

05 January 2024

Our ref: Melton 14

Dear Sir/Madam,

Melton Local Plan Update: Issues and Options (Regulation 18) Consultation Notification

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your consultation, we have some specific comments to make on your plan. Please keep us informed when your plans are further developed when we will be able to offer more detailed comments and advice.

Position Statement

As a water company we have an obligation to provide water supplies and sewage treatment capacity for future development. It is important for us to work collaboratively with Local Planning Authorities to provide relevant assessments on the impacts of future developments and to provide advice regarding policy wording on other relevant areas such as water efficiency, Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), biodiversity, and blue green infrastructure. Where more detail is provided on site allocations, we will provide specific comments on the suitability of the site with respect to the water and sewerage network. In the instances where there may be a concern over the capacity of the network, we may look to undertake modelling to better understand the potential risk. For most developments there is unlikely to be an issue connecting. However, where an issue is identified, we will look to discuss in further detail with the Local Planning Authority. Where there is sufficient confidence that a development will go ahead, we will look to complete any necessary improvements to provide additional capacity.

Specific Response to the consultation

Vision and Objectives – Consultation Question 2

We are supportive of Option 2 a refocused and simplified Vision and Objectives section. It is pleasing that this has been updated to include the impact of climate change. In support of this objective please see the section below in our general guidance referring to Surface Water and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). Sustainable management of surface water will become increasingly more important in the future as the impacts of climate change are predicted to result in more intense rainfall which in turn can increase the risk of flooding. Managing surface water at source, as close as possible to where it falls during rainfall, then maximising the retention time it stays there by mimicking natural drainage via SuDS is key to reducing flood risk.

Policy SS3 – Consultation Question 6 & 7

It is recommended that any review of this policy should retain the following criteria whilst considering an additional statement linked back to the climate change objective set out in your Vision and Objectives section.

- The development can be adequately drained and would does not increase the risk of flooding, in accordance with Policy EN11.

We would like to offer our support in providing potential wastewater infrastructure constraints that may impact the suitability, viability and ultimately sustainability of future allocations. We believe we have worked with you previously to provide this type of information. Early engagement is key whilst there's still flexibility in selection allocation sites. We can provide information to enhance your evidence base which would highlight whether we anticipate any sewerage or surface water drainage risks with a specific allocation. We can also provide more generalise information around Wastewater treatment Works capacity which may help to influence which settlements are best suited to accommodating new development, based on their existing infrastructure capacity and provisions. Please feel free to get in touch with any revised SHLAA or allocation options.

Policy SS4 – Consultation Question 10

Supportive of Option 2 – Amend this policy to reflect the more recent Masterplan

Policy SS5 – Consultation Question 12

Supportive of Option 2 – Amend this policy to reflect the more recent Masterplan

Policy SS6 – Consultation Question 15

With regards to alternative or long-term options exploration as part of any local plan review, the current policy outlines the prioritisation criteria but makes no mention of the sites potential flood risk or sustainability. We would encourage this addition and that any reviews are led by data and aided by consultation with us in line with our comments above to “consultation question 6 &7”.

Policy EN2 – Consultation Question 50

Severn Trent would be supportive of an amendment or splitting of this policy to incorporate guidance for climate change and new developments that encourage biodiversity. Please see supporting text in the Blue Green Infrastructure section below.

Policy EN3 – Consultation Question 52

Supportive of Option 2 - Enhance and update this policy, for example Bullet Point F – mitigating and adapting to climate change, including through tree planting: This could be enhanced to include reference to the Drainage Hierarchy and any form of Surface Water discharge or control opportunities through Sustainable Urban Drainage tools should be considered.

Policy EN5 – Consultation Question 54

Green open space is a highly valued asset in an increasingly urbanised world. We believe green open space, no matter what size, can provide multi-functional use for the communities that live near it. Beyond the obvious amenity and biodiversity benefits, a key use case is for green infrastructure and surface water management. This may not be essential in the immediate future, but by safeguarding green open space now, it leaves the door open to potential retrofit opportunities in the future. Severn Trent would like to recommend the following policy addition to allow Local Green Spaces to be utilised within flood resilience schemes where necessary.

“Development of flood resilience schemes within local green spaces will be supported provided the schemes do not adversely impact the primary function of the green space.”

Policy EN8 – Consultation Question 58

Supportive of Option 3 – Retain but update policy EN8 and make climate change a core thread that runs throughout the entire plan. Please see supporting text in the Blue Green Infrastructure section below to support the wording/role of nature-based solutions for current flood risk and impact of future climate change.

Policy EN9 – Consultation Question 61

We would welcome a policy update which provides greater focus on water use standard, please see the below section on Water Efficiency policy.

Policy EN11 – Consultation Question 65

Severn Trent would like to recommend Option 2 ensuring that the policy is updated in accordance with national policy whilst retaining the detailed requirements, please see our recommendations for guidance and policy wording below.

Policy EN12 – Consultation Question 67

Severn Trent would be supportive of an amendment of this policy as defined in the issues and options consultation document in particular the need for SuDS to be accompanied by a maintenance schedule detailing maintenance boundaries, responsible parties and arrangements to ensure the SuDS are managed in perpetuity. Additional wording is included below.

For your information we have set out some general guidelines and relevant policy wording that may be useful to you.

Wastewater Strategy

We have a duty to provide capacity for new development in the sewerage network and at our Wastewater Treatment Works (WwTW) and to ensure that we protect the environment. On a company level we have produced a Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP) covering the next 25 years, which assesses the future pressures on our catchments including the impacts of climate change, new development growth and impermeable area creep. This plan supports future investment in our wastewater infrastructure and encourages collaborative working with other Risk Management Authorities to best manage current and future risks. More information on our DWMP can be found on our website <https://www.severntrent.com/about-us/our-plans/drainage-wastewater-management-plan/>.

Where site allocations are available, we can provide a high-level assessment of the impact on the existing network. Where issues are identified, we will look to undertake hydraulic sewer modelling to better understand the risk and where there is sufficient confidence that a development will be built, we will look to undertake an improvement scheme to provide capacity.

Surface Water

Management of surface water is an important feature of new development as the increased coverage of impermeable area on a site can increase the rainwater flowing off the site. The introduction of these flows to the public sewerage system can increase the risk of flooding for existing residents. It is therefore vital that surface water flows are managed sustainably, avoiding connections into the foul or combined sewerage

system and where possible directed back into the natural water systems. We recommend that the following policy wording is included in your plan to ensure that surface water discharges are connected in accordance with the drainage hierarchy:

Drainage Hierarchy Policy

New developments shall demonstrate that all surface water discharges have been carried out in accordance with the principles laid out within the drainage hierarchy, whereby a discharge to the public sewerage system is avoided where possible.

Supporting Text:

Planning Practice Guidance Paragraph 80 (Reference ID: 7-080-20150323) states:

“Generally, the aim should be to discharge surface water run off as high up the following hierarchy of drainage options as reasonably practicable:

1. into the ground (infiltration);
2. to a surface water body;
3. to a surface water sewer, highway drain, or another drainage system;
4. to a combined sewer.”

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) represent the most effective way of managing surface water flows whilst being adaptable to the impact of climate change and providing wider benefits around water quality, biodiversity, and amenity. We therefore recommend that the following policy wording is included within your plan regarding SuDS:

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) Policy

All major developments shall ensure that Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) for the management of surface water run-off are included, unless proved to be inappropriate.

All schemes with the inclusion of SuDS should demonstrate they have considered all four areas of good SuDS design: quantity, quality, amenity and biodiversity.

Completed SuDS schemes should be accompanied by a maintenance schedule detailing maintenance boundaries, responsible parties and arrangements to ensure the SuDS are managed in perpetuity.

Supporting Text:

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) should be designed in accordance with current industry best practice, The SuDS Manual, CIRIA (C753), to ensure that the systems deliver both the surface water quantity and the wider benefits, without significantly increasing costs. Good SuDS design can be key for creating a strong sense of place and pride in the community for where they live, work and visit, making the surface water management features as much a part of the development as the buildings and roads.

Blue Green Infrastructure

We are supportive of the principles of blue green infrastructure and plans that aim to improve biodiversity across our area. Looking after water means looking after nature and the environment too. As a water company we have launched a Great Big Nature Boost Campaign which aims to revive 12,000 acres of land, plant 1.3 million trees and restore 2,000km of rivers across our region by 2027. We also have ambitious plans to revive peat bogs and moorland, to plant wildflower meadows working with the RSPB, National Trust, Moors for the Future Partnership, the Rivers Trust, National Forest and regional Wildlife Trusts and conservation groups.

We want to encourage new development to continue this theme, enhancing biodiversity and ecology links through new development so there is appropriate space for water. To enable planning policy to support the principles of blue green Infrastructure, biodiversity and protecting local green open spaces we recommend the inclusion of the following policies:

Blue and Green Infrastructure Policy

Development should where possible create and enhance blue green corridors to protect watercourses and their associated habitats from harm.

Supporting Text:

The incorporation of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) into blue green corridors can help to improve biodiversity, assisting with the wider benefits of utilising SuDS. National Planning Policy Framework (2021) paragraph 174 States:

“Planning policies and Decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their Statutory Status or identified quality in the development plan);*
- b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;*
- c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;*
- d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.”*

Green Open Spaces Policy

Development of flood resilience schemes within local green spaces will be supported provided the schemes do not adversely impact the primary function of the green space.

Supporting Text:

We understand the need for protecting Green Spaces, however open spaces can provide suitable locations for schemes such as flood alleviation schemes to be delivered without adversely impacting on the primary function of the open space. If the correct scheme is chosen, the flood alleviation schemes can result in additional benefits to the local green space through biodiversity and amenity benefits.

Water Quality and Resources

Good quality watercourses and groundwater is vital for the provision of good quality drinking water. We work closely with the Environment Agency and local farmers to ensure that the water quality of our supplies are not impacted by our operations or those of others. Any new developments need to ensure that the Environment Agency’s Source Protection Zones (SPZ) and Safeguarding Zone policies which have been adopted by Natural Resources Wales are adhered to. Any proposals should take into account the principles of the Water Framework Directive and River Basin Management Plan as prepared by the Environment Agency.

Every five years we produce a Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP) which focuses on how we plan to ensure there is sufficient supply of water to meet the needs of our customers whilst protecting our environment over the next 25 years. We use housing target data from Local Planning Authorities to plan

according to the projected growth rates. New development results in the need for an increase in the amount of water that needs to be supplied across our region. We are committed to doing the right thing and finding new sustainable sources of water, along with removing unsustainable abstractions, reducing leakage from the network and encouraging the uptake of water meters to promote a change in water usage to reduce demand.

New developments have a role to play in protecting water resources, we encourage you to include the following policies:

Protection of Water Resources Policy

New developments must demonstrate that they will not result in adverse impacts on the quality of waterbodies, groundwater and surface water, will not prevent waterbodies and groundwater from achieving a good status in the future and contribute positively to the environment and ecology. Where development has the potential to directly or indirectly pollute groundwater, a groundwater risk assessment will be needed to support a planning application.

Supporting Text:

National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021) Paragraph 174 states:

“Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans;”*

Water Efficiency Policy

We are supportive of the use of water efficient design of new developments fittings and appliances and encourage the optional higher water efficiency target of 110 litres per person per day within part G of building regulations. Delivering against the optional higher target or better provides wider benefits to the water cycle and environment as a whole. This approach is not only the most sustainable but the most appropriate direction to deliver water efficiency. We would therefore recommend that the following wording is included for the optional higher water efficiency standard:

New developments should demonstrate that they are water efficient, incorporating water efficiency and re-use measures and that the estimated consumption of wholesome water per dwelling is calculated in accordance with the methodology in the water efficiency calculator, not exceeding 110 litres/person/day.

Supporting Text:

National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021) Paragraph 153 states:

“Plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, and the risk of overheating from rising temperatures. Policies should support appropriate measures to ensure the future resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts, such as providing space for physical protection measures, or making provision for the possible future relocation of vulnerable development and infrastructure.”

This need for lower water consumption standards for new developments is supported by Government. In December 2018, the Government stated the need to a reduction in Per Capita Consumption (PCC) and issued a call for evidence on future PCC targets in January 2019, with an intention of setting a long-term national target. The National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) has already presented a report including recommendations for an average PCC of 118 l/p/d. In Wales, the 110 l/p/d design standard was made mandatory in November 2018. In 2021 the Environment Agency classed the Severn Trent region as Seriously Water Stressed – [link](#).

We recommend that all new developments consider:

- Single flush siphon toilet cistern and those with a flush volume of 4 litres.
- Showers designed to operate efficiently and with a maximum flow rate of 8 litres per minute.
- Hand wash basin taps with low flow rates of 4 litres per minute or less.
- Water butts for external use in properties with gardens.

Water Supply

For the majority of new developments, we do not anticipate issues connecting new development, particularly within urban areas of our water supply network. When specific detail of planned development location and sizes are available a site-specific assessment of the capacity of our water supply network could be made. Any assessment will involve carrying out a network analysis exercise to investigate any potential impacts. If significant development in rural areas is planned, this is more likely to have an impact and require network reinforcements to accommodate greater demands.

Developer Enquiries

When there is more detail available on site-specific developments, we encourage developers to get in contact with Severn Trent at an early stage in planning to ensure that there is sufficient time for a development site to be assessed and if network reinforcements are required that there is time to develop an appropriate scheme to address the issues. We therefore encourage developers to contact us, details of how to submit a Developer Enquiry can be found here - <https://www.stwater.co.uk/building-and-developing/new-site-developments/developer-enquiries/>

We hope that this information has been useful to you, and we look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Yours Sincerely,
Emma Newton

