

## Environment Agency Position Statement – August 2010

### Foul drainage problems limit capacity for new development in the Barnham Area

#### Our position

We want to prevent pollution and safeguard our environment. We have recently reviewed new information that causes us concern regarding the pollution of local watercourses and fields due to problems with the foul sewer network in the Barnham area. Additional development is likely to cause an adverse environmental impact. Therefore, until a sustainable solution is found we will advise against development if it results in a net increase in flow to the sewer network.

We will support the Council to do this and will provide an objection when we respond to relevant planning consultations. To overcome this, applicants will need to demonstrate that there is no net increase in flows to the sewer network as a result of the development. Mitigation measures could include the incorporation of high water efficiency standards in new buildings. We recommend a pragmatic approach should be taken towards householder applications and minor developments which can show high water efficiency standards.

#### Where does it apply

This position statement applies to new development which falls into the sewerage network around Barnham, including the settlements of Westergate, Walberton and Yapton. We will provide a map of the area to Arun District Council.

#### Our role

Our role is both as an environmental regulator and as a consultee in the planning system helping to deliver sustainable development and improve environmental quality. As an advisor and consultee to Local Planning Authorities we provide environmental evidence to inform planning decisions and deliver government policy.

PPS 23 (Planning and Pollution Control) sets the national policy framework designed to take account of potential pollution issues. This policy states that the capacity of the sewer network and the drainage infrastructure will influence whether or not a development should proceed. The policy advocates the precautionary principle is applied where there is a significant pollution risk.

## Background

The Barnham sewer network is at capacity and there is a high risk of pollution. During the winter months, Southern Water has put interim measures in place including tankering waste from the existing sewers to alternative wastewater treatment works. This is not a sustainable sewage management option and a longer- term solution is needed.

The current situation has been caused by both surface and groundwater entering the foul sewer system at times of high rainfall. This overloads the sewer pipes and causes sewage to spill out of manholes into local watercourses and fields.

We consider that further development which increases flow to the sewer network will result in further deterioration in water quality.

## What we are doing

In accordance with European legislation (The Water Framework Directive), planning authorities and other co-deliverers should not allow development in this area to cause the water quality to deteriorate and, where possible, should seek to improve its status.

We are committed to working with Southern Water, West Sussex County Council and Arun District Council to find a long-term solution to this problem.

## Our recommendations

We recommend that the following steps are taken to progress this work:

1. Arun District Council supports our position statement and applies it to relevant applications through the adopted Policy GEN9. We will work alongside them to help develop this policy as we recognise the importance of this issue to local communities and its potential impact on the Local Development Framework.
2. A Surface Water Management Plan or equivalent study is undertaken within the area to reduce infiltration and increase capacity in the sewer.
3. We work in partnership with Southern Water, Arun District Council and West Sussex County Council to progress actions recommended by Southern Water.

## Review date

We will review our position in December 2010, or following receipt of new information.

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incident hotline

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floodline

0845 988 1188

[www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)

## Glossary of Terms

**Precautionary Principle** - The precautionary principle was identified within the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development in 1992. It states that "where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation". The UK Government is committed to using the precautionary principle.

**Sewer Network** - A system of pipes and mechanical appliances for the collection and transportation of wastewaters.

**Wastewater Treatment Works** - The process of removing contaminants from wastewater and household sewage. It includes physical, chemical and biological processes to remove contaminants to a standard that can be discharged back into the environment.