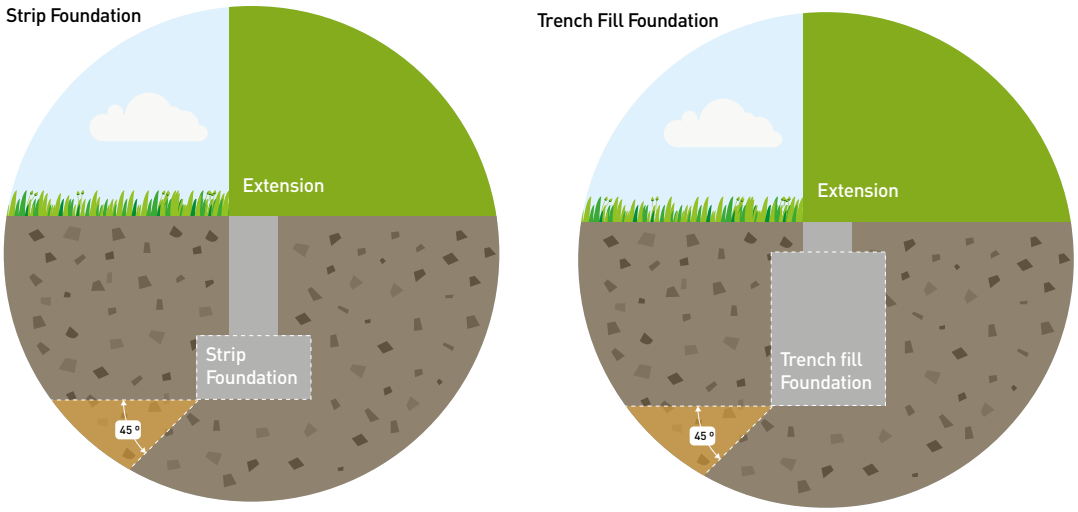
Key:

1 Length of pipe built over not acceptable as it's over 6 metres long, with no space for access.

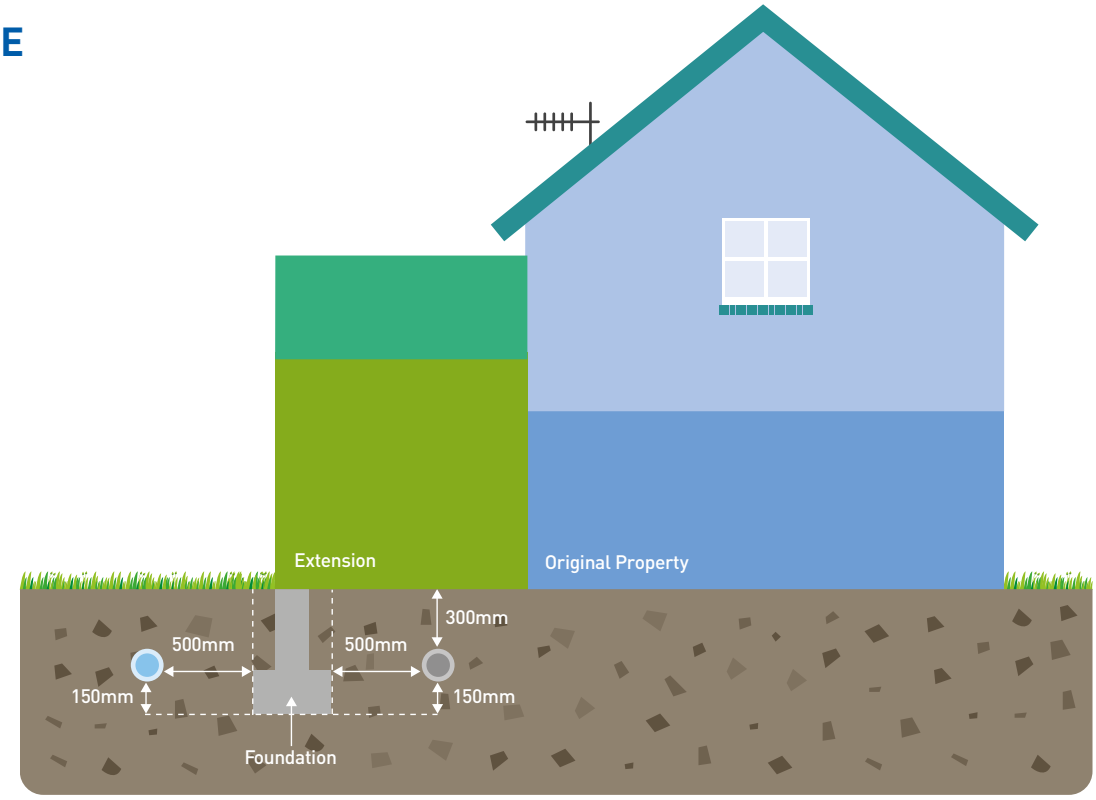
2 This can be overcome by amending the shape of the building and repositioning the existing access

Please note:
Diagrams not to scale

Detail D



Detail E



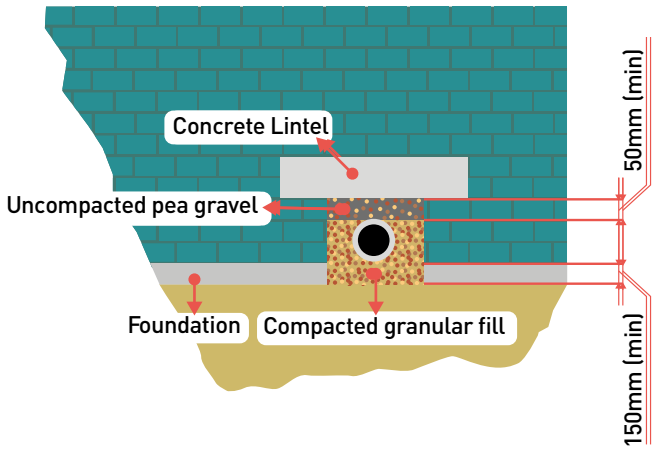
Minimum 500mm horizontal clearance between foundation and sewers

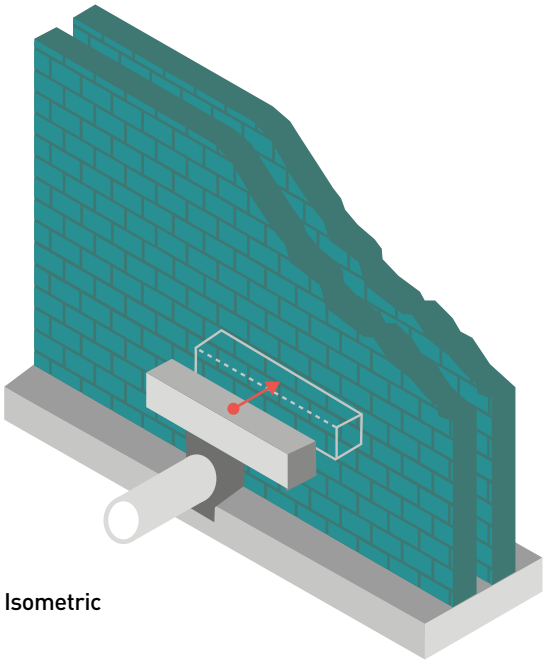
Depth of foundation in relation to the pipe should be a minimum of 150mm within one metre horizontally

Example existing sewer run below or next to new building

Please note:
Diagrams not to scale

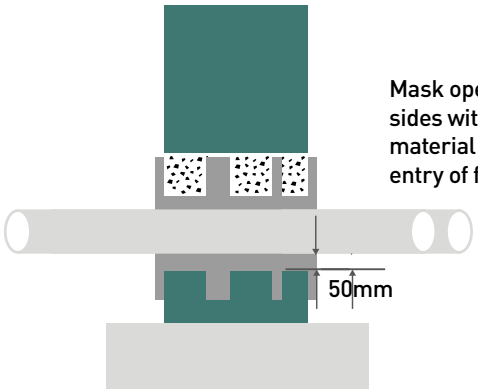
Detail F – Protecting the pipe where walls /foundations are built and cross over





Isometric

Arch or lintelled opening to give 50mm space all round the pipe



Mask opening on all sides with rigid sheet material to prevent entry of fill or vermin

Please note:
Diagrams not to scale

Altering our sewers, lateral drains and access arrangements

If you need to undertake any alterations to a public sewer or lateral drain, such as repositioning an existing inspection chamber, or replacing a defective pipe, the scope of the work will need to be agreed in advance with us. Please complete our Enquiry to build over/close to public drainage form.

If you encounter defective or damaged pipework while working, this is likely to need to be replaced.

The responsibility for replacing the pipework in order to continue with works will be dependent on the extent of the defects and is a decision we will make subject to discussions and if required, a site visit.

You and your contractor will also need to take account of the following requirements prior to any works:

Any work undertaken on the public sewerage network needs to take account of a host of hazards including, but not limited to: confined spaces, working at depth and the potential presence of toxic/explosive gases.

Ready to Build? Here's a handy checklist to make sure you have everything covered...

☐ **Identify whether there are any public sewers or lateral drains within the area of your proposed build**

- Look for details of a drainage arrangement included with the legal documents for your house
- Seek the advice of your designer/ architect, preferred builder or other suitably qualified professional
- Or contact us for further information and we'll help you find the pipes

☐ **Check our consent criteria**

- Establish whether your build will be able to satisfy our criteria and whether any alterations to our network are necessary

☐ **Complete and submit a Declaration of Works form or make a full application by completing our Enquiry to build over/close to public drainage form**

- Submission of these details will enable us to review your declaration and inform you of the next steps in the process

Send your completed Declaration of Works or Enquiry to build over/ close to public drainage form to:

Developer Services
South West Water
Peninsula House
Rydon Lane
Exeter EX2 7HR

Make sure you have:

- Completed all parts of the form
- Signed the form
- Included details from any CCTV survey you may have conducted.

Tel: 0344 346 2020

Email: developerservicesassetprotection@southwestwater.co.uk

SOUTH WEST WATER

southwestwater.co.uk