Non-mains foul drainage

What information do I need to submit with my planning application?
**Introduction**

Where a planning application proposes new or altered non-mains drainage arrangements we will require a minimum amount of information about the new arrangements to be provided **before** we validate your planning application.

**What is non-mains drainage?**

Non-mains foul drainage means the different methods of sewage disposal which are used when mains sewerage is not available. There are three main types:

- Package treatment plants
- Septic tanks
- Cesspools

**What type of sewerage system should I use?**

Government guidance to Local Planning Authorities explains that when drawing up sewerage proposals for any development, the presumption must always be to discharge into a public sewer where connection is available and viable. There is an absolute right in law for connection to the public sewer network, however you should discuss connection with United Utilities at an early stage to understand their requirements.

If connection to a public sewer is not possible, you must consider a package sewage treatment plant incorporating a combination of treatment processes. The plant should offer full treatment with the final effluent discharge from it meeting the standard and conditions set by the Environment Agency.

Only if neither a mains or package treatment plant solution is feasible should a system incorporating septic tanks be considered. Applications for planning permission should be supported by a full assessment of the proposed use of septic tanks, to confirm that no adverse effects will arise from the installation. This assessment should focus on the likely effects on the environment, amenity and public health. In particular your assessment should include a thorough examination of the impact of disposal of the final effluent whether it is discharged to a watercourse or disposed of by soakage into the ground.

If the non-mains sewerage and/or sewage disposal proposed is likely to lead to a significant environmental, amenity or public health problem in any area, national guidance states that this would normally be sufficient to justify refusal of planning permission.

**What is a percolation test?**

A percolation test assesses whether the ground conditions of a site will allow a package treatment plant or septic tank to satisfactorily discharge by soakage into the ground without the need for additional secondary treatment. The Building Regulations 2000: Approved Document H (Drainage and Waste Disposal) provide further details of how to undertake a percolation test.
**Box 1: Non-Mains Drainage Questionnaire**
Please complete this questionnaire and submit with your planning application.

1. What method of foul drainage is proposed?
   - [    ] Mains
   - [    ] Package treatment plant to soakaway
   - [    ] Package treatment plant to watercourse
   - [    ] Septic tank to soakaway
   - [    ] Septic tank to watercourse
   - [    ] Sealed cesspool
   - [    ] Other. Please specify ...........................................................................................................

2. What is the distance from the application site to a mains sewerage connection? .......................metres

3. Does the proposal connect to a new or existing system?
   - [    ] New
   - [    ] Existing

4. Is the system exempt from Environment Agency Discharge Consent?
   - [    ] Yes - system meets requirements for discharge consent exemption
   - [    ] No - discharge consent is required

5. If the discharge is to ground, have percolation tests been carried out?
   - [    ] No - discharge is to watercourse
   - [    ] No - discharge is to ground but percolation tests have not been carried out
   - [    ] Yes - percolation tests have been carried out to Building Regulations Standard

Please note we will not validate your application if you propose to discharge to a ground soakaway but have not done percolation tests.

6. What was the average percolation test result? ....................... $V_p$

7. Does your application include scale plans showing the location of the proposed installation, including any drainage field, drainage mound, or outfall to watercourses?
   - [    ] No
   - [    ] Yes - details shown on plan number .................................................................

8. What is the total area of the drainage field (if applicable)? ....................... square metres

8. Does your application include scale plans of the proposed installation?
   - [    ] No
   - [    ] Yes - details shown on plan number .................................................................

9. Does your application include a supporting statement explaining why you have chosen a particular type of treatment and considering whether the installation will have any adverse effects?
   - [    ] No
   - [    ] Yes
A duty planning officer is available Monday to Friday between 9.30am and 12.30pm to talk to either by phone or in person at our Kendal offices. We also run planning surgeries in Keswick, Glenridding and Gosforth where you can meet an officer in person. Please see our website or call us for details of surgery times and locations.

**Useful reading**

- DETR Circular 03/99: Planning Requirement in respect of the Use of Non-Mains Sewerage incorporating Septic Tanks in New Development

- The Building Regulations 2000: Approved Document H - Drainage and Waste Disposal

- Environmental permitting for discharges to surface water and groundwater

**Contact us**

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For specific advice about Building Regulations in respect of non-mains drainage, you should contact your district council (Allerdale, Copeland, Eden, or South Lakeland)

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