



United Utilities Water Limited
Haweswater House
Lingley Mere Business Park
Lingley Green Avenue
Great Sankey
Warrington WA5 3LP

Telephone: 01925 237000

unitedutilities.com

Our ref: EIR/ID854
Date: 09/06/2026
Email: EIRRequests@uuplc.co.uk

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your request for environmental information. We appreciate your interest, and we want to let you know that your request has been carefully considered in accordance with the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR).

Your request, and our response to your specific questions, are outlined below:

I am writing as a Sandbach resident to request clarification regarding the current and future hydraulic capacity of Sandbach Wastewater Treatment Works, its associated sewer catchment, and the implications for the River Wheelock.

My concern is not simply that storm overflow discharges occur during periods of heavy rainfall. I understand the historic function of storm overflows as relief points within combined or hydraulically constrained sewerage systems. My concern is whether the present level of spill activity indicates that Sandbach's wastewater infrastructure now has insufficient wet-weather headroom for the existing catchment, let alone for further housing growth.

Publicly available Event Duration Monitoring data for Sandbach Wastewater Treatment Works indicates significant discharges to the River Wheelock in recent years. The figures I have seen show 64 spills lasting 313.7 hours in 2023, and 58 spills lasting 375 hours in 2024, although I note that the 2024 data carries a monitoring-uptime caveat. The 2023 operator comment also appears to refer to "Hydraulic Capacity". If these figures or interpretations are inaccurate, I would be grateful if United Utilities could correct them.

Given the scale of housing growth already delivered in and around Sandbach, and the possibility of further growth through the emerging Cheshire East Local Plan, I would be grateful for a clear written response to the following questions.

1. What is the current permitted dry weather flow for Sandbach Wastewater Treatment Works?

The permitted dry weather flow (DWF) is 5,352 m³ per day.

2. What is the current flow-to-full-treatment capacity at Sandbach Wastewater Treatment Works?

The flow to full treatment capacity of the treatment works is set at 151 l/s.

3. What storm-sewage storage volume is currently available at the works and within the

connected sewer catchment?

The minimum volume of storm storage provision at Sandbach WwTW is 1,417 m³. This is comprised of 1,358 m³ in the storm storage tanks and 59 m³ in the pipework and channels.

Under heavy storm conditions our pipework in the upstream sewer network tends to run full, so it doesn't typically lend itself to a volumetric assessment for capacity.

4. Does United Utilities consider Sandbach Wastewater Treatment Works and its sewer catchment to have sufficient hydraulic capacity for existing development, committed development and reasonably foreseeable future housing growth?

United Utilities considers that it currently has sufficient hydraulic capacity at Sandbach WwTW, and in its associated sewer network, to deal with existing treatment demands.

We are aware of the predicted future growth planned in this area and have begun a large capital scheme at this site to help accommodate the impact of this growth (see response to question 8).

5. What population-equivalent figure is Sandbach Wastewater Treatment Works currently designed to serve, and what population-equivalent figure has been used in future capacity modelling?

Most WwTWs, including Sandbach WwTW, contain distinct treatment processes that have been added or expanded over time. The appropriate measure of capacity for these different stages may also vary, for example volume, flow rate, concentration or load.

Therefore, the effective overall capacity of each WwTW will, in practice, be based upon a series of different measures for the different process stages. The key requirement for any WwTW is, however, is that the combined capability of each process stage must be sufficient to treat the flow and load that it receives, in line with its environmental permit. As a result of this, we do not routinely update the overall "capacity" data for our WwTW's, with our focus being on monitoring and managing final effluent quality and permit compliance.

Water companies work in five-year investment cycles. The current period of 2025 to 2030 is known in the industry as AMP8. As outlined in our response to question 8 below, we have a growth project at Sandbach WwTW in AMP8, which is due to deliver by 2030. For this scheme we are using a future population equivalent figure of 27,267.

We analyse the ability of our treatment works to accommodate future population growth. This process is contained within our drainage and wastewater management plans for the region published in May 2023, the landing page for which can be found here:

Drainage and wastewater management plan

We are currently working on DWMP cycle 2 of which the first draft is due in Number 2027 with the final in August 2028.

6. Have all completed, approved and proposed major housing developments in Sandbach, Wheelock, Elworth and the surrounding catchment been included in the latest hydraulic modelling?

Our hydraulic modelling contains a representation of developments, based on the most up-to-date information available at the time. This information comes from pre-planning applications, current planning applications and proposed growth sites, and typically utilises a 2050 design horizon.

The hydraulic model in this area was last updated in 2020 as part of our Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan, known as the DWMP. However, before our solution development is undertaken for the AMP8 growth scheme, we will recommend that this model is updated with refreshed population and development projections and that this obtains local re-verification from the appropriate UUW Risk manager.

7. What specific works are planned to reduce discharges from Sandbach Wastewater Treatment Works into the River Wheelock?

There are no spill reduction drivers being applied to Sandbach WwTW by the Environment Agency (EA) in AMP8, and as such United Utilities have no capital schemes planned for delivery in that period.

Despite this, we do have several other spill reduction capital schemes taking place in within the surrounding catchment, which have discharge points into the River Wheelock. Each of these schemes will be completed before 2030 and has an environmental driver to reduce spill discharges, as shown in the table below.

Scheme Name	EA - Primary Driver code	Driver requirement
CONGLETON WwTW (016810066ST)	EnvAct_IMP2	Reduce ecological harm
Middlewich Road/Parkfield Road CSO (VRY0094SO)	EnvAct_IMP2	Reduce ecological harm
230 London Road CSO (VRY0074SO)	EnvAct_IMP4	10 spills per annum average
St. Michaels Way CSO (CON0039SO)	EnvAct_IMP4	10 spills per annum average
Outside 51 Church Street Davenham CSO (VRY0056SO)	EnvAct_IMP4	10 spills per annum average
181 London Road CSO (VRY0144SO)	EnvAct_IMP4	10 spills per annum average
Bromley Road/Coronation Road CSO (CON0031SO)	EnvAct_IMP4	10 spills per annum average
Bromley Road (CON0038SO)	EnvAct_IMP4	10 spills per annum average

In addition to this work, our Environmental Improvement Programme (EIP) team also proactively undertake activities such as the removal of debris, blockages and silt that has periodically built up in the sewer network. These 'health check' activities can also notably contribute to spill reduction across the local drainage area. An extract of some of these that have been completed in the last 12 months are shown in the table below.

Site Name	Intervention	Date activity completed
Brook Mill CSO	Drainage Area Health check	29/07/2025
Moss Lane CSO	Drainage Area Health check	01/08/2025
Mill Hill Lane CSO	Drainage Area Health check	06/02/2026
Front street CSO	Drainage Area Health check	09/02/2026

In relation to the additional questions posed in the introduction section, we note that the spill frequency figures quotes for 2023 and 2024 are correct. The comments regarding 'hydraulic capacity' were added to the dataset to highlight the potential root cause of the high spills.

This increased spill numbers triggered the need for an investigation to be undertaken, which then resulted in the new valve being installed on the storm tank return. The storm return is the pipework that returns the temporarily stored effluent back from the storage tank to the works for treatment.

This new valve helps empty the storm storage tanks quicker, and in-turn free up more 'available' storage capacity in a shorter timeframe. This work was completed in 2024.

Following the conclusion of this work, we have seen the 58 spills recorded in 2024 reduce to 12 Spills in 2025 (with a combined event duration of just 23 hours). Year-to-date in 2026 we have only seen two spills (with a combined event duration of one hour).

8. Are additional storm-sewage storage tanks, increased flow-to-full-treatment capacity, sewer upsizing, pumping upgrades, infiltration reduction works, or surface-water separation schemes planned for the Sandbach catchment?

As outlined above, Water companies work in five-year investment cycles, with the current period of 2025 to 2030 being known as AMP8.

Sandbach WwTW is scheduled for capital investment in AMP8 under our 'growth' programme. A growth programme is an infrastructure investment initiative aimed expanding existing capacity. It is in place to ensure there is sufficient wastewater treatment to support regional development, such as new houses and data centres, without compromising service reliability or environmental compliance.

This project at Sandbach is currently in the 'Engineering Optioneering' phase and the delivery team are currently considering a number of different solution types for the final design. Therefore, it is too early in the delivery lifecycle to be able to give specifics about what project will deliver.

9. If such works are planned, what are their expected delivery dates, what additional storage or treatment capacity will they provide, and what reduction in spill frequency and duration is expected?

The Sandbach project will be delivered before 31 March 2030. Project details, such as the installation of any additional storage or treatment capacity, will be confirmed once the design has been finalised.

10. If no significant capacity upgrade is planned, what is the technical justification for allowing further housing growth to connect into a catchment that already experiences repeated wet-weather discharges to the River Wheelock?

As described above, there is capital scheme at Sandbach WwTW planned for delivery in AMP8.

11. What discussions have taken place between United Utilities, Cheshire East Council and the Environment Agency regarding wastewater capacity constraints in Sandbach?

Although the location of specific new development proposals is a matter for the local planning authority, and United Utilities is not a statutory consultee on these applications, we do work closely with local authorities to provide comments on applications for planning permission, where we think

it is necessary to protect the impact on our assets and on customers.

Where risk is identified, planning applications are reviewed by the relevant UU team to assess the risk to UU's assets and/or services and to provide advice on how to mitigate the risk through the planning application process.

Our comments must, however, reflect our statutory obligations as a regulated water company, one of which is that we must allow new connections to our network. Whilst we cannot stop development from occurring, we do review applications for planning permission and provide comments where necessary. These comments include recommending planning conditions to control the approach to drainage and seeking to secure foul only connections to the public sewer wherever possible. Foul only connections are important as they help to keep the impact on our wastewater network assets to a minimum, as surface water flows can be much larger than foul flows.

The local authority is ultimately the decision maker for planning applications, and it does not have to reflect UU's comments or recommended conditions in its determinations. In almost all cases, any UU responses will be published to the local authority's planning portal.

The Environment Agency (EA) do not apply regulatory drivers to Water Companies on the topic of 'growth'. Instead, companies are typically given strict environmental permits to adhere to at our treatment works. Should catchment growth occur, and the associated treatment works not be able to cope with this increase in demand, then the EA can initiate the process of a prosecution case for permit non-compliance. This means the EA rely on water companies doing their own assessment of growth needs and making sure this activity receives adequate funding allowances when submitting their business plans to Ofwat. Where companies do not consider this correctly, or act on it accordingly, permit non-compliance and prosecution remain a possibility.

12. Will Cheshire East Council require site allocations and major housing applications in the Sandbach catchment to be supported by wastewater capacity evidence before development is occupied?

This is a matter for Cheshire East Council to determine. To obtain a comprehensive answer, we would recommend that you contact Cheshire East Council directly. Requests can be made to them directly via their 'freedom of information' webpage:

https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/council_information/open-data-and-transparency/freedom_of_information/freedom_of_information.aspx

We hope that this response answers your request. However, if you're not satisfied with how we've handled it, you can request an internal review. To do this, please write to us at Environmental Information Office, Haweswater House, Lingley Mere, Warrington, WA5 3LP or email us at EIRRequests@uuplc.co.uk, addressing your request to [REDACTED], and explaining why you're unhappy with our response. We'll be very happy to review your request and ensure we've done everything we can to assist you.

Any request for an internal review should be made within 40 working days of receipt of this response, and we will reply within 40 working days from receipt of the request for internal review.

Many thanks