

APPENDIX B – Residents Letter from Thames Water

Thames Water
Customer Relations
Customer Services
P.O. Box 436
Swindon
SN38 1TU

Telephone: 08457 200897
Fax: 01793 424291
E-mail: Customer.Feedback@thameswater.co.uk

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Our Ref: 703304

Sewer Flooding

Dear Mr Lewinton

Thank you for your email of 16 November 2010 regarding the sewer flooding experienced by the residents of Eastfield Avenue and Radlett Road. I'm sorry you have experienced another incident at your property.

Our engineers recently attended site and carried out a Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) survey of the sewer to check for any defects which may be causing flooding. A line clean was also carried out to ensure the sewer is functioning to its optimum capacity. The CCTV footage has now been viewed and our engineer's notes show no operational defects within the line. The flooding experienced is solely due to the system being overloaded.

Our records indicate that when the River Colne is in flood, the outfall from our surface water sewers becomes submerged and the risk of flooding increases. The flooding will come out of road gullies and manholes within the local vicinity. We have discussed this issue with the Environment Agency who will not permit an increased discharge to the River Colne.

Please be assured, we are aware of the severity of the issue, and we do have a scheme in place to upsize the existing pipework. This scheme was scheduled to be completed by the end of 2009 as mentioned in your email but unfortunately funding did not permit this work.

I would like to draw your attention to the following details provided to you on 4 February 2010 which details our current position on the situation:

“Every five years, our regulator Ofwat sets the level of customers' bills, which help fund the improvements we carry out to our water and sewerage networks. Ofwat seeks to ensure bills are no higher than necessary by checking that these improvements represent good value for money.

We are, therefore, required to demonstrate that the flood relief schemes we include in our planned work have been put through a process called 'cost benefit analysis'.

As the name implies, this involves comparing the advantages of carrying out the work with the funding required.

We have discussed with Ofwat the work we propose to carry out in the next five-year period, running from 2010 to 2015. We have made the analysis using various pieces of information, including the severity and frequency of flooding and the number of homes that would benefit from each scheme. We have also included the results of research we carried out with customers to see how much they were willing to pay in their bills for these flood protection improvements. A similar process is used by all water companies to help prioritise planned work, in a process supported by the Consumer Council for Water.

However, we have not solely restricted ourselves to using this method. We realise that sewer flooding is the worst service failure a customer can experience, and have therefore considered other issues when assessing these projects. This has included taking into account whether buildings at risk of flooding are vulnerable properties such as schools or hospitals, whether they have suffered frequent flooding and whether it is possible to provide alternative protection measures. In accordance with this strategy, there are a number of schemes that have therefore not been included in our business plan submission to Ofwat.

Unfortunately, the scheme that has been studied in your area is one of these schemes and will therefore not be progressing in the period 2010 to 2015. However, in our Strategic Direction Statement which sets out our plans for the next 25 years we state our intention to eliminate high risk sewer flooding over the 25 year period. It is therefore possible that a scheme may be implemented in your area in the future, however, at this time we are unable to say when that might be. In the meantime, we will continue to gather evidence of flooding in your area to support the development of the case that will need to be made to justify funding at future price reviews. These reviews take place every five years.”

Details of the recent flooding you experienced have been added to our records and will add strength to the case we put forward to our regulators for the work to be carried out urgently.

If you would like any additional information on this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me on 08457 200 897.

Yours sincerely

Sophie Adamou
Customer Relations

Enc. The Thames Water quality promise leaflet