

Requirements for consultations – Public and private sewers

What is the difference between private drains and public sewers?

- Private drains take foul sewage (waste from toilets, bathrooms and kitchens) and surface water (rainwater) away from a single property.
- Public sewers are shared drains that take foul sewage and water away from more than one property.
- Lateral sewers/drains are the part of a drain outside the property boundary - for example, in the public highway or footpath.

The diagram below shows an example of the responsibilities:



The rules concerning responsibility for sewers and drains changed on 1st October 2011:

Sewerage companies’ responsibilities

Sewerage companies are responsible for the public sewers. These are usually in roads or public open spaces, but may run through private gardens. The sewerage company has a right of access to these sewers for maintenance. If the company carries out work on sewers on your land they must follow a code of practice, which is available from the specific company.

Property owner’s responsibilities

The drains and any private sewers which carry household waste are normally the householder’s (or the landlord’s) responsibility. This applies up to the point they connect with the public sewers or lateral drain. Since 1 October 2011 (following the transfer of private sewers), this is usually at the boundary of the property.

How does relate to Building Control?

If your proposal involves building over or within 3m of a sewer or lateral drain as shown from your proposed plans, then jhai are obliged to inform and consult the sewerage/water authority under Regulation 13 of the Approved Inspector Regulations 2010. You will also require the authority’s consent and they may ask you to enter into a ‘*build-over agreement*’. More recently Water Authorities are accepting a *Declaration of Works (DOW)* on simple projects to save time and resources. This process is likely to incur an additional time and expense on the project, so we would advise you to consult your local water authority as early as you can before starting.

More information can be found at: <https://www.ofwat.gov.uk/nonhouseholds/supply-and-standards/public-and-private-sewers/>