

Dear Nick, I hope this note finds you well. Firstly, many apologies for not replying to you with a detailed answer much sooner. My colleague, who covers Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, has been off on paternity leave, so it has taken me longer than anticipated to compile all the relevant detail to update you, as I have been covering his area also. I am very grateful for your understanding and patience on this.

I can confirm that the section of sewer which you have highlighted is on our list of assets under consideration for investment. As all of our investment is, ultimately, funded through customer bills, in the interests of keeping bills as low as possible, we allocate funding for improvement work according to need, with locations affected by internal sewer flooding or where there is a higher risk of damage to the environment (e.g. pollution of a river or other water course) being high priorities. At the same time, we remain fully committed to fairly and logically allocating available resources to provide the best quality of service possible for all our customers.

There is currently no confirmed timescale for the already identified upgrade work to replace the sewer in question in Plumpton Green. However, we do carry out regular reviews of locations across our region where investment is required, using the most up to date information on any new incidents or issues, and will, of course, keep you fully updated on any changes to how things stand at present. It is important to note that when replacing sewers, particularly in busy roadways, we look to carry out this work using 'no dig' approaches, such as directional drilling, to minimise disruption and inconvenience for local communities.

In terms of catering for future development in and around Plumpton Green, we are legally required to provide water and wastewater services and cannot refuse new connections to our networks or object to new developments. Importantly, this is on the basis of there being no deterioration in service for existing customers. We liaise closely with developers to agree the appropriate method and point for any connection, with a developer being required to make a contribution towards the cost of designing and constructing the required infrastructure.

Due to the regulatory framework within which we operate, it is not permitted for developer contributions to be used inappropriately to fund investment to resolve any pre-existing issues, such as sewer flooding. Equally, it is not permitted for existing customers, via their bills, to effectively inappropriately subsidise the cost of new infrastructure to connect new properties.

That said, while connecting new properties and maintaining and improving our wider network / infrastructure must be treated as separate entities, these two areas do inform each other to make sure we take full account of all relevant factors when deciding which approach to take. Similarly, if there is a way, which complies with the rules and regulations by which we are governed, that enables us to serve new development and at the same time resolve or mitigate a pre-existing issue, or vice versa, then we would look to pursue this, if it provided a more cost-effective way forward.

I trust that the above provides further clarity on the issue you have raised, but do let me know of any further questions you may have.

Finally, a reminder that residents can report any wastewater issues to us via our 24-hour Contact Centre. The number is tel [0330 303 0368](tel:03303030368).

With best regards

Joel

Joel Hufford
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