

Appeal if you've been refused connection to a public sewer

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You can appeal to the Environment Agency if your water company has refused to provide a public sewer connection. Or if you want to dispute when they will provide the sewer by.

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Some water companies are 'sewerage undertakers' who deal with wastewater.

They must provide and pay for new public sewers to drain an area if all these points apply:

- properties currently use private sewerage systems and are not connected to a public sewer (directly or indirectly)
- the properties generate domestic sewage from toilets, cooking and similar activities (but the property does not have to be residential)
- drainage is causing, or is likely to cause, problems for the environment, or the use of land, recreation or people's quality of life (amenity)
- the drainage problems cannot be fully solved by repairing or maintaining the current private sewerage systems
- the problems are from private sewerage serving more than one building
- a public sewer is the most appropriate solution

Apply for a public sewer connection

To apply for a public sewer connection, contact the sewerage undertaker whose area your property is in. You may be able to apply on their website.

If you're not sure who this is, you can use the Water UK's website to check which sewerage undertaker serves your postcode.

The sewerage undertaker will then assess your application to decide if it has a duty to provide a public sewer. Most sewerage undertakers explain how they make their decision on their website.

Appeal if you're unhappy with the sewerage undertaker's decision

You can appeal to the Environment Agency if you're unhappy with the sewerage undertaker's decision. This could be about:

- whether the sewerage undertaker has to provide you with a sewer

- when the sewerage undertaker will provide the sewer by

As part of your appeal you can provide supporting evidence like:

- photographs
- letters between residents and the Environment Agency or local authority
- reports from the drainage contractor

Start your appeal

How the Environment Agency assesses appeals

After you've sent your appeal, the Environment Agency will consider information from you and your sewerage undertaker.

The Environment Agency will share relevant information that it receives with you and your sewerage undertaker. That includes:

- relevant information that you send
- relevant information that your sewerage undertaker sends
- information from independent sources

When making its decision, the Environment Agency will take into account the guidance issued by the Minister on the interpretation of the legislation. If you want to request a copy of this, contact the Environment Agency.

The Environment Agency may ask the sewerage undertaker to:

- reconsider their original assessment
- consider more information, including other public or private sewerage options

When you get the Environment Agency's decision

The appeal process is likely to take at least 12 months. But it can take significantly longer in more complex cases.

All parties must have enough opportunity to review and respond to the information the Environment Agency receives during the process.

The Environment Agency's decision is final. Neither you nor your sewerage undertaker can appeal against it. The decision may also recommend actions or give guidance.

If the Environment Agency decides in your favour, they will ask your sewerage undertaker to tell you when they will provide the sewer.

If you use a private sewerage system

You must minimise pollution from private sewerage systems while:

- the appeal is being considered
- you're waiting for a public sewer connection

Check your responsibilities if you have a:

- septic tank or sewage treatment plant
- cesspool

If you pollute, the Environment Agency may take action in line with its enforcement and sanctions policy.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/disputes-regarding-connection-to-the-public-sewer>