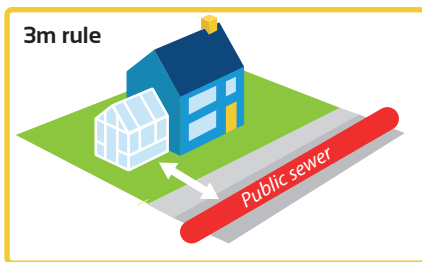


Sewers and water pipes – What are the rules?



You may often hear people referring to the 3-metre rule, the 6-metre rule or even the 18-metre rule but what do they actually mean?

There are several rules regarding proximity to pipework that water companies have put in place to protect both homeowners and public assets. You may not be familiar with some of these rules and therefore we thought it would be helpful to provide an explanation for each scenario.

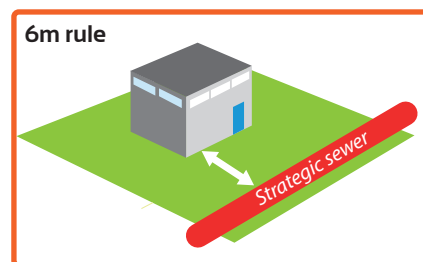


The **3 metre rule** simply means that you cannot build or excavate within 3 metres of a public sewer without consent from the water company.

If your client does decide to carry out works (eg, build an extension), there are different criteria that they will need to meet depending on whether their plans are to build near or over the public sewer.

In 2018, Wessex Water introduced self-certification for development plans where the building works will be taking place between 3 metres and 0.5 metres of public pipes. There are 6 criteria laid out in the guidance notes on Wessex Water's website. Once the client has made sure they meet all of the criteria, they will then be issued with a printable self-certificated build near agreement document. It is recommended that you keep evidence such as pictures and any survey documents to show the criteria was met, as well as keeping the self-certification

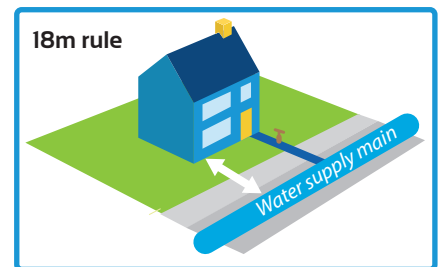
with your title deeds to avoid any delays when selling.



The **6 metre rule** means that you are not permitted to build within 6 metres of a strategic sewer on greenfield sites (undeveloped land).

By definition, a strategic sewer is a sewer of critical importance to the water company. They are generally much larger than other types of sewers and are more commonly (but not exclusively) found in urban areas. They can include pipes carrying foul water, surface water or a combination of the two. There are approximately 1300km of strategic sewers within the Wessex Water region.

On our sewer plans, we depict these as pipes with a thick black outline making them easily identifiable to readers. We will also disclose whether there is a strategic sewer within the boundary in response to Question 2.4 of the CON29DW.



Often less commonly known is the **18 metre rule**. This means that if the distance between a water supply main in the centre of the highway and the property it serves is less than 18 metres, the lateral pipe up to the property boundary and the stop cock included will be public and therefore under the ownership of the water company.

The rule also means that if the distance between the water supply main and the property exceeds 18 metres then the entire supply pipe will be private, and the stop cock will be located at the public main. This scenario often comes into play in more rural areas where the property is located quite some distance from the nearest public water main.

It is important to advise your clients that any private pipework will be their responsibility to maintain.

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t 01225 526 206

