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## **Wiltshire: Marlborough Area Neighbourhood Plan: Pre Submission Plan Draft Plan**

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for allowing Thames Water Utilities Ltd (Thames Water) to comment on the above.

As you are aware, Thames Water covers the North East of the Wiltshire area including Marlborough and are hence a "specific consultation body" in accordance with the Town & Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations 2012. We have the following comments on the consultation document:

### **Water and Wastewater/Sewerage Infrastructure**

Thames Water seeks to co-operate and maintain a good working relationship with local planning authorities in its area and to provide the support they need with regards to the provision of sewerage/wastewater treatment and water supply infrastructure.

A key sustainability objective for the preparation of Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans should be for new development to be co-ordinated with the infrastructure it demands and to take into account the capacity of existing infrastructure. Paragraph 20 of the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), February 2019, states: "Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and make sufficient provision for... infrastructure for waste management, water supply, wastewater..."

Paragraph 28 relates to non-strategic policies and states: "Non-strategic policies should be used by local planning authorities and communities to set out more detailed policies for specific areas, neighbourhoods or types of development. This can include allocating sites, the provision of infrastructure..."

Paragraph 26 of the revised NPPF goes on to state: "Effective and on-going joint working between strategic policy-making authorities and relevant bodies is integral to the production of a positively prepared and justified strategy. In particular, joint working should help to determine where additional infrastructure is necessary...."

The web based National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) includes a section on 'water supply, wastewater and water quality' and sets out that Local Plans should be the focus for ensuring that investment plans of water and sewerage/wastewater companies align with development needs. The introduction to this section also sets out that "Adequate water and

wastewater infrastructure is needed to support sustainable development” (Paragraph: 001, Reference ID: 34-001-20140306).

It is important to consider the net increase in wastewater [and water supply] demand to serve the development and also any impact that developments may have off site, further down the network. The Neighbourhood Plan should therefore seek to ensure that there is adequate wastewater[and water supply] infrastructure to serve all new developments. Thames Water will work with developers and local authorities to ensure that any necessary infrastructure reinforcement is delivered ahead of the occupation of development. Where there are infrastructure constraints, it is important not to under estimate the time required to deliver necessary infrastructure. For example: local network upgrades take around 18 months and Sewage Treatment & Water Treatment Works upgrades can take 3-5 years.

The provision of water treatment (both wastewater treatment and water supply) is met by Thames Water’s asset plans and from the 1st April 2018 network improvements will be from infrastructure charges per new dwelling.

From 1st April 2018, the way Thames Water and all other water and wastewater companies charge for new connections has changed. The economic regulator Ofwat has published new rules, which set out that charges should reflect: fairness and affordability; environmental protection; stability and predictability; and transparency and customer-focused service.

The changes mean that more of Thames Water’s charges will be fixed and published, rather than provided on application, enabling you to estimate your costs without needing to contact us. The services affected include new water connections, lateral drain connections, water mains and sewers (requisitions), traffic management costs, income offsetting and infrastructure charges.

Thames Water therefore recommends that developers engage with them at the earliest opportunity (in line with paragraph 26 of the revised NPPF) to establish the following:

- The developments demand for water supply infrastructure;
- The developments demand for Sewage/Wastewater Treatment and network infrastructure both on and off site and can it be met; and
- The surface water drainage requirements and flood risk of the development both on and off site and can it be met.

Thames Water offer a free Pre-Planning service which confirms if capacity exists to serve the development or if upgrades are required for potable water, waste water and surface water requirements. Details on Thames Water’s free pre planning service are available at: <https://www.thameswater.co.uk/preplanning>

In light of the above comments and Government guidance we consider that the Neighbourhood Plan should include a specific reference to the key issue of the provision of wastewater/sewerage [and water supply] infrastructure to service development proposed in a policy. This is necessary because it will not be possible to identify all of the water/sewerage infrastructure required over the plan period due to the way water companies are regulated and plan in 5 year periods (Asset Management Plans or AMPs). We recommend the Neighbourhood Plan include the following policy/supporting text:

**PROPOSED NEW WATER/WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE TEXT**

***“Where appropriate, planning permission for developments which result in the need for off-site upgrades, will be subject to conditions to ensure the occupation is aligned with the delivery of necessary infrastructure upgrades.”***

***“The Local Planning Authority will seek to ensure that there is adequate water and wastewater infrastructure to serve all new developments. Developers are encouraged to contact the water/waste water company as early as possible to discuss their development proposals and intended delivery programme to assist with identifying any potential water and wastewater network reinforcement requirements. 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.”***

#### **Comments in relation to Water Efficiency/Climate Change:**

The Environment Agency has designated the Thames Water region to be “seriously water stressed” which reflects the extent to which available water resources are used. Future pressures on water resources will continue to increase and key factors are population growth and climate change.

Water conservation and climate change is a vitally important issue to the water industry. Not only is it expected to have an impact on the availability of raw water for treatment but also the demand from customers for potable (drinking) water. Therefore, Thames Water support the mains water consumption target of 110 litres per head per day (105 litres per head per day plus an allowance of 5 litres per head per day for gardens) as set out in the NPPG (Paragraph: 014 Reference ID: 56-014-20150327) and support the inclusion of this requirement in the Policy.

Thames Water promote water efficiency and have a number of water efficiency campaigns which aim to encourage their customers to save water at local levels. Further details are available on the our website via the following link:  
<https://www.thameswater.co.uk/Be-water-smart>

It is our understanding that the water efficiency standards of 105 litres per person per day is only applied through the building regulations where there is a planning condition requiring this standard (as set out at paragraph 2.8 of Part G2 of the Building Regulations). As the Thames Water area is defined as water stressed it is considered that such a condition should be attached as standard to all planning approvals for new residential development in order to help ensure that the standard is effectively delivered through the building regulations.

Proposed policy text:

***“Development must 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. Residential development must not exceed a maximum water use of 105 litres per head per day (excluding the allowance of up to 5 litres for external water consumption). Planning conditions will be applied to new residential development to ensure that the water efficiency standards are met.”***

#### **Flood Risk, Sustainable Drainage Systems and Water Management**

The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) states that a sequential approach should be used by local planning authorities in areas known to be at risk from forms of flooding other than from river and sea, which includes "Flooding from Sewers".

When reviewing development and flood risk it is important to recognise that water and/or sewerage infrastructure may be required to be developed in flood risk areas. By their very nature water and sewage treatment works are located close or adjacent to rivers (to abstract water for treatment and supply or to discharge treated effluent). It is likely that these existing works will need to be upgraded or extended to provide the increase in treatment capacity required to service new development. Flood risk sustainability objectives should therefore accept that water and sewerage infrastructure development may be necessary in flood risk areas.

Flood risk sustainability objectives and policies should also make reference to 'sewer flooding' and an acceptance that flooding can occur away from the flood plain as a result of development where off site sewerage infrastructure and capacity is not in place ahead of development.

With regard to surface water drainage it is the responsibility of the developer to make proper provision for drainage to ground, watercourses or surface water sewer. It is important to reduce the quantity of surface water entering the sewerage system in order to maximise the capacity for foul sewage to reduce the risk of sewer flooding.

Limiting the opportunity for surface water entering the foul and combined sewer networks is of critical importance to Thames Water. Thames Water have advocated an approach to SuDS that limits as far as possible the volume of and rate at which surface water enters the public sewer system. By doing this, SuDS have the potential to play an important role in helping to ensure the sewerage network has the capacity to cater for population growth and the effects of climate change.

SuDS not only help to mitigate flooding, they can also help to: improve water quality; provide opportunities for water efficiency; provide enhanced landscape and visual features; support wildlife; and provide amenity and recreational benefits.

With regard to surface water drainage, Thames Water request that the following paragraph should be included in the Neighbourhood Plan ***"It is the responsibility of a developer to make proper provision for surface water drainage to ground, water courses or surface water sewer. It must not be allowed to drain to the foul sewer, as this is the major contributor to sewer flooding."***

### **Comments on Site Allocations**

The information contained within the new Neighbourhood Plan will be of significant value to Thames Water as we prepare for the provision of future infrastructure.

The attached table provides Thames Water's site specific comments from desktop assessments on water, sewerage/waste water network and waste water treatment infrastructure in relation to the proposed development sites, but more detailed modelling may be required to refine the requirements.

We recommend Developers contact Thames Water to discuss their development proposals by using our pre app service (link below)

<https://developers.thameswater.co.uk/Developing-a-large-site/Planning-your-development/Water-and-wastewater-capacity>

It should be noted that in the event of an upgrade to our sewerage network assets being required, up to three years lead in time is usual to enable for the planning and delivery of the upgrade. As a developer has the automatic right to connect to our sewer network under the Water Industry Act we may also request a drainage planning condition if a network upgrade is required to ensure the infrastructure is in place ahead of occupation of the development. This will avoid adverse environmental impacts such as sewer flooding and / or water pollution.

Additionally, the proposed development sites fall inside an area prone to groundwater infiltration, therefore please see some comments surrounding this below:

In order to provide an essential sewerage service to our 16 million customers it is critical that we protect our sewerage system from unwanted flows entering our network, the consequence of not doing so is an impact to the environment through pollution or service to our customers such as flooding.

Thames Water is actively working towards minimising groundwater infiltration into our sewerage system. There is an acknowledgement both from Thames Water and other stakeholders such as the EA, that dealing with groundwater infiltration is a long-term issue which requires a concerted and sustained approach. We are working with the EA to produce Groundwater Impacted System Management Plans which will outline both our short-term mitigation and long-term plans to deal with infiltration in priority areas. A successful outcome will only be possible with a strong partnership foundation between Risk Management Authorities.

The thrust of our work will be to identify sections of sewerage systems susceptible to infiltration and sealing these sections to reduce the impact. The majority of our sewerage network is only designed to contend with foul / wastewater only. Just one litre per second of groundwater infiltration can take up the equivalent of 250 houses average daily wastewater flow so it is easy to see how eliminating groundwater infiltration is important to safeguarding the essential wastewater service we provide.

The problem presented by groundwater infiltration is often compounded by surface water getting into foul only systems, many connections of surface water from roofs and drives are undertaken without our consent or knowledge and it is something that we are actively looking to address. As a planning authority you will be aware that we have an obligation to provide drainage under the Water Industry Act (1991) and that a right to connect presently exists for developers. On occasions developers may make requests to connect surface water into a foul only sewer for the reason that they consider it unreasonable to meet the cost of connecting to the nearest suitable surface water system or do not wish to entertain the use of Sustainable Drainage systems (SuDs) that do not require a positive outfall. In these circumstances (and not just relating to those areas covered in this letter), we would like to reiterate the importance that the drainage hierarchy is enforced in a robust manner; with surface water discharge to combined (and foul) sewers being an absolute last resort and full consideration is given to other means of surface water drainage. We seek your support in assistance with this matter to maintain the focus on this issue in high risk areas whilst we progress a long-term resolution.

We trust the above is satisfactory, but please do not hesitate to contact David Wilson on the number above if you have any queries.

Yours faithfully

**Thames Water Utilities Ltd**