Community Scrutiny Committee

Water Management in the Coalville Strategic Growth Area

Task and Finish Group

Final Report

1. Background

1.1 North West Leicestershire District Council's Community Scrutiny Committee recommended that a task and finish group be established to review issues associated with water management in the Coalville Strategic Growth Area. The review has been prompted by complaints made by local residents about levels of sewerage pollution along the River Sence from storm overflows, linked to the impact of new housing development[1].

1.2 The Coalville Strategic Growth Area Task and Finish Group met for the first time on 24 October 2025 to appoint its chair, to consider and agree its terms of reference, and the principal areas for review. The agreed terms of reference are attached as Appendix 1.

1.3 The Task and Finish Group held 4 meetings on 27 November 2025, 16 and 24 April and 1 May 2026, and were supported in the consideration of matters through the attendance of Council partners, East Midlands Councils (EMC) advisors and its own officers. A site visit was undertaken on 17 March 2026. Individual briefing notes were also provided by advisors and officers.

1.4 The report includes those issues that are most relevant to the agreed terms of reference and are within the influence of Severn Trent Water, regulatory agencies, and the Council either through their own activity, or which it is able to shape through its work with partners. To inform this, a number of recommendations are made to the Community Scrutiny Committee for subsequent consideration and decision by Cabinet.

1.5 Members would like to thank Hugglescote and Donington le Heath Parish Council, Mary Lorimer, Cllr Russell Johnson and community representatives for their contributions to this review, Severn Trent Water (STW) and Leicestershire County Council in their role as the Lead Local Flood Authority for their constructive engagement. Members would also like thank NWLDC officers and East Midlands Councils for their advice and support to the Task and Finish Group throughout its review.

[1] Sewer upgrades promised after 'disgusting' spills - BBC News

2. Objectives of the Review

2.1 The objectives of the Coalville Strategic Growth Area Task and Finish Group are:

a) To review the issues of water management within the parish of Hugglescote and Donington le Heath.
b) To review the actions being taken by STW to address the issues.
c) To review the strategic planning and stakeholder coordination which the Council undertook and consider how this might be improved when approaching other large-scale developments in the future.
d) To offer constructive recommendations to the Council, STW and/or wider partners in order to deliver tangible solutions or mitigations.

3. Membership of the Task and Finish Group

3.1 The Membership of the Task and Finish is set out below:

- Cllr M Ball – Alliance
- Cllr R Morris – Alliance
- Cllr J Simmons – Alliance
- Cllr A Barker – Labour
- Cllr Eynon – Labour (Chair)
- Cllr E Parle – Labour

4. Evidence Considered

4.1 To understand the range of water management concerns relating to the Coalville Strategic Growth Area, the Task and Finish Group was informed by input from a range of partners and supporting documentary evidence.

4.2 The following written submissions were considered:

Local Planning Authority:

- Regulation 18 Representation Extract (local plan consultation response from STW).
- Information from Head of Planning and Infrastructure on planning responses from STW.
- Email exchange with STW regarding flooding at Millfield (October/November 2025).
- Response from STW to consultation on Local Plan Review Issues and Options (November 2022).

- Responses from STW regarding planning application13/00956/OUTM – 2700 dwellings, Hugglescote.

Hugglescote and Donington le Heath Parish Council:

- Submission from local resident Mary Lorimer.
- Submission from local resident Steve Palmer including East Midlands Today news report (video link).

Russell Johnson (Local District and Parish Councillor):

- Email/photographs exchange with STW (September 2024).

Lead Local Flood Authority (Leicestershire County Council):

- Note from Michael Warner, Senior Flood Risk Engineer (April 2026).

Severn Trent Water:

- Response for request for information from the Task and Finish Group: November 2025.
- Presentation made to Task and Finish Group on the 1 May 2026.

East Midlands Councils:

- Water Quality in Coalville: Background Paper (November 2025).
- NWLDC Coalville Water Quality Review: Planning Discussion Paper (April 2026).

4.3 The Task and Finish Group undertook a site visit on the 17 March 2026 to areas affected by flooding and sewerage discharge guided by Cllr Russell Johnson, starting at the Hugglescote (Millfield) Recreation Ground and walking down to the Townsend Lane storm outflows on the River Sence on land owned by Mary Lorimer.

4.4 The Task and Finish Group held two in-person evidence gathering sessions at Stenson House with the following witnesses:

24 April 2026:

- Mary Lorimer, Local resident, Hugglescote
- Michael Warner, Senior Flood Risk Engineer, LCC (Lead Local Flood Authority)
- Chris Elston, Head of Planning and Infrastructure, NWLDC

1 May 2026:

- Stephanie Crawley, Director of Operations, STW
- Chris Bramley, Strategic Catchment Planner, STW
- Max Fitzpatrick, Asset Planning Lead, STW

5. Recommendations

5.1 Based on a thorough consideration of all the evidence, the following five recommendations are proposed by the Task and Finish Group:

Recommendation 1
We have concluded that it is legally possible for the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to reject or to impose 'Grampian conditions'[2] on new development where it is acknowledged that a lack of sewer or water treatment capacity exists – if it has sufficient evidence from the water company. As a result, the Council should ask STW to review its approach to responding to full and outline planning applications in NW Leicestershire to ensure that robust technical evidence is made available which reflects STW's publicly stated view that the sewer system in Coalville is currently over capacity.

Recommendation 2
Whilst we welcome STW's commitment to fix the current capacity issues through further investment by 2030, we believe the current situation in Coalville is untenable and will only be made worse when development, which already has planning permission, is built out over the next four years. The Council should ask STW to redouble its efforts to implement interim mitigation measures to reduce the impact of pollution on people and the local environment.

Recommendation 3
The Council should ask STW to provide any evidence of ingress, infiltration or misconnection relating to the operation of Sustainable Urban Drainage Schemes (SuDS) in SE Coalville to the LPA, to enable the LPA to reach a view as to whether enforcement action against developers (or homeowners) would be justified or proportionate. In parallel, the Council should explore the use of additional planning controls to ensure that future SuDS are built consistent with the approved design, for example, through the use of conditions on any planning permissions granted.

Recommendation 4
The Council should make political representations through the local MP to press for the enactment of Schedule 3 of the Floods and Water Management Act 2010, consistent with the commitments made by Ministers in post in 2023. This would enable SuDS Approval Bodies (SABs) to be designated and for SuDS to be adopted as public infrastructure, ending the current ambiguity around their status and ongoing maintenance.

[2] A "Grampian condition" is planning condition attached to a decision notice that prevents the start of a development until necessary off-site works have been completed on land not controlled by the applicant. The name is derived from the case of Grampian Regional Council v City of Aberdeen (1984). It can be alternatively known as Pre-Commencement Condition'

Recommendation 5

We have seen evidence of sanitary products, condoms and nappies being discharged via storm overflows. Regardless of the capacity of the sewer system in Coalville, this material should not be present in foul water flows. The Council should work with STW to reinforce public messaging about what is acceptable/unacceptable to dispose of down the lavatory.

6. Findings

Sewerage Pollution Incidents on the River Sence

6.1 The House of Commons Library publishes Environment Agency monitoring information on sewerage spills by Parliamentary Constituency[3]. The data shows that in 2024, across the 56 storm overflows in the NW Leicestershire Constituency, there were 1,647 sewerage spills lasting a total of 15,145 hours.

6.2 In relation to the River Sence and its tributaries in NW Leicestershire, there were 341 incidents lasting a total of 2,645 hours. Detailed figures are set out below. Just two locations contributed to 62% of the incidents and 87% of the time.

Storm Overflow	Incidents (No)	Duration (hrs)	Average Duration (hrs)
Donington-Le-Heath Townsend Lane	135	1,284	9.5
Coalville South Pumping Station	78	1,029	13.2
Forest Road	33	78	2.4
Heather - Mill Lane	12	42	3.5
Heather Pumping Station	6	27	4.5
Snibston - St Marys Lane	10	16	1.6
Hugglescote Station Road	10	13	1.3
Hugglescote Station Road	7	12	1.7
Dennis Street Storm Overflow	0	0	0
Coalville - Central Road	10	14	1.4
Sinope Sewage Pumping Station	12	32	2.7
Station Road Pumping Station	1	1	1.0
The Hollow	14	78	5.6
Belcher Bar Pumping Station	0	0	0
Coalville London Road	13	19	1.5
Total	**341**	**2,645**	**7.8**

Source: commonslibrary.shinyapps.io/edm_2024/

6.3 Nationally, the independent 'Top of the Poops' website[4] uses the same data to rank rivers from worst to best by water company. The analysis suggests that the River Sence in the Severn Trent area is the 62nd worst performing river out of 4,104 across England and Wales[5] in 2024, with 993 incidents lasting a total of 8,262 hours. Whilst we understand that the equivalent data for 2025 from the Environment Agency shows a reduction in both the number and duration of

[3] commonslibrary.shinyapps.io/edm_2024/
[4] Top of the Poops | Rivers
[5] Some rivers cross more than one water company area.

spills into the River Sence, it is clear to us from the evidence we received that fundamental problems remain.

6.4 Photographs provided to us by Cllr Johnson taken in October 2023 show raw sewage erupting from a manhole cover on the Hugglescote recreation ground as it slopes down towards station road, which we understand continues to be a regular occurrence following heavy rainfall and has impacted on local resident's gardens. Whilst STW has improved its clean-up responses following local representations, the spillages still represent a health hazard to local people and result in an element of residual pollution.

Figure 1: Sewage discharges on the Hugglescote (Millfield) recreation ground (October 2023).

6.5 On our site visit we visited land owned by Mary Lorimer which contains two combined sewer overflows close to the River Sence we saw physical evidence of numerous sewerage spills despite efforts by STW to clean up.

6.6 In our in-person evidence session of 24 April 2026, Mary told us of repeated storm discharges onto her land over several years, including raw sewage, sanitary products, and waste being deposited onto grazing land and vegetation. This included a public footpath (National Forest Way), raising concerns around public health, amenity, and tourism. Mary also described the emotional, health, and practical impacts, including restrictions on land use for family and livestock.

Figure 2: Detritus from sewage discharges on land owned by Mary Lorimer (November 2025).

Planning & Development

6.7 Coalville has been identified by the Council as a location for strategic growth. In particular, 'South East Coalville' comprises several areas which together form a strategic site allocated in the North West Leicestershire Local Plan with planning permission for 3,500 dwellings (site H1h)[6].

6.8 The planning application for the largest of these sites was considered by the District Council's Planning Committee on 2 December 2014 which resolved to grant outline planning permission subject to Section 106 obligations for mixed use development, including up to 2,700 dwellings[7].

6.9 STW is not a statutory consultee for planning applications, meaning they were not legally required to be consulted in this instance. However, STW is routinely consulted on applications by the Council to provide an opportunity for expert advice on the potential impacts on drainage, water supply, and infrastructure, and to ensure new developments align with STW's investment plans, to promote sustainable drainage, and to provide pre-development enquiry services for developers to discuss potential drainage proposals. We are clear that STW made no substantive comment on any these planning applications.

[6] Adopted Written Statement 2021 - public copy (4).pdf
[7] A4.pdf NWLDC Committee Report 2014

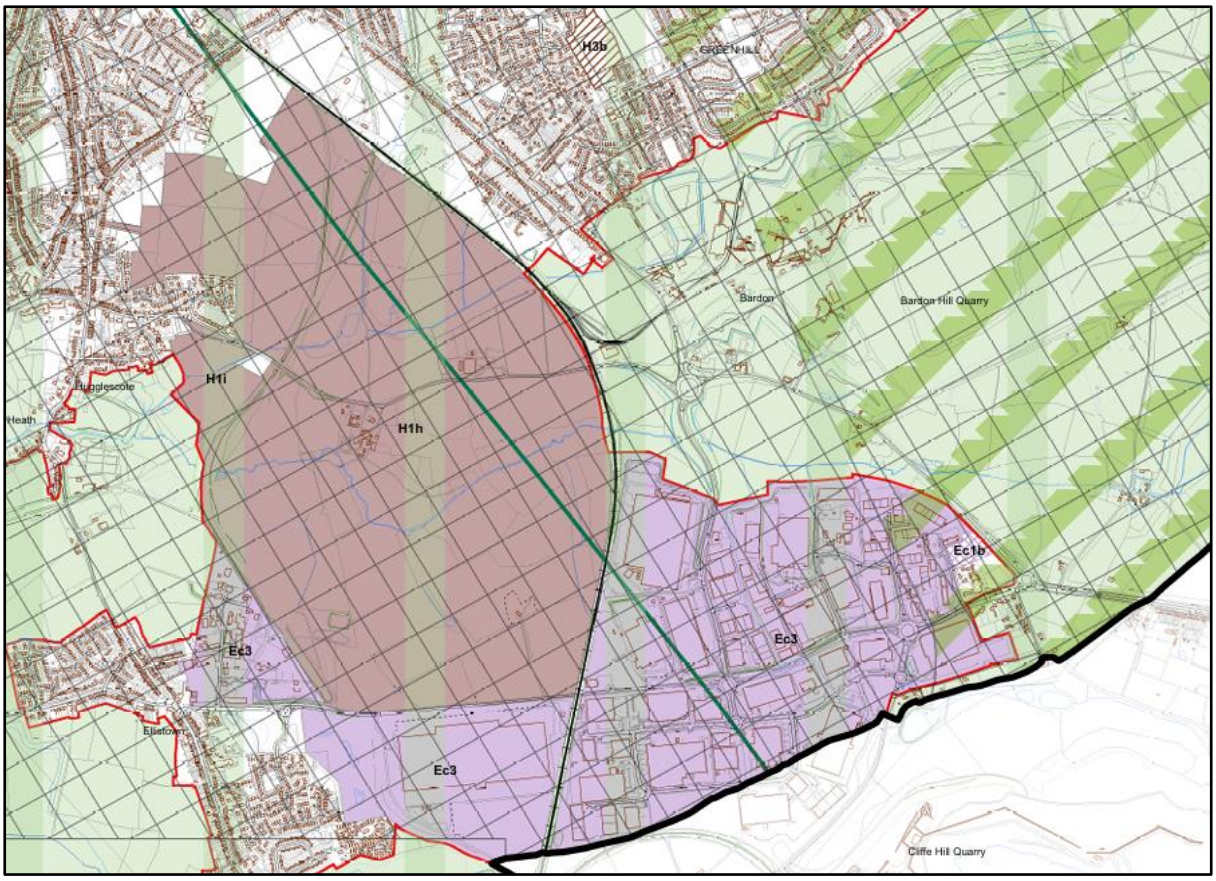

Figure 2 SE Coalville Strategic Growth Area (Source: Adopted Local Plan Inset Maps 2017.pdf)

6.10 A detailed Water Cycle Study was undertaken by AMEC for NWLDC in July 2012[8] to inform the development of the Council's then Core Strategy. AMEC carried out network modelling to assess sewer capacity and the need for improvements in Ashby, Coalville and Packington. The results indicated that the levels of growth set out in the Draft Core Strategy could be accommodated with only minor modifications to the sewer network.

6.11 In relation to Coalville, the study did identify that surface water flows were limiting capacity at the wastewater treatment works serving the Coalville area (Snarrows), which could only accommodate an additional 2,500 homes based on existing flows. Reducing 'infiltration' from ground water and watercourses would free up capacity to deal with additional foul flows from new development.

6.12 The report considered this to be feasible, including through the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs) for new development. In addition, applying Level 3 of the then Code for Sustainable Homes could reduce foul flows from new homes. However, the report noted that '*additional localised*

[8] North West Leicestershire District Council

capacity improvements' to the sewerage network would also be required to prevent local flooding.

6.13 It seems that network modelling undertaken by AMEC only included consideration of additional foul water flows, as it was assumed that SuDS would deal with additional surface runoff. AMEC also believed that the base model appeared to over-estimate the level of sewerage spills compared to observed data.

6.14 We understand the then Government withdrew the Code for Sustainable Homes in March 2015 to address viability concerns, and that Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, which would have made SuDS compulsory for all new development over $100m^{Sq.}$ and established SuDS Approval Bodies (SABs) has yet to be implemented by any Government. However, it understood that all new development in SE Coalville has used SuDS to prevent rainwater infiltrating the sewerage system.

6.15 Of the 3,500 homes that received outline planning permission SE Coalville in 2014 it is currently understood that 1,952 also have detailed permission (i.e. fully consented) and 1,293 have been built. Just over 2,200 homes therefore remain to be constructed.

Investment by STW

6.16 To deal with foul flows arising from the new development, STW established an investment programme for the Coalville area, the first phase of which involved a new £1.2m link sewer completed in 2016[9]. This was required to align with the developer's build profile and provided the first section of a gravity sewer required to enable a 'long-term strategy' to accommodate planned strategic growth. The work allowed connection of 105 dwellings at the end of 2015 and a further 550 dwellings by the end of the AMP6 period (2015-2020). It is understood that approximately 1,800 dwellings will eventually gravitate through the new link sewer.

6.17 The new link sewer was 700m in length and 600mm in diameter and runs from Grange Road, Hugglescote to the southwest through private land, woodland and the Hugglescote (Millfield) Recreation Ground (a former landfill site).

[9] South East Coalville Growth Scheme (2016) |

Figure 3: Diagram showing route of foul link sewer constructed in 2016.

6.18 A 225mm diameter ‘temporary connection’ was made from the south side of the recreation ground to the existing 300mm diameter sewer in Station Road.


Figure 2: Temporary connection to existing 300m diameter sewer (at the top of the picture) in Station Road.

6.19 We understand the new link sewer was designed to relieve existing overloaded sewers, therefore, reducing the risk of sewer flooding/pollution. It allowed for

further future development in the area to connect to a gravity sewer avoiding the need for STW to adopt two new developer pumping stations that would otherwise be required to pump flows from the future development. It also enabled the decommissioning of the existing Sewage Pumping Station in Grange Road by removing the flow from the 115 dwellings that were previously connected, providing an operational cost saving to STW.

6.20 NWLDC published an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) in June 2016[10]. The IDP was designed to provide a robust evidence base to support the Local Plan and to inform the development of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

6.21 The IDB drew on the 2012 Water Cycle Study and repeated its general conclusion *'that with minor modifications to the existing infrastructure, there are unlikely to be significant constraints on growth'*, notwithstanding the limited capacity the Snarrows wastewater treatment works.

6.22 Additional desk studies were also undertaken by STW to inform the IDP to identify the level of potential impact on the existing sewerage infrastructure of the proposed development sites. This additional work highlighted that: *"A number of the existing planning permissions have been identified as having a high impact, these include…The Farm, Manor Road - Donington le Heath, Loughborough Road - Thringstone, Frearson Road - Hugglescote, North and South of Grange Road - Hugglescote and (N. of Grange Rd) Bardon Grange - Coalville. The reason for the high impact on the majority of these sites being the existing network being at or over capacity."* But that: *"These capacity issues have been considered as part of the application process and appropriate conditions have been put in place to mitigate any issues."*

6.23 From this, it must be assumed that STW believed that the investment made 2016 would be sufficient to deal with the impact of at least initial levels of new development, albeit as the first stage of a 'long term' investment strategy for the area. Certainly, STW raised no concerns about SE Coalville in its consultation response to the outline application in 2014, nor did it raise concerns through the subsequent local plan process. The 2016 Infrastructure Delivery Plan itself does not appear to have been challenged by either STW or the Inspector at Examination.

6.24 However, the Parish Council (Cllr Steve Palmer) brought our attention to a BBC report of 16 October 2025 where STW's Director of Operations accepted that the sewer system in Coalville was over-capacity saying:

[10] NWLDC IDP Final Version.pdf

'*We have new houses that have been built that the sewers weren't designed to be capable of those extra flows. So, we have work to do. We are committed to doing that, we've a commitment to complete that by 2030'*

6.25 In our in-person evidence session on 1 May 2026, STW confirmed this remained their view. This raised two important questions for us:

- What had happened to the rest of the 'long term strategy' promised by STW when the new link foul sewer was constructed in 2016?

- If the sewer system in Coalville is over capacity, why is STW not object to, or seek to condition, new applications for housing development when consulted?

6.26 On the first question, we were told that there had been further investment in the Coalville area since 2016, including increasing capacity at the Snarrows Wastewater Treatment Works and additional pumping station storage capacity. However, the tougher targets resulting from the previous Government's Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan (published in September 2022 and updated in September 2023[11]) meant that the original plans for Coalville would not meet the necessary standards, and that alternative strategy would be required to deal with the new development.

6.27 STW was able to provide an overview of their emerging revised plans for Coalville in a presentation which is contained in Appendix 2.

6.28 In relation to the second question, STW told us that as they were not a 'statutory consultee' and that they believed that they could not object to planning applications or propose so-called 'Grampian conditions' linked to the completion of infrastructure upgrades.

6.29 However, information provided by East Midlands Councils helpfully clarified the key legislative and policy issues relating to both the planning system and the regulation of the water industry – which leads us to a different conclusion.

6.30 We understand that water companies are legally required, under the Water Act 1991, to provide water and sewerage services to new developments within the region they serve. In practice, this means that new developers have a right to connect their drains to the main sewers operated by water companies.

6.31 The cost of connecting new homes to the sewerage network is the responsibility of the developer. Developers can either do this themselves or pay the water

[11] Storm overflows discharge reduction plan - GOV.UK

company to do it for them. It is the responsibility of the water company to ensure that there is sufficient sewerage network and wastewater treatment capacity to deal with the impact of existing and new development.

6.32 Any necessary enhancements are funded by private capital investment, the servicing cost of which is ultimately met by bill-payers. The level of investment and the scale of bills is controlled by the regulator OFWAT through a five- year price control regime known as Asset Management Plan (AMP) periods.

6.33 In terms of the planning system, our attention was drawn to paragraph 20 (b) of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024), which requires LPAs to set out strategic policies in their local plans for: *"…infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, security, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management, and the provision of minerals and energy (including heat);"*

6.34 Government Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) highlights that 'early discussions' between LPAs and water and sewerage companies *"…can help to ensure that proposed growth and environmental objectives are reflected in company business plans. Growth that requires new water supply should also be reflected in companies' long-term water resources management plans. This will help ensure that the necessary infrastructure is funded through the water industry price review."*

6.35 In terms of wastewater specifically, Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) highlights that plan-making may need to consider:

- the sufficiency and capacity of wastewater infrastructure
- the circumstances where wastewater from new development would not be expected to drain to a public sewer
- the capacity of the environment to receive effluent from development in different parts of a strategic policy-making authority's area without preventing relevant statutory objectives being met

6.36 It is for the LPA to decide whether the capacity of wastewater infrastructure is a relevant consideration to a specific planning application. The NPPF requires the LPA to consider *"the availability and capacity of infrastructure…both existing and proposed – as well as their potential for further improvement" (paragraph 129c).*

6.37 We, therefore, conclude that that it is legally possible for an LPA to refuse permission if there is proven to be insufficient wastewater treatment capacity which cannot be mitigated within the development's timescales. We have also seen legal opinion confirming that an LPA could grant planning permission subject to a condition requiring that the development be not occupied until

mitigation measures have been implemented (known as a 'Grampian condition')[12] – as demonstrated by a recent appeal decision in East Sussex[13]. However, for an LPA to refuse or condition an application on this basis it must have sufficient evidence.[14]

6.38 Although water companies are not statutory consultees for development management decisions at present, we have seen evidence that they **can** make objections to planning applications. For example, Anglian Water has begun to take a more robust attitude to objecting to planning applications where it believes there is insufficient water treatment capacity[15] – although this has not aways been welcomed by LPAs under pressure to deliver housing targets.

6.39 However, it is worth noting that if a planning decision relying on the evidence of a water company is overturned at appeal, it is the LPA that could be liable for costs, not the water company.

Recommendation 1
We have concluded that it is legally possible for the LPA to reject or to impose 'Grampian conditions' on new development where it is acknowledged that a lack of sewer or water treatment capacity exists – if it has sufficient evidence from the water company. As a result, the Council should ask STW to review its approach to responding to full and outline planning applications in NW Leicestershire to ensure that robust technical evidence is made available which reflects STW's publicly stated view that the sewer system in Coalville is currently over capacity.

Long Term Strategy and Short-Term Mitigation

6.40 STW outlined its Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP) obligations and confirmed a commitment to deliver a full solution by 2030. This includes reducing spills to fewer than 10 per year on average, removing environmental harm where it is identified through water quality modelling, and delivering major infrastructure interventions such as catchment reconfiguration, additional storage, new pumping stations, and abandonment of sewer sections affected by historic mining subsidence.

6.41 At our in-person evidence session on the 1st May 2026 STW clarified the distinction between flooding incidents, permitted Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) spills, and pollution incidents, and it was emphasised to the panel that

[12] GRAMPIAN CONDITIONS - JENNY WRIGLEY KC - Landmark Chambers 15 Oct 2023.pdf
[13] Chailey Homes against Wealdon District Council, March 2025 Appeal Decision
[14] Leigh-Day-KC-Opinion.pdf
[15] Anglian Water report Appendix A.pdf

the planned investment aims to reduce the number of spills from Donington le Heath (off Townsend Lane CSO) to an average of 10 spills per annum. It was noted that the investment also aimed to reduce spills from other WINEP CSOs to a similar level.

6.42 Whilst we recognise that this represents a very significant reduction from current levels, we are concerned that this target lacks a degree of specificity. We understand a single spill event may last from minutes to several days but is recorded as one occurrence, and that spill counts alone do not reflect the duration or environmental impact of discharges.

6.43 We welcomed the confidence of STW that the planned investment will be delivered by 2030, and that it will address the pollution problems experienced by the local community. However, we are concerned about the length of time before infrastructure improvements will be delivered, with the reality being the local community must endure unacceptable conditions for a further four years before any significant improvements will be made.

6.44 It was noted that temporary measures installed to date have not delivered significant improvement, particularly during wet winter periods. The clearing of detritus or 'rag material' following these discharge events, while essential, does not address the ongoing pollution and degraded ecological condition of watercourses.

6.45 To do nothing and wait until 2030 is unacceptable, and we requested clarity from STW on what additional short-term measures could realistically be implemented to reduce ongoing harm ahead of the long-term investment solution.

Recommendation 2

Whilst we welcome STW's commitment to fix the current capacity issues through further investment by 2030, we believe the current situation in Coalville is untenable and will only be made worse when development which already has planning permission is built out over the next four years. The Council should ask STW to redouble its efforts to implement interim mitigation measures to reduce the impact of pollution on people and the local environment.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)

6.46 Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) are designed to manage rainwater in towns and cities in a more natural and environmentally friendly way. Instead of

directing water straight into drains and sewers, SuDS slow the movement of water, store it temporarily, and allow it to soak into the ground where possible.

6.47 SuDS reduce the risk of flooding by slowing down water flow, improve water quality by filtering out pollutants, encourage water to soak into the ground, and support wildlife and green spaces by creating more natural features within developments.

6.48 We noted that the original water system modelling carried out in 2014 assumed that no surface water would enter the sewer system from the new development in SE Coalville, and that the new link sewer constructed in 2016 was designed to deal with foul flows only.

6.49 However, we were told on the site visit that it was suspected that excess surface water was a contributory factor given that the flooding events generally followed periods of heavy rainfall. As a result, the effectiveness of the SuDS constructed to mitigate the impact of the new development was questioned.

6.50 In understanding how SuDS are designed to operate, we were grateful for the insight and advice of Michael Warner from Leicestershire County Council, the Lead Local Flood Authority.

6.51 We were told that just because attenuation ponds did not appear to fill up during heavy rainfall does not necessarily mean that SuDS were not working, as they are generally future proofed to accommodate extreme weather events and designed to release water slowly, primarily into the ground. That said, it is very important that SuDs are kept separate from the foul systems and that surface water is not allowed to infiltrate foul sewers.

6.52 We understand that surface water has the potential to discharge to the foul system on new developments in the following instances:

- Misconnections between the surface and foul systems.
- Ground water seeping into foul systems through poorly constructed sewer joints (joints between pipes or at chambers) or through damaged pipes.
- Surface water entering through manhole covers (unusual considering routing of surface water is limited in modern design for smaller events).
- Incorrectly mapped existing surface water systems which discharge to a combined system downstream.
- Emergency storage tanks for adopted foul pumping stations on-site allowing surface water to infiltrate into the tank.
- Foul pumping station overflows set too low and being surcharged with surface water from a ditch or watercourse. This risks surface water entering a pumping station via these overflows

6.53 However, we were told that none of this is the responsibility of the Lead Local Flood Authority to check. Clearly, if misconnection has occurred or if SuDs have been constructed incorrectly, this would be a breach of planning control – but we were also told by the LPA that it had currently neither the skills nor resources to take enforcement action.

6.54 We heard from STW that there has been evidence of '*ingress, infiltration and mis connection'* in SE Coalville – which STW had taken steps to address where possible. However, it seems clear that water is continuing to enter the new foul link sewer following periods of heavy rail which is contributing to the storm over-flows. This is despite fact that link sewer itself was designed to provide some temporary storage (being 600m in diameter) for foul flows.

Recommendation 3
The Council should ask STW to provide any evidence of ingress, infiltration or misconnection relating to the operation of SuDS in SE Coalville to the LPA, to enable the LPA to reach a view as to whether enforcement action against developers (or homeowners) would be justified or proportionate. In parallel, the Council should explore the use of additional planning controls to ensure that future SuDS schemes are built consistent with the approved design, for example through the use of conditions on any planning permissions granted.

6.55 Given their importance, we were concerned to hear that there is no single public body responsible for SuDS infrastructure. In addition, the SE Coalville Strategic Growth Area is being delivered by multiple developers in different phases, rather than by a single entity. As a result, surface water drainage arrangements are typically dealt with on a site-by-site basis. There are questions about the quality of construction by developers of SuDS. and their ongoing maintenance by private management companies.

6.56 As well as making SuDS compulsory, Schedule 3 of the Floods & Water Management Act 2010 would designate the County Council as the 'SuDS Approval Body (SAB)'. The SAB would formally adopt SuDS which have been designed and constructed to the appropriate standards. In the absence of this formal arrangement, it is not clear to us who is ultimately responsible for ensuring that SuDS operate as intended.

6.57 We understand that the previous Government undertook a review of the current arrangements which was published in 2023[16] and similarly concluded that:

[16] The review for implementation of Schedule 3 to The Flood and Water Management Act 2010

"...there were no specific checking regimes in place to ensure that SuDS had been constructed as agreed, leaving concerns about unsatisfactory standards of design and construction, and of difficulties of ensuring proper maintenance once the developer has left the site."

6.58 As a result, then Ministers committed to implementing Schedule 3 of the 2010 Act in full by the end of 2024. However, the General Election intervened, and the present Government have so far failed to act.

Recommendation 4
The Council should make political representations through the local MP to press for the for the enactment for the Schedule 3 of the Floods and Water Management Act 2010, consistent with the commitments made by then Ministers in 2023. This would enable SuDS Approval Bodies (SABs) to be designated and for SuDS to be adopted as public infrastructure, ending the current ambiguity around their status and ongoing maintenance.

Partnership Working and Communication

6.59 We welcomed STW's stated willingness to improve partnership working through earlier engagement in the planning process, better sharing of technical information and clearer communications with the Council.

6.60 Although we are appalled at the scale of sewerage spills in Coalville, we share STW's frustration that sewers are being used by people inappropriately. Flushing non-biodegradable items like wet wipes, sanitary products, condoms, and nappies down lavatories is never acceptable and results in increased costs for consumers and environmental damage.

6.61 We believe that efforts should be made by the Council and STW to raise awareness of appropriate sewer use and the impact of household behaviour on flooding and pollution, particularly in the Coalville area, and practical steps residents can take to reduce surface water runoff.

Recommendation 5
We have seen evidence of sanitary products, condoms and nappies being discharged via storm overflows. Regardless of the capacity of the sewer system in Coalville, this material should not be present in foul water flows. The Council should work with STW to reinforce public messaging about what is acceptable/unacceptable to dispose of down the lavatory.

7. Conclusions

7.1 This review has identified serious and ongoing sewerage pollution issues affecting the River Sence. The available data demonstrates both a high frequency and prolonged duration of sewer overflows. In 2024 alone, there were 1,647 spill events across North West Leicestershire, with 341 incidents, lasting a total of 2,645 hours, directly impacting the River Sence and its tributaries. A small number of locations were responsible for a disproportionate share of these incidents, highlighting clearly defined pressure points within the system. Evidence gathered from residents and site visits confirms that raw sewage is repeatedly discharged onto both public spaces and private land, reinforcing the scale and persistence of the problem.

7.2 These pressures must be understood in the context of significant planned housing growth in Coalville, where up to 3,500 homes have been approved within the South East Coalville Strategic Growth Area. While earlier assessments suggested that the existing system could accommodate this level of growth with only minor adjustments, the evidence reviewed indicates that the sewer network was already operating at or near capacity in several areas. It is notable that STW did not raise substantive concerns during the planning stages, yet more recent evidence confirms that the system is now over capacity and requires further investment.

7.3 Although STW has undertaken infrastructure improvements, including investment in sewer capacity, these measures have not kept pace with the combined impacts of development and increasingly stringent environmental requirements. Earlier assumptions and plans have required revision, and a new long-term strategy is now being developed. STW has acknowledged that the system is overloaded and has committed to delivering a comprehensive solution by 2030. While this commitment provides some reassurance, it does not address the immediate challenges faced by communities. Residents are likely to experience continued disruption and environmental risk for several years, and the mitigation measures implemented to date have not proven effective, particularly during periods of heavy rainfall.

7.4 The effectiveness of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), which were intended to play a central role in managing surface water and reducing pressure on the sewer network, is also in question. Surface water continues to enter the foul sewer system, particularly during wet weather, contributing to overload conditions and overflow event – despite less than 40% of the homes intended for SE Coalville having been built. This may be due to a combination of factors, including misconnections, groundwater infiltration, and issues with design or construction. STW has identified instances of such problems, but their persistence indicates that they have not been fully resolved.

7.5 In addition to technical concerns, there are broader issues relating to governance and oversight. Responsibility for SuDS is fragmented, with multiple developers delivering infrastructure in phases and ongoing maintenance typically assigned to management companies with limited external scrutiny. There is no single body accountable for ensuring that these systems are functioning effectively over the long term, and the Council currently lacks the resources and specialist capacity to enforce compliance where problems arise. As a result, there is considerable uncertainty about whether these systems are operating as intended or being adequately maintained.

7.6 Fundamentally, the findings of this review demonstrate that wastewater infrastructure in Coalville has not kept pace with the scale and timing of housing growth. This has resulted in persistent pollution and environmental harm, to the detriment of local communities. The situation reflects a combination of factors, including an underestimation of infrastructure constraints during the planning process, delays and limitations in water infrastructure investment, uncertainty around the performance and management of SuDS, and a lack of effective short-term measures while longer-term solutions are developed. It is a stark illustration of the problems that arise when infrastructure investment is functionally separated from the planning system and housing delivery.

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference for the Water Management in the Coalville Strategic Growth Area Task and Finish Group

1. What is the role of the Water Management in the Coalville Strategic Growth Area Task and Finish Group?

To review issues associated with water management in the Coalville Strategic Growth Area.

2. What are the Principles of the Review?

- To review the issues of water management within the parish of Hugglescote and Donington le Heath.
- To review the actions being taken by Severn Trent to address the issues.
- To review the strategic planning and stakeholder coordination which the Council undertook and consider how this might be improved when approaching other large-scale developments in the future.

3. What is expected of members of the Task and Finish Group?

Whilst the Task and Finish Group will not be a decision-making body, the group will be asked to:

- Review the information available on Water Management in the Coalville Strategic Growth Area and take evidence from a range of stakeholders.
- Consider what lessons can be learned for the future
- Act as critical friends during key aspects of the report, in relation to the scrutiny function, providing comments and feedback as required.
- Agree a majority consensus for recommendation back to the Community Scrutiny Committee.

4. Who has voting rights on the recommendations?

Only elected Members (or their substitutes) have voting rights.

5. Members of the Task and Finish Group

- Alliance – Cllr M Ball
- Alliance – Cllr R Morris
- Alliance – Cllr J Simmons
- Labour – Cllr A Barker
- Labour – Cllr T Eynon
- Labour – Cllr E Parle

Where any of the above councillors are not able to attend a meeting, they may select a councillor of their choosing to take their place.

6. What is expected of officers of the Task and Finish Group?

- Provide professional advice, as required, throughout the task and finish group.
- Ensure effective administration of the group including provision of agendas and minutes.
- Help formulate the views of members into a number of recommendations for consideration by Community Scrutiny Committee

7. Officers of the Task and Finish Group

- James Arnold, Strategic Director of Place
- Rachel Wallace, Democratic Services Officer
- Andrew Pritchard, Stuart Young, East Midlands Councils
- Other officers/representatives as appropriate or requested

8. How often will the Group meet?

- Meetings will be held, as required, culminating in a draft report for consideration by the Community Scrutiny Committee in March 2026. Meetings may be face to face and/or virtual.

Appendix 2: Presentation on Long Term Investment Strategy by Severn Trent Water

(see separate attachment)

Appendix 3: Background Note on the Water Industry

1. Water Industry Regulation

1.1 The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has overarching responsibility for the water environment in England.

1.2 The water sector is made up of private regional monopolies responsible for providing water and sewerage services. Severn Trent Water Ltd operates in North West Leicestershire and much of the Midlands. Ultimately, water companies are responsible for minimising storm overflows in line with their legal obligations. Regulators are responsible for ensuring compliance and enforcing sanctions.

1.3 The economic regulator is Ofwat, which is responsible for setting the price of water and for agreeing water company investment plans. The Water Industry Act 1991 defines Ofwat's statutory duties, powers and regulatory framework. These are used to ensure compliance of water companies with their obligations. Defra sets priorities for Ofwat through a statutory strategic policy statement (last updated March 2022[17]). Ofwat must have regard to this statement when carrying out its duties.

1.4 In May 2025 Ofwat published its price determination for the period up to 2030, which it hopes will generate £104bn of investment over the next 5 years across England & Wales. In the Severn Trent area this will result in average water bills rising from £398 in 2024-25 to £583 in 2029-30, along with a requirement to spend £2 billion to reduce storm overflow spills by 49% on 2021 levels.

1.5 The environmental regulator is the Environment Agency (EA). The Environment Act 1995 established the EA and set out its functions, powers and duties. These were updated by the Environment Act 2021.

1.6 Water companies discharging sewage through storm overflows are required to apply for an environmental permit from the EA. This is part of the EA's wider environmental permitting regime under the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016. Each storm overflow requires a storm overflow discharge permit, and this will set out conditions about when it can and cannot be used.

1.7 If water companies are found to be in breach of their environmental permits, the EA can open an enforcement investigation and issue fines. The Water (Special Measures) Act 2025 introduced additional requirements for water companies

[17] February 2022: The government's strategic priorities for Ofwat - GOV.UK

and powers for regulators, including for the EA to levy fixed monetary penalties for water company pollution.

2. National Policy Context

2.1 The UK's sewerage system was largely constructed in the Victorian era and has limited capacity to deal with extreme weather or heavy rainfall. House building, urbanisation, and growing numbers of users have increased the volume of water flowing through the system. To prevent combined sewers from becoming overwhelmed when the existing infrastructure is unable to cope with a surge in the volume of water flowing through it, water companies are permitted to use storm overflows in certain conditions.

2.2 In 2021, the Government's 'Storm Overflows Taskforce' found that the complete separation of combined sewerage systems would cost between £350 billion and £600 billion, with the potential to increase household bills by between £569 and £999 per year. The report concluded that it would be "highly disruptive and complex" to deliver such a change in infrastructure across England[18].

2.3 Subsequently, Defra published the Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan was in September 2022 and updated in September 2023[19]. It sets targets for water companies, regulators and the government to reduce the number of sewage discharges from storm overflows in England.

2.4 Water companies are also required to produce enhanced Drainage & Wastewater Management Plans, reflecting new statutory guidance published in May 2025[20]

3. Water Industry Reform

3.1 Reflecting widespread concern with the water industry, the new Government commissioned Sir John Cunliffe to lead a review and make recommendations for change.

3.2 The independent report published in July 2025[21] proposes an enhanced regulatory framework and a new single regulatory body bringing together Ofwat, the Drinking Water Inspectorate, and the water environment functions of the Environment Agency and Natural England. However, the report stops short of recommending nationalisation of the water companies in England and Wales.

[18] Storm overflows evidence project - GOV.UK
[19] Storm overflows discharge reduction plan - GOV.UK
[20] About the guidance and planning for drainage and wastewater management - GOV.UK
[21] Independent Water Commission Final Report

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