

Building near or diverting water courses



Gaining permission for building over a sewer at a residential property can be relatively easy to obtain. It involves a process before reaching an agreement between the homeowner and the water company's Developer Services department. But when it comes to building over water mains it is a different procedure entirely.

Building over a water supply main is prohibited in any circumstance. The reason for this being that water mains are pressurised and carry large volumes of water. As a result, building over the top could result in added compression to the pipe causing a burst or building works could result in an accidental incision in the pipe. The consequences of this damage can affect neighbouring properties also and could risk contamination.

The presence of a public water main within the boundary of a property is a rare occurrence albeit an inconvenient one. A homeowner with plans to extend over or build over a public water main will be faced two alternative options.

The first option the water company may advise is to gain a Build Near Agreement. This is a written agreement consenting that construction can take place either side of the public main. There is a minimum of 3-metre rule but this is subject to the size, depth and pressure of the water main so the distance may increase if it is a critical main.

The water company will generally recommend the homeowner to hire a private inspector to visit the property and accurately locate the exact position of the main. Once this has been performed, the inspector should produce a map showing their workings. You can then share this with the water company and begin the process of gaining approval.

The other option for the homeowner is to divert the water main. This can come at a high cost and sometimes the cost may be greater than the actual cost for the building works that are being implemented. There is a six-step process involved. This is outlined opposite.

Step 1 The Developer Services department will generally have an application form which will be easily locatable on the water company's website. You will need to complete the form and also provide an architect drawing of the property.

Step 2 The application will be acknowledged.

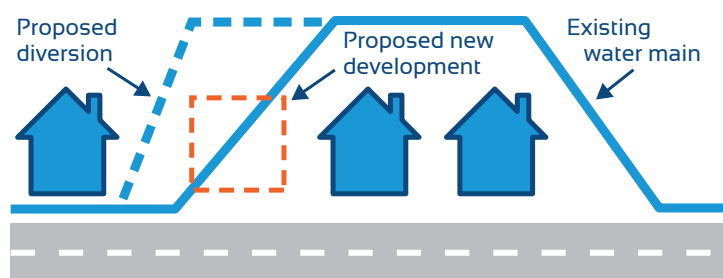
Step 3 The Developer Services will accept the application and request upfront payment.

Step 4 The water company will produce a design proposal and then calculate and confirm the additional fees that you need to pay.

Step 5 You will be issued with an Agreement for signature, and a line and level form to guarantee the route of the trench.

Step 6 The water company will arrange a construction programme with you. This will take six weeks minimum.

More information with regards to diverting a water main can be found in the Water Industry Act 1991.



In summary

Your client would be faced with two options both of which can be costly and labour intensive. This really exemplifies the importance of official drainage and water searches which will reveal whether there are any public pipes within the boundary of the property.



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