Approved Document H – 2002 Revisions
Drainage & waste disposal

Briefing Note

Requirement H1 - Foul Drainage

1. The regulations now establish a priority order in which methods of disposing of foul water must be used. In each case the requirement is that the first method on the list will be used, unless it is not reasonably practicable to do so, when the next method must be used (and so on). For example, the building regulations will not allow the installation of a septic tank unless it can be demonstrated that it would not be reasonably practical to connect to a public or private sewer. The order of priority is as follows:
    1. Public sewer
    2. Private sewer
    3. Septic tank or treatment system
    4. Cesspool
2. Includes all foul pipework up to the point of connection with the sewer/septic tank etc - which clarifies the position with regard to pipework put in at the same time as the sewer. For example, pipework from the sewer to the back of the highway (to allow for future connections) **will** require Building Regulation consent/inspection.
3. Boiler condensate may connect to sanitary pipework via pipes at least 22mm diameter pipework with a 75mm trap
4. Rodding points in soil stacks must be above the spillover level of the lowest connected appliance
5. Protection of shallow pipes now includes reinforced concrete bridging
6. Pipework serving more than 10 dwellings must be at least 150mm diameter.
7. Drainage serving commercial kitchens to have grease separators.
8. Guidance on limiting the effects of surcharging drains to prevent foul sewage entering buildings (especially in basements) now provided.
9. Planning of new sites must make reasonable allowance for the possibility of future extensions without needing to build over the sewer.
10. Drains connecting into existing pipework (other than at a manhole) must use prefabricated units to avoid the use of "saddles". Where the use of a saddle is unavoidable, the hole in the existing pipe must be drilled - not broken out.
11. Separate foul and surface water systems must be tested to prove they are connected to the right system.
12. Additional guidance is provided for areas with rodent control problems.

Requirement H2 – Wastewater treatment systems and cesspools

1. Septic tanks must have a minimum capacity of 2700 litres (4 people) plus 180 litres for each extra person.
2. Cesspools – 18000litres (2 people) plus 6800 litres/person.
3. Septic tanks and cesspools should be sited at least 7m from any habitable parts of buildings, preferably downslope, and within 30m of a suitable tanker access (without the need to pass the hose from the tanker through the building).
4. A notice is required within the building describing the system, emptying details and legal responsibilities.
5. Outfall drainage from septic tanks and package treatment works now controlled, and must be located at least 15m from any building, 10m from any watercourse, and sufficiently far away from any other soakaway or drainage field etc. No driveways, paths etc should cover the disposal area.
6. The outfall of the drainage system must be designed following a percolation test. It is also likely that The Environment Agency will require to be consulted.

Packaged treatment plants:

7. Must be type tested in accordance with BS 7781 - and if it is electrically powered, it must be able to function adequately for 6 hours without power (or have a backup power supply)
8. The discharge must be at least 10m away from watercourses or buildings
9. A notice must be provided within the building describing required maintenance and legal responsibilities

Constructed wetlands/reed beds and greywater storage systems:

10. The Approved Document now includes details of both horizontal and vertical flow reed bed treatment systems
11. Greywater and rainwater storage systems storing water for re-use within the building must be watertight, well ventilated and be provided with a durable and lockable access cover to allow emptying and cleaning. Where the storage system has an overflow connection to a drain or sewer an anti-backflow device should be fitted.

Requirement H3 – Rainwater drainage

1. As with Foul drainage, the Regulations now specify an order of priority for methods of disposal. The effect of this is that applicant's can no longer simply chose to discharge rainwater to a sewer - even where a separate surface water sewer exists. If it is reasonably practicable to use either a soakaway or watercourse - then applicants must do so. Surface water must therefore discharge in order of priority:
    a. Soakaway
    b. Water course
    c. Sewer
2. Soakaways need to be designed. Details of rainfall intensity, porosity tests and storage capacity are now included in the Approved Document, as are details of swales, filter drains and detention ponds which may also be used.
3. Discharge to a watercourse may require consent from the Environment Agency.
4. The effective roof areas for any given roof pitch has changed resulting in increased gutter sizes etc.
5. Certain paved areas (disabled access routes, common access areas and routes to waste storage areas) must be either free draining or pervious to allow water to soak away. If this is not possible then a gully/channel drainage system should be used.
6. Areas that may produce contaminated drainage (car parks, oils storage areas etc) need to be kept separate for treatment via oil interceptors or other systems as appropriate.
7. Syphonic and eaves drop systems are now included in the Approved Document guidance.

Requirement H4 – Building over sewers

1. Regulation 14A requires the sewerage authority to be consulted if it is intended to build over or within 3m of ***any*** sewer shown on the sewer records (even if it is not a public sewer). The consultation will be instigated at the fee acceptance stage. The plans cannot be passed or a completion certificate issued until a response has been received or 15 days has elapsed.
2. 21 days notice must be given to the sewerage undertaker prior to making any connection to a public sewer.
3. Full plans applications are required where it is proposed to build over or within 3.0m of a public sewer.
4. No building should cover a manhole/inspection chamber/access fitting serving ***any*** sewer.
5. No length of sewer covered by a building should exceed 6m in length, be more than 225mm diameter or more than 3m deep, unless permission from the owner of the drain is given. (NB the sewerage undertaker is the owner of a public sewer.)
6. An alternative route for the sewer at least 3.0m from the building should be available so that it could (if necessary) be diverted without affecting the building.
7. Sewers should be adequately protected during the construction process to prevent damage.

Requirement H5 – Separate systems of drainage

1. Surface water drainage may only connect to a foul water sewer if a soakaway or a watercourse cannot be used ***and*** a surface water sewer is not available.
2. Where only a foul sewer is available, but a surface water sewer is under construction, a separate system must be constructed up to the point of connection of the foul sewer.
3. Where rainwater drainage from paved areas may be contaminated and could present a risk of pollution, it may connect to the foul sewer subject to consent from the sewerage undertaker.

Requirement H6 – Solid waste storage

1. For domestic developments, space should be provided for two containers (one for recyclable waste) having a combined capacity of $0.25m^3$ – generally an area of $1.2m^2$ is considered sufficient. The waste storage area is required to be within 30m of the dwelling and 25m of the collection point.
2. Pathways should have a maximum gradient of 1:12 and preferably no steps (with a maximum of 3 if unavoidable).
3. Waste storage areas should be located away from windows or ventilators, preferably in the shade or under cover, not interfere with pedestrian/ vehicle access to the building.
4. For commercial (non-domestic) developments the waste collection authority must be consulted for guidance on the volume and nature of the waste storage required, location of storage areas and access of removal of waste etc

For more information please contact the Building Control Division of Plymouth City Council on (01752) 304343 or via e-mail at buildingcontrol@plymouth.gov.uk