West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041 (adopted June 2025)

Policy DM7

Water Resources and Waste Water

Development will be required to minimise water use by incorporating appropriate water efficiency and water recycling measures. A collaborative approach is encouraged between the Council, statutory agencies, water companies and site promoters/developers to promote innovation in water efficiency and re-use within and outside of dwellings and commercial buildings, including demand reduction to improve longer term water resilience. Liaison with other local authorities is expected where relevant.

Development will be required to be designed to be water efficient and reduce water consumption. Refurbishments and other non-domestic development will be expected to meet BREEAM water-efficiency credits. All new residential developments (including replacement dwellings) will meet the Building Regulation optional higher water efficiency standard of 110 litres per person per day, using the 'Fittings Approach' as set out in table 2.2 of the Building Regulations part G2. Planning conditions will be applied to new residential development to ensure that the water efficiency standards are met.

New or replacement non-residential development of 1000sqm gross floor area or more will meet BREEAM 'excellent' standards for water consumption (with at least a 40% improvement in water consumption against the baseline performance of the building), unless demonstrated not to be practicable.

Both of the above apply unless it can be demonstrated that it would not be feasible on technical or viability grounds. Where subsequent national standards exceed those set out above, the new national standards will be applied.

Development proposals should satisfactorily demonstrate the following criteria:

a. Efficient use of water is made through recycling measures such as rainwater harvesting and grey water recycling;
b. Foul water flows produced by the development will be drained separately from surface water run off to a suitable point of connection to a public foul sewer or, for non mains drainage proposals, where there would be no detrimental impact on the environment;
c. Suitable land and access is safeguarded for the maintenance and treatment of water resources and wastewater, flood defences and drainage infrastructure; and
d. It will not adversely impact the water quality, ecological value or drainage function of water bodies in the District, including any adverse impacts on Source Protection Zones (SPZ).

Development which would overload available facilities and create or exacerbate problems of flooding or pollution will not be permitted. Where upgrades to water supply and waste water are required and where there is a capacity constraint the local planning authority will, where appropriate, apply phasing conditions to any approval to ensure that any necessary infrastructure upgrades are delivered ahead of the occupation of the relevant phase of development. The identified need for the development or expansion of other water supply or wastewater facilities, required for existing or proposed development, is an important material consideration in the consideration of planning applications for such proposals.

The West Berkshire Phase 2 Water Cycle Study (2021) identifies that land adjacent to the Hungerford Waste Water Treatment Works (as shown on the plan below), will need to be safeguarded to enable upgrades to the Waste Water Treatment Works to serve future growth.

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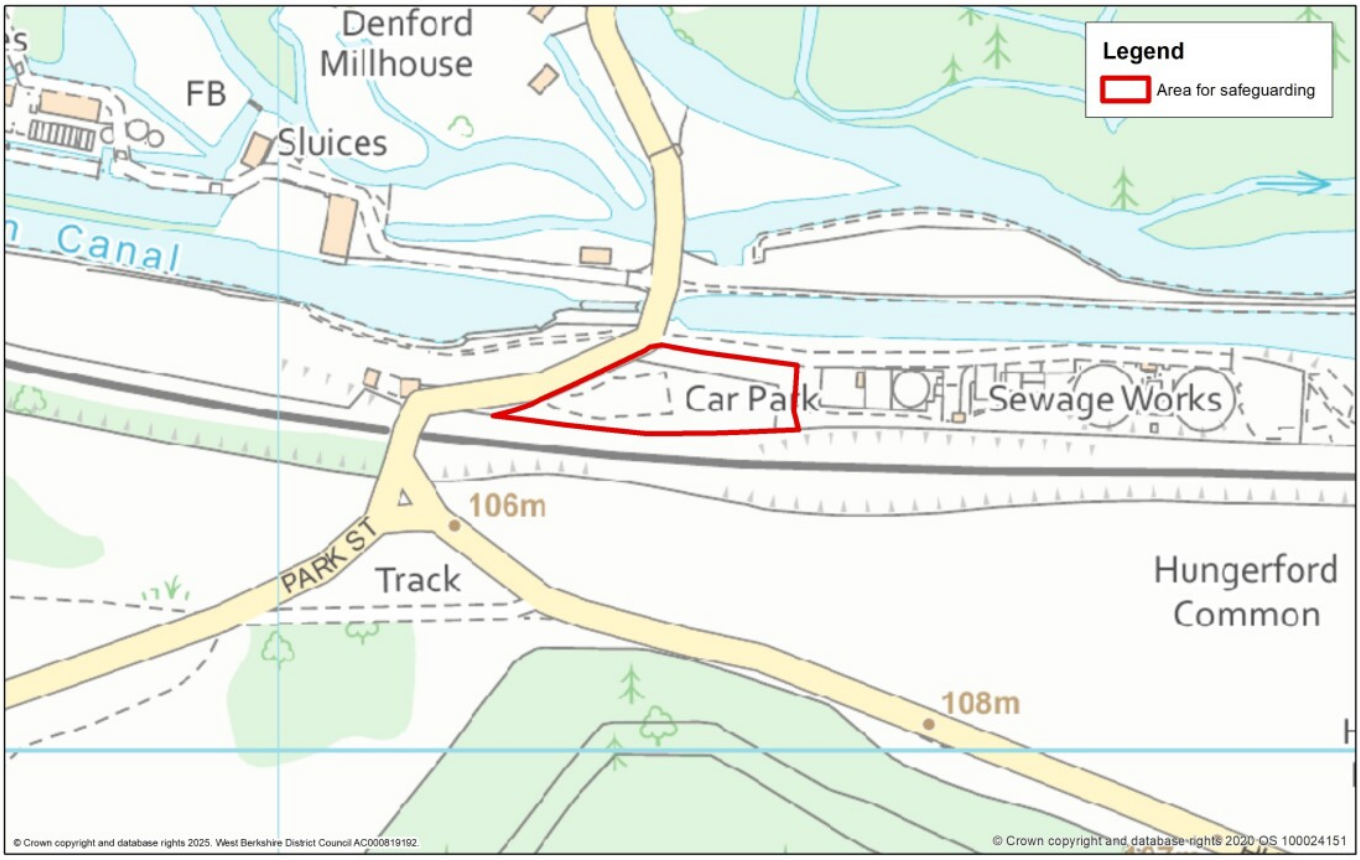
Area for safeguarding at Hungerford Waste Water Sewage Treatment Works



Supporting Text

10.70 A comprehensive and integrated approach to the conservation and management of our precious water resources is needed to ensure well designed development is delivered in accessible locations in an environmentally sensitive way. West Berkshire lies within one of the driest part of the country. A growing population and number of households within the District and its primary Water Resource Zone in the Kennet Valley, alongside growth within the neighbouring Thames Water Resource Zones will place demand pressures on the sustainable supply of water. The Thames Water Resources Management Plan (2019) sets out their understanding of population growth, drought, environmental obligations and climate change, and how it will provide a secure and sustainable supply of water to its customers over the next 80 years. The Plan includes a number of measures that are intended to reduce the amount of water needing to be put into the supply, and for the remaining sources of supply, taking measures to improve habitats and avoid environmental degradation. Thames Water predicts that there will be a substantial shortfall between the amount of water available and the amount we need in the next 25 years and in the longer term if action is not taken.

10.71 Furthermore the amount of available water will be affected by climate change through changing weather patterns and more extreme weather events such as storms, floods and drought. In taking water from rivers and aquifers, their value to the natural environment and people's enjoyment must not be compromised but improved and sustained.

10.72 Most of the water is abstracted from groundwater aquifers supported by some river extraction, notably the Rivers Kennet and Lambourn. Most is to satisfy public water supply but a significant proportion is supplied for private supply including agricultural land management, and electricity and industry. Thames Water supplies all of West Berkshire and is classified as being in a 'seriously water stressed' area in the Environment Agency Water Stressed Areas Classification 2021. All developments should implement the highest standards of water efficiency and infrastructure in order to place no additional pressure on water scarcity and quality in the river basin catchments of the Kennet and its tributaries and of the Thames and Chilterns South. Efficiency measures will also contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions including those associated with water treatment and taking pressure off wastewater treatment works.

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10.73 Contamination of land or groundwater can result from land formerly used for development or inappropriate uses and/or water management techniques. Land formerly used for industrial or waste management purposes could contain contaminants which can escape from the site and result in water pollution or pollution of nearby land. National policy reaffirms that where a site is affected by contamination, responsibility for securing a safe development rests with the developer and/or landowner, through appropriate remediation. Groundwater Source Protection Zones (GSPZs) are protected areas of groundwater used for drinking water. There are a number of SPZs within the District. Depending on the type and location of development in proximity of the SPZs only certain types of SuDS may be appropriate and will need to be agreed with the Environment Agency.

10.74 One way in which this can be achieved is by reducing the water demand from new houses through to achieving "water neutrality" in a catchment by offsetting a new development's water demand by improving efficiency in existing buildings. The definition of 'water neutrality' adopted by the Government and Environment Agency is 'For every development, total water use in the wider area after the development must be equal to or less than total water use in the wider area before development'. In essence, water neutrality is about accommodating growth in a catchment without increasing overall water demand. Water neutrality can be achieved in a number of ways:

- Reducing leakage from the water supply networks;
- Making new developments more water-efficient;
- Offsetting new demand by retrofitting homes with water-efficient devices;
- Encouraging existing commercial premises to use less water;
- Implementing metering and tariffs to encourage the wise use of water;
- Education and awareness-raising amongst individuals.

10.75 As set out in Government guidance the Council has the option to set additional technical requirements in the Local Plan on exceeding the minimum standard required by the Building Regulations relating to water efficiency. There is a clear local need for the tighter requirement of 110 litres per person per day due to West Berkshire falling within an area classed as being under serious water stress by the Environment Agency water stressed areas – 2021 classification (2021) and is supported by the Water Cycle Study Phase 2 (2021).

10.76 Early engagement with Thames Water should ensure that any development is aligned with existing capacity to serve the development or that the required upgrades to the water supply network, wastewater infrastructure, sewage treatment upgrades are constructed prior to occupation of new developments. Land may need to be safeguarded to ensure that land required for water infrastructure in the future is not developed, preventing necessary upgrade. This is supported by the West Berkshire Water Cycle Study (Phase 2) (2021)[120] which highlights that development in areas where there is limited wastewater network capacity will increase pressure on the network, increasing the risk of a detrimental impact on existing customers, and increasing the likelihood of sewer flooding. To overcome this early engagement with Thames Water is required, and further modelling of the network may be required at the planning application stage. The Study highlights that three waste water treatment works within West Berkshire are predicted to, or already exceeding their flow permit during the plan period: Chieveley, Hungerford and Newbury. In order to allow for water and wastewater infrastructure delivery national planning guidance stipulates that phasing new development should be considered to ensure that the 'infrastructure will be in place when and where needed and provided through the timely provision of new, or the enhancement of existing necessary strategic and local infrastructure to ensure that infrastructure is in place and available prior to the occupation of all developments'. As the Water Cycle Study (Phase 2) (2021) is showing the need for upgrades it may be necessary for development to be phased in West Berkshire to allow for the delivery of this infrastructure.

10.77 This policy will be considered in conjunction with other policies in the LPR to ensure a comprehensive consideration of the water environment.

120 West Berkshire Water Cycle Study (Phase 2) (2021): https://www.westberks.gov.uk/local-plan-evidence#infrastructure