Dunkerton and Tunley Parish Council – Wastewater and Drainage Infrastructure Response Supporting Evidence

This response is submitted on behalf of parishioners in the Dunkerton and Tunley area. The principal concern is whether existing sewerage, wastewater and drainage infrastructure has sufficient capacity to accommodate substantial housing growth in neighbouring settlements without increasing pollution, flooding or sewer-overflow risks for existing communities.

There is already evidence of pressure on local wastewater infrastructure. Official monitoring records storm-overflow discharges associated with both the Dunkerton and Paulton systems. In 2025, the Cam Valley Dunkerton inlet recorded 28 spill events, while the Paulton wastewater treatment works storm tank recorded 57 events totalling approximately 844 hours. B&NES planning records have also previously noted that, although Dunkerton sewage works itself had treatment capacity for a particular development, the downstream sewer network had limited capacity and required upgrading and network modelling.

This concern is reinforced by ongoing monitoring undertaken by the Dunkerton and Tunley Parish Council and the Bristol Avon Rivers Trust (BART) on the Cam Brook. Its 2024 monitoring found that the site downstream of Paulton Sewage Treatment Works showed considerable organic pollution and poor water quality. BART also recorded substantial siltation and reported its findings to Wessex Water. While this does not prove that wastewater capacity is the sole cause, it demonstrates an already stressed water environment.

The Parish Council also asks whether Wessex Water has carried out a full assessment of the relevant wastewater catchments covering Dunkerton, Tunley, Paulton, Peasedown, Timsbury, Radstock and Midsomer Norton, and whether it has formally committed to the treatment, sewer-network and pumping-capacity upgrades required to serve the level of growth proposed in the Local Plan. At present, the Local Plan material reviewed does not provide that level of catchment-wide confirmation.

The Parish Council asks B&NES to show clearly:

- the present capacity of the wastewater treatment works and sewer networks serving Dunkerton, Tunley and surrounding growth areas;
- whether Wessex Water has completed catchment-wide modelling for the full scale of proposed development;
- what additional treatment, sewer and pumping capacity will be required;
- whether Wessex Water has committed to fund and deliver those upgrades, and to what timetable;
- the cumulative effect of all proposed housing, rather than assessing individual developments in isolation;
- how further storm-overflow discharges and pollution of the Cam Brook and connected watercourses will be prevented;
- how surface water will be managed without increasing flood or drainage problems downstream;

- how necessary infrastructure improvements will be secured before new homes are occupied.

The Parish Council considers that major housing growth should not proceed ahead of confirmed wastewater and sewer capacity. Existing overflow records, independent river monitoring and uncertainty over catchment-wide infrastructure commitments demonstrate the need for a precautionary, infrastructure-first approach.