

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CLEARING SEWER AND DRAIN BLOCKAGES?

If the blockage is in a public sewer, then the responsibility for removing a blockage or carrying out a repair, rests with Thames Water plc.

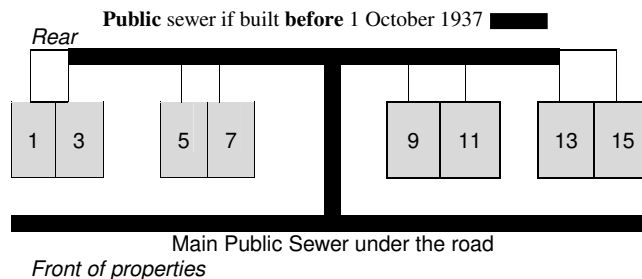
If the blockage occurs in a private sewer, then the responsibility for removing a blockage or carrying out a repair, rests with the owners of those properties which are connected to it up to the point of blockage.

If the blockage is in a drain then the responsibility rests with the owner of the property.

WHAT IS A PUBLIC SEWER?

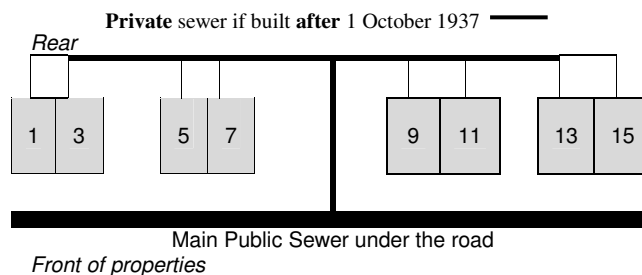
The main sewer which usually runs under the road is normally a public sewer. You should contact Thames Water on **08459 200800** to report the blockage. They will also clear up any mess resulting from an overflow of effluent from manholes. See the section marked **■** on the layout plan.

Where two or more houses are connected to a sewer which was constructed before 1st October 1937 then that sewer is a public sewer. You should contact Thames Water to report the blockage or if you are not sure that your drains are connected to a pre 1937 sewer.



WHAT IS A PRIVATE SEWER?

Any sewer constructed after 1st October 1937 is a private sewer up to the point where it joins a public sewer, even if this is beyond the boundary of your property. It may extend under a public highway or through gardens not in your ownership. A private sewer will serve a number of properties. See the section marked **—** on the layout plan.



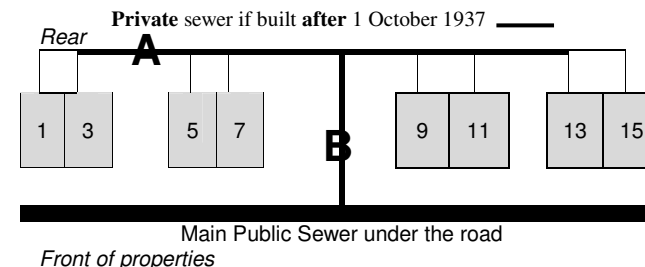
WHAT IS A DRAIN?

A drain is the section of pipe from your house to the point where it meets a private sewer or public sewer. A drain only serves one property. See the section marked **—** on the layout plan.

SO AM I RESPONSIBLE FOR THE WHOLE OF A PRIVATE SEWER?

If the blockage occurs in a private sewer you will be jointly responsible with other owners for any maintenance or blockage up to the point where the problem occurs.

For example on the layout plan below if a blockage occurred at point A only house numbers 1 and 3 would be responsible for removing the blockage. If a blockage occurred at point B all the houses would be responsible for removing the blockage.



WHAT CAUSES BLOCKAGES?

A blockage can occur for all sorts of reasons. In most cases it occurs because of what has been put down the drain or sewer. One of the common causes of blockages is foodstuffs and fats which solidify in the sewers. Disposable nappies and sanitary towels can easily block the sewer as they catch on worn or jagged surfaces where the pipes have dropped or risen over time resulting in a poor flow.

Sewers can also be blocked by tree roots and to prevent this, trees should not be planted near sewers.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF THERE ARE PERSISTENT BLOCKAGES?

If the problem persists in a public sewer then Thames Water should carry out investigative works and any necessary repairs. If you are not satisfied with the action taken by the Thames Water helpline you can write to Thames Water Utilities, PO Box 436, Swindon, SN38 1PU.

If the owners of a private sewer cannot co-operate to remedy the problem themselves, the Council has the power under legislation to serve notices and carry out work in default to repair or unblock a sewer. The costs are recharged to the owners together with a 20% service charge.

If you need help or advice concerning a private sewer contact the Environment and Health Department at St Albans City & District Council on 01727 819406.

If the problem occurs in your drain you should contact a plumber/builder or one of the specialist companies that deal with drain/sewer problems.

Sewer Blockages

What to do when there is a problem.

Fact Sheet