

Southern Water - Wastewater Position Statement Hailsham North and Hailsham South Wastewater Treatment Works - December 2018

Summary

- 1.1 The following Wastewater Position Statement has been subject to meetings and discussions with relevant stakeholders in order to assist in formulating the basis for a Statement of Common Ground on Wastewater Infrastructure issues in Hailsham, for the purposes of the Wealden Local Plan. The following organisations have signed up to this Position Statement as an accurate factual account of the position at the Hailsham North and Hailsham South Wastewater Treatment Works (WTWs):
- Wealden District Council;
 - Southern Water;
 - Environment Agency; and
 - Natural England.
- 1.2 Hailsham North and Hailsham South WTWs discharge treated effluent into the Pevensey Levels, a sensitive natural environment afforded protection by European and National legislation. During the preparation of Wealden's Core Strategy (adopted February 2013) it became apparent that additional discharges into the Pevensey Levels might be constrained and so a commitment was made to limit growth until an acceptable solution for treating wastewater had been identified. Southern Water has considered various options and based on current information has concluded that the preferred solution is the provision of a high rate secondary treatment process at both WTWs in order to overcome this environmental constraint.

Introduction

- 2.1 Southern Water owns and operates Hailsham North and Hailsham South WTWs. Both WTWs discharge treated effluent to the Pevensey Levels, a sensitive natural environment protected by National and European Legislation. The WTWs operate in accordance with Environmental Permits set by the Environment Agency so that water quality objectives are protected.
- 2.2. During the preparation of Wealden's Core Strategy (adopted February 2013), it was identified that there was capacity available at both WTWs but their ability to accommodate future growth beyond the existing headroom would be limited due to the environmental impact of additional treated effluent on the Pevensey Levels. The evidence was considered by the Planning Inspector who concluded in his report '...there is sufficient uncertainty over the deliverability of development beyond the headroom level for the CS not to commit at this stage to further housing in south Wealden....'. He recommended a main modification to review the Core Strategy by 2015.
- 2.3. Accordingly, policy WCS1 (Provision of Homes and Jobs 2006-2027) of the adopted Core Strategy requires that the strategy for homes and jobs 'shall be reviewed in 2015 or when a preferred solution to the capacity issues associated with Hailsham North and Hailsham South Wastewater Treatment

Works has been identified, whichever is the earlier, in order to ensure that there is an adequate supply of development land in the longer term. The review shall include an assessment of current and future levels of need and demand for housing to provide an appropriate basis for longer term housing provision’.

- 2.4. Southern Water has investigated possible solutions to deliver additional wastewater treatment capacity in south Wealden to accommodate growth beyond the existing combined headroom at Hailsham North and South WTWs. This position statement sets out background information, summarises the possible options and identifies the preferred solution based on the best information currently available.

Pevensey Levels

- 3.1 Hailsham South and Hailsham North Wastewater Treatment Works (WTWs) discharge treated effluent into the Pevensey Levels. The Pevensey Levels are located between Eastbourne and Bexhill and comprise one of the largest and least fragmented lowland wet grassland in the UK. They are designated as a Ramsar site as well as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and part of it is a National Nature Reserve.
- 3.2 As a designated SAC the Pevensey Levels is afforded a high level of protection in town and country planning terms.

Wastewater treatment capacity currently available

- 4.1 Hailsham North WTW serves the northern part of Hailsham, Horsebridge and several outlying villages. Hailsham South WTW serves the majority of Hailsham itself as well as Polegate and Willingdon. Both these WTWs discharge treated waste water into the Pevensey Levels, in line with Environmental Permits granted by the Environment Agency.
- 4.2 There is sufficient capacity at the two WTWs to serve the development set out in the adopted Wealden Core Strategy. Paragraph 6.16 of the Core Strategy states that ‘Development in Hailsham and Hellingly is constrained by the capacity of the waste water treatment works to discharge treated waste water. Of particular concern is the impact of the treated effluent on the conservation objectives of the Pevensey levels, and as a result the Environment Agency has capped the amount of effluent that can be discharged. The growth strategy reflects this constraint and therefore development will only be allowed if it can be accommodated by the existing works, unless an alternative location for the treatment and discharge of waste water is implemented’. As a result, the Core Strategy limits the number of new homes in Hailsham, Polegate, Willingdon and Stone Cross to match the capacity available at the two WTWs.

Provision of additional wastewater treatment capacity

- 5.1 Further review and trialling of current wastewater treatment technology identified a high rate biological treatment process that is capable of meeting the requirement to achieve a high quality effluent.
- 5.2 Southern Water is currently undertaking the engineering design with a deadline for the construction, commissioning and operation of the process by 22nd December 2021.
- 5.3 Whilst continuing with the design Southern Water is working with the Environment Agency and Natural England to develop an 'Operating Agreement' to achieve the required high quality effluent from the works.
- 5.4 The permit itself will include a numeric standard of 0.25mg/l phosphorous level as an annual average. This standard is considered as the "Technically Achievable Limit" for phosphorous with current technology, however Southern Water have committed to treat beyond this at the two Hailsham WTWs to support the protection of the Pevensey Levels. The Operating Agreement will set out the way in which Southern Water will run the works to reduce the annual average of phosphorous to 0.1mg/l at Hailsham South WTW and 0.08mg/l at Hailsham North WTW.
- 5.5 The development of an operating agreement with the Environment Agency and Natural England is well progressed and nearing completion. Once the permit is in place we will monitor Southern Water's progress in meeting the requirements of the Operating Agreement.
- 5.6 In addition, to further reduce the level of phosphorous, Southern Water has undertaken investigations on the surface water sewer network serving Hailsham. This has identified a number of misconnections, where foul discharges have been mistakenly connected to the surface water system. The details of these connections have been shared with the Environmental Health team within Wealden District Council for them to pursue their removal.

Odour Control Infrastructure

- 6.1 Broad locations identified in the Wealden Local Plan, including land east of Hailsham as well as the consented land west of Uckfield are potentially affected by odour nuisance arising from nearby WTWs. The Wealden Local Plan seeks to allocate land outside of the areas potentially subject to odour nuisance. Any planning application associated with development within the proximity of the WTWs will need to show that it will not be subject to odour nuisance. If it is deemed that odour nuisance is relevant to any proposed development then, in order for development to proceed, schemes are required to be implemented at the works to reduce the odour to acceptable levels. It is expected that the relevant developer(s) fund such schemes and is implemented prior to occupation.