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SEWER FLOODING: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES



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Sewers and drains are an underground system of pipework which carry waste water away from built up areas.

Depending on the type of water, the pipes will normally flow to a sewage treatment facility or a watercourse.

Public Sewers

When private drains from two or more properties flow into a single pipe, this then becomes a public sewer.

There are three main types of public sewer:

- **PUBLIC FOUL SEWERS:** waste water from toilets, bathrooms, kitchens and washing machines, and also industrial effluent
- **PUBLIC SURFACE WATER SEWERS:** rainwater from roofs, driveways or car parking areas
- **PUBLIC COMBINED SEWERS:** these carry both surface and foul water.

Sewerage Companies are responsible for cleaning public sewers and must also ensure that an area is well drained.

The sewerage companies operating within Oxfordshire are:

- Thames Water
- Anglian Water.

Note - Highway Drainage serves public roads only. More information on this subject can be found in leaflet 9 of this series: 'Highway Drainage Roles and Responsibilities': <https://www.oxfordshirefloodtoolkit.com/guides/highways/>

Sewer Maintenance and Repair

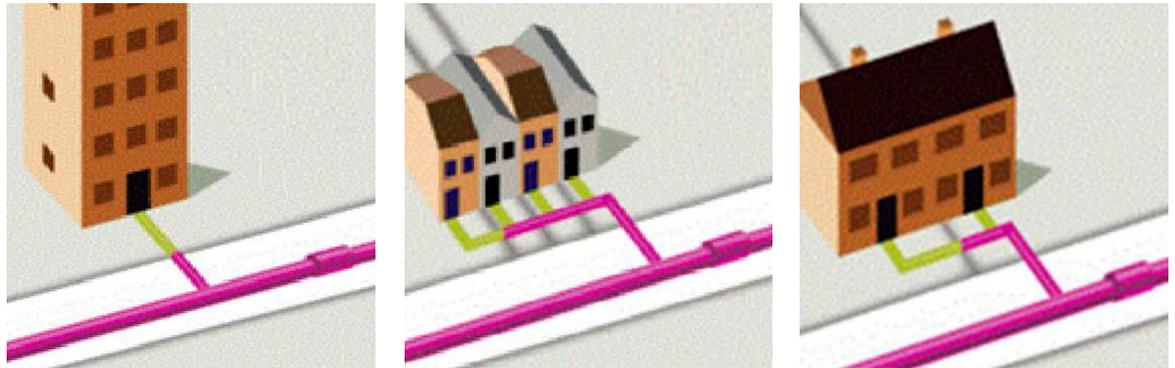
In October 2011, the Sewerage Companies took over the ownership of many more sewers and drains than before. The drains shared between neighbours, and pipes **OUTSIDE OF THE PROPERTY BOUNDARY** connecting to the Public Sewer are not now the individual owners' responsibility.

Where private pumping stations exist, these were subject to a phased transfer to the Sewerage Companies, which was due to be complete by 1st October 2016.

Private Drainage

Private drains are those serving a single property, within that property's boundary. These drains are the responsibility of the property owner who gains benefit from them. This includes foul water, surface water and combined types of drains. If a blockage occurs in a private drain the property owner is responsible for clearing it.

Below, the illustrations show how this public/private distinction applies to different kinds of properties.



Any pipe shown in **GREEN** is the responsibility of the property owner. Any pipe shown in **PINK** is the responsibility of the sewerage company.

Property Owner's Responsibilities

Usually, the property owner is responsible for the following:

- The drainage within their property boundary that takes waste water away from their home only (includes pipes and any associated manholes or gullies)
- Any pipes that don't connect to the Public Sewerage system
- Cesspits, septic tanks or private sewage treatment works for foul water
- Soakaways, or a direct discharge to a watercourse, for surface water.

USEFUL TIPS: If there seems to be a problem with drainage at a property, the residents should first ask their neighbours if they are also affected. If they are not, it is likely that the problem is within the private section of drainage.

To reduce the risk of a blockage **THE FOLLOWING ITEMS SHOULD NEVER BE PUT DOWN ANY DRAIN:**

- * Disposable nappies
- * Baby wipes/ facial wipes and similar
- * Cotton buds
- * Sanitary towels
- * Oils and fats from cooking
- * Food scraps
- * Plastic bags, leaves or other rubbish
- * Builders waste such as grout, plaster, cement, paint, or similar substances.

Private Tenants

The rental agreement should clarify who is responsible for drainage maintenance. If the blockage is due to misuse (fat or wipes in the system) the tenant is usually billed, if it is due to breakage or tree roots then the landlord is usually responsible.

Local Authority Tenants

Local authorities, such as District Councils, function as landlords for council houses. They are responsible for maintaining the supply pipes and drains for these properties.

Further Information & Contacts

THAMES WATER

Emergency Tel: **0845 9200 800**

<http://www.thameswater.co.uk/help-and-advice/9782.htm>

ANGLIAN WATER

Emergency Tel: **08457 145145**

<http://www.anglianwater.co.uk/business/water-recycling-services/sewers-and-drains.aspx>



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