



Water for the North West

United Utilities Water Limited

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Our ref: EIR/ID902

Date: 10/08/2026

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:

We formally submit the following questions to your planning and asset protection teams:

1. **Wastewater & Public Sewer Capacity Deficiencies**
 - The 2020 WYG Constraints Report explicitly states that there is no public sewer infrastructure within the eastern sectors of the Simister Bowlee site (Sub-Areas SE1, SE2, and SE3), and that the existing 175mm} combined sewer on Heywood Road is “*operating close to capacity.*” **Can United Utilities confirm if the existing local network can safely absorb foul water from the proposed 1,550 homes and primary school without risking localised flooding or sewer back-ups for existing residents?**
 - What specific network reinforcements, pumping stations, or pipeline upsizing will be required to securely connect JPA1.2 to the Bury Wastewater Treatment Works, and **has United Utilities mandated that these overhauls must be fully completed and operational prior to the build-out or occupation of the first housing phase?**
 - Has United Utilities conducted a comprehensive **Cumulative Impact Assessment** to evaluate how the regional network will cope with the wastewater load from JPA1.2 occurring simultaneously with the massive, adjacent Northern Gateway (JPA1.1) employment development?
2. **The High-Pressure Sludge Main Asset Constraint**
 - The WYG Report identifies a high-pressure 200mm} diameter foul sludge main cutting directly through the heart of Sub-Area SE1. **What is United Utilities’ strict statutory easement requirement (in metres) flanking this specific asset, and what explicit restrictions are placed on building over, or introducing deep foundations near, this pipeline?**
 - Does the presence of this high-pressure asset pose any heightened structural, environmental, or odour management risks to the proposed residential homes and the primary school earmarked to sit directly within Sub-Area SE1?
3. **Contamination & The Prohibition of Rainwater Infiltration**
 - The WYG report indicates that historic industrial landfills (containing documented chemical waste and potential asbestos) are located on Sub-Areas SE1 and SW2, making standard Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) infiltration completely unsafe due to the risk of mobilising toxic leachate into deep groundwater

channels. **Does United Utilities categorically oppose any developer proposals to use gravity-fed or natural infiltration drainage schemes on these contaminated sectors?**

- If natural ground infiltration is prohibited to prevent deep aquifer contamination, will United Utilities permit the developer to discharge surface water run-off directly into the public sewer network, or **will you enforce a strict zero-discharge mandate for surface water entering your assets from this site?**
- 4. **Financial Deliverability & Viability**
 - Given that the master plan requires an estimated 81,000m³ of artificial water attenuation storage—which legally triggers the strict safety regulations of the *Reservoirs Act 1975*—is United Utilities satisfied that the developer's proposed on-site water management solutions are physically and operationally deliverable without creating long-term liabilities for the local area?

Our response:

1. Wastewater & Public Sewer Capacity Deficiencies

1.1 Can United Utilities confirm if the existing local network can safely absorb foul water from the proposed 1,550 homes and primary school without risking localised flooding or sewer back-ups for existing residents?

It is important to make clear that not all of the planned properties in the allocation are proposed to connect to a single point of the public sewerage system and there will be an incremental increase in flows as the new homes are built. The current proposed points of connection for foul water are to the Simister Lane catchment and the Manchester Old Road catchment.

We have undertaken an impact assessment of the details which were available in 2022. There was a minor impact on level of service and no increase in flooding or surcharge risk. However, this review will be revised later this year using the latest assessment methodology and in light of more recent information. We are aware that there are some network reinforcement interventions which will likely be required to manage the full development and these will be highlighted and addressed through our Network Reinforcement programme, in line with our prioritisation process. We won't be able to fully understand the network reinforcement requirements until the updated assessment is complete.

1.2 What specific network reinforcements, pumping stations, or pipeline upsizing will be required to securely connect JPA1.2 to the Bury Wastewater Treatment Works, and has United Utilities mandated that these overhauls must be fully completed and operational prior to the build-out or occupation of the first housing phase?

On the plans we have seen, no foul flows for JPA1.2 will not connect to the catchment served by Bury Wastewater Treatment Works (WwTW). It is currently understood that foul flows from the site will connect to catchments served by either Bolton WwTW or Davyhulme WwTW.

Points of connection to the existing wastewater system will be agreed with the developer. It is usually the case with residential development that the developer will design and construct on site surface water and foul water infrastructure, to agreed industry standards (Sewerage Sector Guidance), for eventual adoption by an undertaker once complete and the adoption criteria are met. As per the response to 1) above, we will liaise with the developer and agree points of connection to the existing system. From that point we can revise the previous assessment (if needed), and any network reinforcement of the public sewerage system required to accommodate the additional foul

flows will be planned and prioritised for construction.

1.3 Has United Utilities conducted a comprehensive Cumulative Impact Assessment to evaluate how the regional network will cope with the wastewater load from JPA1.2 occurring simultaneously with the massive, adjacent Northern Gateway (JPA1.1) employment development?

As referenced above, in 2022 United Utilities undertook separate assessments of the impact of the allocations. However, as we now have more current details of the plans, and there is more certainty of the timeframe of the development, we have amended our methodology for assessment, we are intending that these assessments will be reviewed and revised.

The two allocations, JPA1.1 and JPA1.2, were considered at the same time, however as they will drain to different systems and have different receiving WwTWs, the assessments are necessarily separate and not cumulative. Had these developments connected to the same system, or discharged to the same wastewater treatment works, then a cumulative assessment would be undertaken.

2. The High-Pressure Sludge Main Asset Constraint

The WYG Report identifies a high-pressure 200mm} diameter foul sludge main cutting directly through the heart of Sub-Area SE1. What is United Utilities' strict statutory easement requirement (in metres) flanking this specific asset, and what explicit restrictions are placed on building over, or introducing deep foundations near, this pipeline?

United Utilities has existing statutory rights and specific easement arrangements in place with relevant landowners to protect the Mersey Valley Sludge Pipeline (the high-pressure 200mm diameter sludge main referenced in the report). As is standard practice for developments proposed in proximity to our assets, we will engage with the developer as plans progress to ensure that appropriate stand-off distances are maintained and that no unacceptable risk is introduced to the operation, maintenance, or integrity of the pipeline.

There is a specific requirement for a stand-off distance of 3.5 metres each side from the centreline of the pipe for this particular main, with any activity within this zone requiring a permit to work from United Utilities. United Utilities will not allow any building over the pipeline. United Utilities also publishes specific guidance relating to development activities near the Mersey Valley Sludge Pipeline, including requirements for building near, or working adjacent to our assets. This guidance is available at: [Working near our pipes - United Utilities](#).

Any development proposals would be expected to comply with these requirements and any additional easement or protection measures identified through the development review process.

2.2 Does the presence of this high-pressure asset pose any heightened structural, environmental, or odour management risks to the proposed residential homes and the primary school earmarked to sit directly within Sub-Area SE1?

United Utilities does not expect the presence of the high-pressure sludge main to present any material environmental, amenity, structural or odour risk to the proposed residential development or nearby receptors. The asset is a sealed, pressurised pipeline designed to transport sludge within a closed system and, under normal operating conditions, does not give rise to odour emissions.

Accordingly, the sludge main is a development constraint that must be accounted for in the design and construction process in accordance with our requirements and guidance.

3. Contamination & The Prohibition of Rainwater Infiltration

3.1 The WYG report indicates that historic industrial landfills (containing documented chemical waste and potential asbestos) are located on Sub-Areas SE1 and SW2, making standard Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) infiltration completely unsafe due to the risk of mobilising toxic leachate into deep groundwater channels. Does United Utilities categorically oppose any developer proposals to use gravity-fed or natural infiltration drainage schemes on these contaminated sectors?

United Utilities does not have a regulatory role in determining the suitability of proposals in relation to land contamination and remediation.

Any planning application would need to be supported by appropriate site investigations, risk assessments, and technical evidence, and would be considered by the relevant authorities as part of the planning and regulatory process.

The assessment of whether infiltration-based SuDS are appropriate on potentially contaminated land is a matter for the relevant planning and environmental regulators. This includes the Local Planning Authority (LPA), the Environment Agency (EA) and the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), who have responsibilities relating to land contamination, groundwater protection and surface water drainage.

The suitability of any proposed drainage solution would need to be assessed by the relevant decision-making authorities on the basis of the available evidence and applicable regulatory requirements.

3.2 If natural ground infiltration is prohibited to prevent deep aquifer contamination, will United Utilities permit the developer to discharge surface water run-off directly into the public sewer network, or will you enforce a strict zero-discharge mandate for surface water entering your assets from this site?

United Utilities is not the determining authority for the drainage strategy of a development. The LPA, supported by the LLFA, is responsible for assessing and determining whether the proposed drainage approach is appropriate, taking account of the available evidence, planning policy, and relevant technical guidance.

United Utilities would provide detailed comments to the LPA on any drainage proposals submitted as part of the planning process. Any surface water drainage strategy should follow the established drainage hierarchy set out in national planning policy and guidance, which requires consideration of alternative discharge options before discharge of surface water to the public combined sewer network is considered.

Where infiltration is demonstrated to be unsuitable, other drainage options, including direct discharge to a watercourse, and then (second to direct watercourse discharge) a surface water sewer, would normally be considered. Only where higher-tiered options within the drainage hierarchy have been robustly discounted would discharge to the public combined sewer be considered, and any such discharge would be expected to be restricted to an appropriately controlled rate.

Based on our current understanding of the area, there are watercourses and surface water drainage infrastructure available. As a result, discharge of surface water to the public combined sewer network would be unlikely to represent the best environmental/preferred drainage solution. However, the suitability of any drainage strategy would need to be determined through the planning and associated technical assessment process based on the evidence available at the time.

4. Financial Deliverability & Viability

4.1 Given that the master plan requires an estimated 81,000m³ of artificial water attenuation storage—which legally triggers the strict safety regulations of the Reservoirs Act 1975—is United Utilities satisfied that the developer's proposed on-site water management solutions are physically and operationally deliverable without creating long-term liabilities for the local area?

The report identifies a total attenuation storage requirement of approximately 81,000m³ across the development site. Based on United Utilities' experience, we would not expect this volume of storage to be provided as a single, standalone storage feature. Rather, it is standard practice for attenuation storage associated with developments of this scale to be incorporated within the wider site drainage strategy.

Typically, such storage would be delivered through a combination of measures, including oversized pipework within the drainage network, below-ground attenuation systems, and above-ground Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) features such as basins, swales, and other landscaped attenuation areas. In accordance with good drainage design practice, the required storage would generally be distributed across the development rather than concentrated in a single location, with storage provided through a mixture of below-ground and above-ground infrastructure.

As such, the storage volume identified does not, in itself, indicate that an unmanageable or unusual drainage solution would be required, and the detailed design of the drainage network would be developed by the developer as part of the planning and drainage approval process. Any enforcement of the provisions of the Reservoirs Act would be a matter for the Environment Agency.

We hope that this response answers your request. Should you have any remaining questions please contact Jonathan Cartledge (jonathan.cartledge@uuplc.co.uk , 07979 245584), who will be happy to discuss the above further.

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