

Members of the Elmbridge Planning Committee
Re: Proposed Raleigh Drive Development – Drainage and Infrastructure Concerns

Dear Committee Members,

We write on behalf of residents of Raleigh Drive, Rythe Road and Looseberry Road to raise serious concerns regarding the current adequacy of the existing drainage infrastructure serving the proposed Raleigh Drive development and the risk of placing additional demand on an already demonstrably constrained foul sewer network.

These concerns are longstanding, evidence-based, and supported by both resident experience and external agency records.

As members may be aware, Councillor Burns, Chair of Claygate Parish Council, previously contacted Thames Water on behalf of Raleigh Drive residents regarding persistent concerns that the proposed development would place further pressure on drainage infrastructure that residents have repeatedly experienced as inadequate. The Parish Council is fully aware of the historical issues affecting Raleigh Drive and has supported residents in seeking clarity and accountability regarding the condition and resilience of the existing foul sewer network.

Residents have compiled substantial photographic evidence documenting at least seven sewer surcharge incidents between 2013 and 2023. During these events, foul effluent discharged from manholes at the lower end of Raleigh Drive, affecting roads, gardens and residential properties before flowing into the River Rythe beneath the bridge at the western end of the road.

Importantly, the foul sewer serving Raleigh Drive does not operate in isolation. The foul water from Looseberry Road and Rythe Road connects into the Raleigh Drive drain and compounds the issue. The result is increasing pressure on infrastructure that has repeatedly shown signs of failure during periods of heavy rainfall.

While we understand that Councillor Burns may still be awaiting a formal response from Thames Water, residents have also engaged directly with the utility provider. Thames Water advised that it held no records of effluent discharge incidents at Raleigh Drive and asserted that the existing network possesses sufficient capacity to accommodate the proposed development. Although hydraulic flooding was acknowledged as a possible contributing factor, no substantive explanation was provided, and Thames Water subsequently indicated its intention to close the matter without further investigation.

However, evidence has since emerged that materially contradict Thames Water's position and raises questions regarding the completeness of the information relied upon within the planning process.

On 20 May 2026, the Environment Agency (Customer and Engagement Team – Kent, South London and East Sussex) provided written confirmation that **five sewer surcharge incidents at Raleigh Drive were formally reported between 2008 and 2016**. (see attached). In each case, Thames Water was notified and attended site. These incidents occurred during periods of heavy rainfall and were classified as **Category 3 pollution incidents** due to discharges into the adjacent watercourse. While Environment Agency records understandably focus on



environmental impacts, they do not appear to reflect the consequential effects experienced by residents, including contamination of homes and gardens.

This evidence raises significant concerns as to whether Thames Water's assurances regarding historical performance and network resilience accurately reflect the operational reality experienced by local residents over many years.

Furthermore, Thames Water's own published guidance acknowledges that significant parts of the sewer network date from the Victorian era and were designed for substantially smaller populations and lower wastewater volumes than those experienced today. Thames Water also recognises that heavy rainfall can overwhelm foul sewer systems through rainwater ingress from roofs, drives, gullies, manholes and groundwater infiltration. In some locations, surface water remains connected to foul sewer systems, further exacerbating capacity constraints.

By Thames Water's own standard assumptions, an average household of four generates approximately **570 litres of wastewater per day**. By contrast, during storm conditions, a typical residential roof and driveway may generate approximately **5,500 litres of surface water runoff per hour**. Such volumes far exceed normal foul-water assumptions and place considerable strain on vulnerable infrastructure, particularly where historic hydraulic constraints are already evident.

Thames Water are aware of an alternative solution to mitigate the pressure on Raleigh Drive sewer infrastructure by having any foul sewer infrastructure located to the north of the proposed development site, being directed towards Littleworth Road. This is detailed in an email communication from Lee McGouran, Operational Planning Services Manager, Asset Management, Thames Water, on 11th February 2026, see attached.

Taken together, the evidence strongly suggests that the drainage and wastewater infrastructure serving Raleigh Drive is already operating under significant pressure and has experienced repeated surcharge failures over an extended period. Against this backdrop, it is difficult to understand how further residential development can be considered acceptable without robust and independently verified evidence demonstrating that the network has both the present and future capacity to accommodate additional demand safely and without unacceptable risk to existing residents or the local environment.

We therefore respectfully request that the Planning Committee gives substantial weight to these infrastructure concerns when determining the application and seeks further clarification from Thames Water regarding:

1. The discrepancy between Thames Water's assertion that no incidents were recorded and the Environment Agency's confirmation of multiple formally reported surcharge events where Thames Water attended;
2. The adequacy of the hydraulic modelling underpinning Thames Water's assessment of network capacity;
3. Whether sufficient allowance has been made for stormwater infiltration and increasingly frequent extreme rainfall events; and
4. What mitigation measures or infrastructure upgrades, if any, are proposed prior to any development proceeding.

Given the evidence now available, it would appear prudent for the Committee to ensure that the adequacy, resilience and safety of the drainage infrastructure are fully evidenced before any planning consent is granted.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Graham Bartholomew', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Graham Bartholomew, FRICS Chartered Surveyor
The Lodge, Raleigh Drive

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Douglas Edwards', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Douglas Edwards
6 Raleigh Drive