

If you are planning to build a structure or extension, you will need to check if you are building over a public or private sewer pipe or drain. If you are, you must consult the owner of the pipe.

Introduction

United Utilities owns and operates the sewer network of over 40,000 km of sewers in the north west of England. Some of these pipes, particularly sewers built before 1937, many of which do not appear on the sewer map, are located in yards and gardens. It is likely therefore that you will need to consult United Utilities.

United Utilities maintains the Statutory Sewer Map. This shows the recorded position of public sewers, disposal mains and some sewers covered by a Section 104 adoption agreement.

All local authorities have access to the Statutory Sewer Map for their area on the internet, and this is available to view free of charge by the public at council offices. A printed extract of the Statutory Sewer Map may be purchased from: United Utilities Property Searches; tel: **0870 751 0101** or email: property.searches@uuplc.co.uk

Planning permission

Many types of development or building work need permission from the local planning authority. For larger developments United Utilities will advise developers and planning authorities on building over situations. This consultation advice is available from:

*Asset Protection Department
First Floor, Thirlmere House
Lingley Mere, Lingley Green Avenue
Warrington WA5 3LP
Tel: **01925 537 256** or
Tel: **01925 537 257***

In the case of larger residential developments it is usually possible to re-design the layout to avoid building over or to carry out a sewer diversion under section 185 of the Water Industry Act 1991.

The building regulations

Under the terms of the Building Act 1984, building over or near to a sewer shown on the statutory sewer map will not be permitted except in rare cases and then only in a manner directed by the undertaker. Clause S6 of the Model Agreement imposes a similar control.

Buildings should be located at least 3m away from the sewer where the depth from ground level to invert is less than 3m. In circumstances of large diameter sewers, greater depth, unusual ground profile or material, the undertaker may require a greater distance.

Building over rules – part H4

This part of the regulations relates to the construction, extension or underpinning of a building over or within three metres of the centre-line of an existing drain, sewer or disposal main shown on the Statutory Sewer Map.

Building over agreements

United Utilities policy is that public sewers should not be built over and the building should be realigned or the sewer diverted. Building Over Agreements are allowed in rare cases, we will investigate the possibility of this only if it is not feasible to realign the building or divert the sewer.

Special measures

Applicants may need to take special measures if the pipe is in poor condition or the ground conditions are unsatisfactory.

If the pipe is shown by a CCTV inspection to be in poor condition the applicant must take steps to protect the building and the pipe and to reduce the risk of pipe failure in the future. It may not be viable to build over or near to a pipe which is fit for purpose only when not built over and access is available. The most likely cost-effective solution will be renewal of the pipe, the cost of which must be borne by the applicant.

Examples of unsatisfactory ground conditions are soils that are easily eroded such as fine sand, fine silty sands, saturated silts and peat. These soil conditions need special design and construction plans for the building foundations.

Access points

Access points to sewers (manholes and rodding points) should be easily accessible and easily visible for use in an emergency.

Buildings and extensions should not be sited where they would remove an existing point of access. Where practicable United Utilities will insist on the re-location of an access point to the outside of the proposed works. See diagrams a and b.

Diversiónary routes

A satisfactory alternative route should be available so that the sewer or drain can be re-constructed without affecting the building. The route should be at least three metres away from the building and pass through land owned by the applicant. The alternative route may need to be accessible by mechanical excavators in some situations. See diagram c.

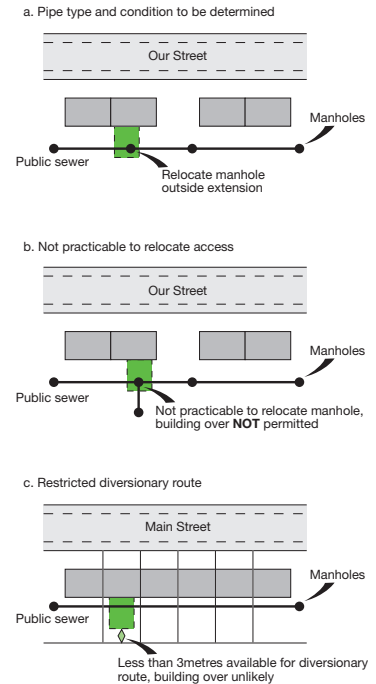
United Utilities recognises that this requirement is not always possible, and will take a practical approach in such circumstances.

New connections to public sewer

Where a connection is required the owner or occupier must give notice to United Utilities at least 21 days before

they propose to connect to the public sewer. Please contact our call centre on **0845 602 0406** to arrange a point of contact for this procedure. Please refer to the checklist below for help.

It is the duty of your building inspector to consult United Utilities if you plan to build within three meters of the public sewer. Should you wish to streamline the statutory consultation processes, you should consult United Utilities direct before making a Building Regulations application. Please be aware that you will have to bear costs in relation to CCTV surveys, pipe replacement/protection and legal costs if a Building Over Agreement is permitted.



Building over public sewers checklist

1 Are planning or building approvals needed?

Check with your local council.

2 Are there existing sewers, drains or other pipes within 3 metres of the extension?

Check the Statutory Sewer Map and other drawings. United Utilities may need a CCTV inspection of the pipe, the cost of which must be borne by the applicant. If a Building Over Agreement is allowed, there will also be legal costs.

Yes – go to check No 3.

No – go to No 8.

3 If there is a pipe within 3 metres can you build the extension elsewhere?

Yes – go to No 8.

No – go to No 4.

4 Have you checked to see if there is an easement or covenant protecting the pipe?

Check the property deeds for details. If there is an easement but it does not affect your proposals go to No 5. If an easement does affect the proposals go to No 9.

5 Is your proposed building close to an existing access point to the pipe eg a manhole or inspection chamber?

Yes – consult the council or United Utilities.

No – go to check No 6.

6 If the pipe needs to be replaced in the future can it be re-laid on an alternative diversion route at least 3 metres away from the building?

Yes – go to No 8.

No – consult the council or United Utilities.

7 Will the alterations require a new connection to the public sewer?

Applicants must give 21 days notice.

Yes – consult the council or United Utilities.

No – go to No 8.

8 You should now apply to Building Control for building regulation approval.

9 Sorry, but a building over is not allowed but we hope that this checklist has been helpful.

NB: Some structures like conservatories may not need building regulation approval or planning permission. However, you will still need to contact United Utilities if you intend to build over a public sewer.