

Luton Local Plan consultation (July 2026)

1. Anglian Water Services

- 1.1 Anglian Water Services (AWS) is the water and water recycling provider for over six million customers. Our operational area spans between from the Humber to the Thames and includes around a fifth of the English coastline. The region we serve is the driest in the country, receiving less rainfall than other region and the lowest lying, with a quarter of our area below sea level. This makes it particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change including heightened risks of both drought and flooding, including coastal flooding. It is also rapidly growing and includes several of the fastest-growing cities in the UK, Cambridge – alongside a thriving agricultural and burgeoning green energy industry, all of which have significant demands for water and drainage. Our ‘Blueprint for Growth’ sets out how we are undertaking a practical approach to growth in now and long-term (May 2026) [growth-manifesto.pdf](#)
- 1.2 AWS has amended its Articles of Association in 2019 to legally enshrine public interest into the way the business operates for current and future generations. In planning future infrastructure investment AWS will increasingly consider the capital and operational carbon associated with protecting and maintaining infrastructure in less sustainable locations. AWS’s Purpose is ‘to bring environmental and social prosperity to the region we serve’.
- 1.3 As a long-term, purpose-driven business, we are planning sustained investment over decades, to build resilience against a changing climate, deliver essential investment in water and sewerage infrastructure, alongside protecting and enhancing the environment: all of which will create jobs and bolster the local economy.
- 1.4 The system that plans for growth and funds the infrastructure to support it – especially when it comes to water and wastewater – is not aligned. AWS recognises that this region includes fast-growing cities and globally significant innovation, which require the space to deliver sustainable, inclusive growth that is underpinned by infrastructure and water resilience. AWS is working hard to chart the path between environmental compliance and supporting growth across our region, but we need innovative approaches and a collaborative way of working with local planning authorities (LPA), our regulators, and government to tackle these challenges.
- 1.5 AWS is a statutory water and sewage/ water recycling provider and this includes areas within and surrounding the local authority area of Luton. AWS is a statutory consultee under The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. AWS wishes to engage proactively with the local plan process to ensure the plan delivers benefits for residents, visitors, and business in the area. In doing so, our primary aim is to protect the environment and so to assist Luton Borough Council in directing growth where there is existing water and water recycling capacity.

1.6 AWS welcomes the opportunity to comment on this scoping stage of the Luton Local Plan and hope our comments and are helpful in informing the next iteration of the plan. In summary, we would expect the Local Plan to:

- **Use an evidence-based approach:** by way of Water Cycle Studies (WCS), Integrated Water Management Strategies (IWMS) and Strategic Flood Risk Assessments (SFRA) to inform the spatial strategy, site selection and phasing.
- **Use existing headroom first:** direct growth to catchments with existing WRC and network capacity before relying on new infrastructure – subject to other plan-led constraints.
- **Phase where needed:** where water/ wastewater capacity is constrained, allocations should be phased so occupation aligns with delivery/ commissioning of required infrastructure upgrades.
- **Reduce potable water demand:** tighter water efficiency standards, and Sustainable Drainage “SuDS first” approach reduces potable demand and wastewater network capacity water pressures.
- **Integrated water management:** treat water as part of place-making through multi-functional green and blue infrastructure with opportunities for non-potable reuse.
- **Protect our critical infrastructure assets:** safeguard access to AWS’s underground and operational assets and avoid introducing sensitive receptors that constrain operations (agent of change). Site allocations or policy designations should not constrain the ability to extend and upgrade our operational sites (e.g. Water Recycling Centres, pumping stations, water treatment works) to support growth.
- **Facilitate delivery of critical infrastructure:** safeguard areas for new critical water and wastewater infrastructure in relevant plans, where these schemes are sufficiently advanced, or ensure a positive policy framework to enable delivery of critical water and wastewater infrastructure to ensure alignment with supporting substantial growth planned for the region.

1.7 Engagement on the preparation of the Local Plan is essential to ensure that growth strategies, site allocations and policies are deliverable and do not create avoidable delay at application stage. Water and wastewater constraints can be location-specific (catchment and asset specific) and can change over time; early engagement helps identify key risks, the most sustainable locations for growth, and any required phasing or safeguarding considerations. AWS will work with the LPA to provide data to inform this evidence.

2. Commentary on the Local Plan Scoping Report Consultation

Section/ Question	Comment
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Question 4	AWS agrees with the Local Plan time period of 2050 as this mirrors the five-year investment plan cycle of the water sector. The latest being published in 2025. This would assist in alignment on growth trajectories and on investment plans underpinning the Council's assessment of deliverable and developable sites.				
Question 31	The Local Plan should include a robust planning policy approach to protecting groundwater, particularly within Source Protection Zones (SPZs). Water resource assets, such as reservoirs and boreholes, should be protected from inappropriate development to safeguard and ensure a resilient water supply. Further guidance should be sought from the Environment Agency. A minimum 50m stand-off must be maintained around AWS groundwater assets (e.g. boreholes, adits, shafts) to protect the assets, avoid disturbance, and ensure continued operational access. Also applies to SEA Scoping Report Section 3.56 and Section 5.7 of the SFRA.				
Questions 32 and 33	The draft SFRA and Local Plan and SEA scoping reports should explain those statutory undertakers involved with sewage/ water recycling services in a consistent manner and necessary corrections made – see following extracts. <u>SFRA Level 1</u> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Thames Water</td><td>Drains and sewerage</td></tr> <tr> <td>Affinity Water / Anglian Water</td><td>Water availability</td></tr> </table> <u>SEA Scoping Report</u> 3.59 Water authorities – Anglian Water and Affinity Water - are responsible for the public water supply in Luton. These water authorities carry out tests to ensure the public water supply meets the required standards and provide reports on it [See reference 55] [See reference 56]. 3.60 Water supply for the majority of the Luton area is provided by Affinity Water. A small area in the north of Luton's boundary falls within Anglian Water's Ruthamford South Resource Zone. Wastewater treatment is provided by Thames Water and Anglian Water. <u>Local Plan Scoping Report</u> 5.129 Water supply in Luton is provided / managed by Affinity Water, with very small areas to the north of the town managed by Anglian Water. No reference to wastewater. Section 5.131 - Whilst Water Resource Management Plans are referenced to, Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP) should also be mentioned. A WRMP covers water supply matters and jointly prepared alongside the DWMP which sets out the	Thames Water	Drains and sewerage	Affinity Water / Anglian Water	Water availability
Thames Water	Drains and sewerage				
Affinity Water / Anglian Water	Water availability				

	management/development of drainage and sewerage systems to meet obligations under Water Industry Act 1991. The SA report should be updated accordingly and would also apply in SA objective 7 regarding sufficient capacity to support sustainable growth. Please refer to various AWS documents: https://www.anglianwater.co.uk/corporate/strategies-and-plans/water-resources-management-plan https://www.anglianwater.co.uk/siteassets/household/about-us/dwmp/dwmp-1.pdf https://www.anglianwater.co.uk/corporate/strategies-and-plans/drainage-wastewater-management-plan https://www.anglianwater.co.uk/environment/enhancing-the-environment/advanced-winep-a-winep https://www.anglianwater.co.uk/developing/help-and-advice/services-and-charges/environmental-incentive-scheme https://www.anglianwater.co.uk/corporate/strategies-and-plans/pollution-incident-reduction-plan https://www.anglianwater.co.uk/siteassets/household/services/aw0784-storm-overflow-action-plan.pdf https://www.anglianwater.co.uk/corporate/strategies-and-plans/flooding-incident-reduction-plan--2025 https://www.anglianwater.co.uk/corporate/strategies-and-plans/drought-plan Water efficiency AWS encourages Local Plans to cover this issue through a policy-based approach for the reasons and background context. There is a national focus on water efficiency and the Government's has previously committed to review the Building Regulations 2010 to allow LPAs to introduce tighter water efficiency standards in new homes. In the meantime, LPAs in areas of serious water stress, where water scarcity is inhibiting the adoption of Local Plans or the granting of planning permission for homes, are encouraged to agree tighter standards than the optional 110 l/p/d following advice in the Written Ministerial Statement 'The Next Stage in Our Long Term Plan for Housing Update' from 2023. Such measures to improve water efficiency standards and opportunities for water reuse and recycling also reduces the volume of wastewater needed to be treated at our water recycling centres. The reduction in water use in new development would assist in reducing and managing new flows to the sewerage network. This will also help to reduce customer bills (including for other energy bills) as well as reduce carbon emissions in the supply and recycling of water. We would direct the LPA to other emerging Local Plans that are including water efficiency standards of 85 or 90 l/p/d (within Essex: Colchester; Chelmsford; Castle Point; and recently adopted Uttlesford Local Plan). The Milton Keynes draft Local Plan includes water efficiency standards of 93 l/p/d.
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	The Shared Standards for Water Efficiency in Local Plans was published in June 2025. These Shared Standards set out a collaborative and collective approach between AWS, Cambridge Water, Essex & Suffolk Water, Affinity Water, the Environment Agency and Natural England, with the full endorsement of Water Resources East (WRE) as part of strengthening the Regional Water Resources Plan for Eastern England. The Shared Standards provides the evidence to help support LPAs establish these ambitious policy requirements. Natural England Blog: Getting water wise – Shared Standards in Water Efficiency for Local Plans in East Anglia – Natural England The Shared Standards recommend Local Plan policies: • Require new homes to be built to more stringent standards for water efficiency than the optional Building Regulations (part G) standard of 110 litres per person per day (l/p/d). Evidence indicates that <i>a design standard of up to 85 litres/person/day (l/p/d) for residential developments is feasible (a range between 85-95 l/p/d should be considered subject to viability)</i>. • Require new, extended or redeveloped non-domestic development to aim to achieve full credits in the BREEAM water calculator. • Require new major non-domestic developments to include water saving measures and water reuse in their design. • These standards provide guidance and local evidence to help local planning authorities (LPAs) make a case that more stringent water efficiency policies are justified, feasible and viable as part of any Water Cycle Strategy (WCS) or Integrated Water Management Plans (IWMP) that effectively manage a range of challenges across the water environment and aid nature recovery. Local Plans have a significant role in helping to deliver the sustainable use of water resources and address shorter-term water scarcity issues. LPAs can help ensure the risk of harm to habitats and deterioration to water bodies due to water scarcity is minimised by setting more ambitious, tighter water efficiency standards for new residential and non-domestic developments in local planning policy. • Tighter water efficiency standards that can be justified by evidence set out in the annexes supporting Shared Standards. The evidence is extensive and demonstrates, inter alia, that: • The Water Resource Management Plans (WRMPs), prepared by water companies, in the Shared Standards area demonstrate that there are significant challenges in meeting predicted domestic and non-domestic growth in water demand whilst also meeting statutory environmental obligations. • Water efficiency is needed for protected sites and wider nature recovery. Of the 239 SSSIs in the Shared Standards area, 96 at time of writing, have water abstraction identified as an active pressure. Many have measures in place to address these pressures linked in many cases to the plan-led approach. The Shared Standards complement or support the delivery of those measures. • At present it is feasible to achieve a total consumption of 85 l/p/d by taking a fittings-based approach using product types outlined in the Shared
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	Standards Annex C - Section C2, which can be achieved at relatively low cost. In addition, water companies offer incentives to developers to build water efficient homes. These are tied into water company Business Plans that are published every five years, with the latest being published in 2025 alongside WRMPs. • We would also welcome reference to effective integrated water management measures such as plot/ community scale water reuse for new homes and businesses, that can effectively reduce potable water use and reduce surface water run-off. Further evidence can be obtained through the Enabling Water Smart Communities website www.ewsc.org.uk <u>Non-domestic water use</u> The different employment sectors require water and can be particularly water-intensive in terms of their non-domestic water use. AWS has previously informed local authorities about our non-domestic water requests policy position in relation for requests from businesses to supply non-domestic connections. Our updated policy on non-domestic water requests is set out in the attached document and which may also be found at: AW Non-Domestic Water Requests Policy - updated June 2026 To help protect the environment, the Environment Agency (EA) is reviewing abstraction licences and reducing the amount of water that businesses including AWS can abstract from the environment. As a result, the gap between the demand for water and our supply (aka headroom) has shrunk. This situation is reducing our ability to be flexible with new requests to supply non-domestic connections, which were not planned for in the WRMP. However, where our supplies allow, we will endeavour to help businesses in whatever way we can to meet their needs and continue to serve the communities and economies they support. To respond to both this challenge, and a growing population, AWS is building a new strategic pipeline to move water around our region. We have also developed plans to build two new reservoirs to increase water supply. These solutions will take time to deliver, and so it is more crucial than ever that all homes and businesses are water efficient, to reduce the overall demand for water, to meet government targets and to ensure there is enough water to go around. Although AWS does not have a statutory obligation to supply for non-domestic purposes in these circumstances, we factor this into our WRMP and we do everything we can to support businesses in the region, with the help of the water retail market. However, the situation is now changing, due to water supply being squeezed by abstraction reduction, climate change and a fast-growing population. Therefore, where new and unplanned non-domestic requests are received, which exceed 20,000 litres per day (0.020 ML/d) (this may be less, dependent on the availability of water in that area) or where there is a cumulative impact from a significant number of smaller requests, there might be the need to decline in order to protect existing supplies and the environment.
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	To assess these requests, all businesses will need to submit a Water Resource Assessment (WRA) as part of our planning process, and, where feasible, we will work with them to explore innovative solutions to meet their requests. We are always willing to provide practical support and advice on navigating the regulation and the EA's abstraction reduction strategy to businesses in our region. When a site is allocated for a particular employment use, there is no certainty of the type of business that might come forward, and whether the business will be an intensive domestic/non-domestic water user. AWS would, therefore, welcome the requirement to ensure that employment allocations delivered as part of larger, residential-led or mixed-use schemes should be provided with utility connections. We would seek a further policy requirement that would apply to developments that require significant non-domestic water supplies (exceeding 20,000 litres/day) to demonstrate that the development will only be supported if evidence shows that it will not cause any unacceptable detrimental environmental impact as a result of the cumulative impact on water demand, by submitting a WRA prepared in consultation with the relevant Water Company, that identifies the measures to be taken to ensure headroom can be maintained in the water resource zone - such as rainwater/stormwater harvesting and reuse, greywater recycling, water efficient fittings standards, and closed processes which recycle water to minimise domestic and non-domestic water use. The WRA should also address long term measures with respect to implementing further process and water efficiency measures in liaison with the Water Retailer. <u>Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI)</u> AWS supports blue infrastructure given the importance that our rivers, canals; lakes and reservoirs have in providing formal and informal recreation and in the supporting good mental and physical health. AWS would be supportive of policy aims in the Local Plan to provide a multifunctional GBI network, which will contribute towards improving biodiversity and facilitate nature recovery in alignment with the Bedfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). Such measures will help communities adapt to climate change impacts through helping to reduce flood risk and improve water quality through SuDS and other nature-based solutions. The Government has challenged water companies to increase their investment and to improve environmental outcomes by 2030, AWS will be investing in river restoration projects between 2025 to 2030 to enhance and protect our rivers, nurture wildlife and restore important habitats for future generations to enjoy and explore. River restoration is just one small part of a wider program to improve the environment which is part of our Water Industry National Environment Program (WINEP) Asset Management Plan (AMP8) - which includes measures to reduce nutrients from the discharges at some of our WRCs. These ambitious measures have been set by the Environment Agency. AWS are looking to work with landowners to help deliver river restoration on 16 rivers across the region, these have been identified by the Environment Agency as our region's most important
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	rivers and streams. Our WINEP programme will help achieve wider nature recovery ambitions identified in LNRs across our region. GBI should assist in addressing climate change, flood risk management, and enhancing the natural environment. Such measures will help communities adapt to climate change impacts through helping to reduce flood risk and improve water quality through SuDS and other nature-based solutions. We fully support the need to integrate SuDS into the development and ensure they provide multifunctional benefits. However, we consider that GBI measures such as SuDS should be provided in all new development proposals, not just major development. We request that all new development proposals should include new green and blue infrastructure to help mitigate potential flood risk, including the provision of SuDS. <u>Managing flood risk</u> AWS would support a policy to manage flood risk which should include from all sources of flooding. AWS will be able to make further comment when a policy is drafted for further comment, but respectfully request the following matters are incorporated at first draft. AWS is responsible for surface water drainage in the public sewer system. Our sewer networks can become overwhelmed when flooding occurs, and new development should be located to minimise flood risk and mitigate surface water flood risk appropriately. AWS requires separation of surface water and wastewater flows to reduce pressure on our networks and avoid hydraulic overloading that can lead to pollutions and spills. The planning policy approach should be in accordance with the drainage hierarchy and should require rainwater re-use first, then SuDS with infiltration to ground, then to a surface water body and then to a highway or other non-sewer network drain. Suggested surface water drainage and SuDS policy wording: <i>All new development shall incorporate SuDS appropriate to the site and demonstrate the surface water drainage hierarchy has been followed. Surface and foul water flows must be separated. Under no circumstances will surface water be permitted to discharge into a separate foul sewer or to a combined sewerage system via a new connection. Redevelopment sites with an existing combined sewer connection must provide betterment in terms of reduced surface water flows where practicable.</i> We would suggest reference is including the Local Plan to relevant organisations including water companies on the need for early consultation with the responsible bodies for flood risk. We would support the approach that development should positively influence the potential for betterment and ensuring existing assets are not adversely impacted by proposals. Betterment should also be provided on previously developed sites and this is relevant in terms of those types of sites which are proposed as allocations in the Local Plan.
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	The developer is responsible for providing the appropriate surface water disposal infrastructure. As such, all the work to determine the feasibility of a connection to the existing surface water sewer complete with all upgrades to the consented outfall is to be conducted by the developer at their cost. AWS will request a planning condition to ensure no additional flow will be connected to our surface water network until, any identified upgrades have been delivered and sufficient capacity in the network has been demonstrated. AWS has published Surface Water Risk Management Guidance that provides a comprehensive approach to how we will assess different types of sites in terms of surface water connections. We would welcome reference to our Surface Water Risk Management Guidance in the supporting text. Where reasonably practicable all hard surfaces should be permeable, with the exception that we would not support permeable surfacing over our existing assets as this can prove to be problematic for maintenance and repair of our assets and the effective operation of this type of SuDS. It is, therefore, important that where we have existing underground assets within a site, that these are incorporated in roads or public open space as part of the design layout, and permeable surfaces overlaying our assets is avoided. We would support measures to address misconnections, as this can have a detrimental impact on networks and local communities – as rainwater from one roof entering the wastewater network generates the same volume of water as one hundred homes would usually flush away in a day from their toilets and sinks. It is essential for the effective management of operational risk that the risk posed from flooding, particularly surface water and groundwater flooding is clearly understood and taken into account when development comes forward to minimise the risk to assets when flooding can cause hydraulic overloading of our networks. Suitable access must be provided and maintained for water supply and drainage infrastructure. We would welcome reference to identified locations where there may be particular concerns around flooding. Our Flooding Incident Reduction Plan is available on our website and sets out how we aim to mitigation flooding risks across our region. It is essential for the effective management of our operational risk that we ensure the risk posed from surface water drainage is clearly understood and taken into account by developers.
Question 36	See response above on green and blue infrastructure.
Question 38	<u>New trees and planting</u> We request that where new trees and planting are provided in new development, that consideration in tree surveys and assessment must be given to the potential conflict between new trees and built form, and be compatible with existing or planned underground utilities (such as sewers).

	There will be certain types of development, where trees are not an appropriate solution i.e. wetland creation, but alternative ecosystem services are delivered. For trees to thrive they need space for root development in the underlying soil, which must be of sufficient capacity to accommodate the rooting habits of the species, without impacting on the functioning of our underground assets. A sewer or lateral drain should not be located closer to trees/bushes/shrubs than the canopy width at mature height, except where special protection measures are provided - such as use of appropriate barriers to resist root ingress to the sewer system. The strategy should consider both the growth of tree roots and increased heave and ground movement due to climate change. A tree should not be planted directly over sewers or where excavation onto the sewer would require removal of the tree. To minimise the risk of root damage, tree planting should provide good growing conditions. Guidance can be found in 'Trees in Hard Landscapes: A Guide for Delivery'.
Question 41	<u>Local Green Spaces</u> A policy designating area of Local Green Spaces (LGS) will need to ensure it doesn't place a more restrictive approach to development proposals than apply in Green Belt without sufficient justification, which the NPPF does not allow for. This has been clarified in the Courts. (See Court of Appeal case R on the Application of Lochailort Investments Limited v Mendip District Council. Case Number: C1/2020/0812.) AWS can often have assets forming part of our water and water recycling network located within or in the vicinity of such proposed LGS sites. We consider a LGS policy needs to provide scope to undertake operational development to maintain and repair any underground network assets that may be within these areas, such as sewers, rising mains and mains water pipes, which would be consistent with the policy tests to upgrade or maintain these assets, and are generally 'permitted development'. Although there will be instances where the engineering operations could require planning permission. The Local Plan should be clear that managing development within a LGS is to be consistent with the current NPPF on the Green Belt – see para. 108 “<i>Policies for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with those for Green Belts...</i>” Paras.142 to 160 of the NPPF set out criteria regarding the types of development that may be appropriate in Green Belt areas. This will ensure that there is no doubt regarding the lawfulness of the policy and the restrictions on development regarding LGS designation will continue to apply through the NPPF.
Question 55	AWS would welcome engagement with utility providers through the IDP, WCS, SFRA and related processes to ensure a clear understanding of water supply, drainage and wastewater capacity, alongside the requirements for any necessary infrastructure provision. AWS operates within the driest region of the UK, which is increasingly vulnerable to both drought and flood risk. Pressures arising from planned growth, climate change and tighter environmental permitting requirements are placing increasing strain on water resources,

	sewer networks and water recycling centres (WRCs). Local Plans therefore play a critical role in ensuring that growth is appropriately located and designed so that infrastructure capacity is, or can be, made available without resulting in environmental harm. <u>Protection of assets, avoiding encroachment and enabling essential infrastructure</u> AWS will raise concerns where development proposals have the potential to encroach on operational assets, such as sewage pumping stations and water recycling centres (WRCs) buffers. This is to ensure that issues such as odour, noise and general amenity do not adversely affect new development. It is also important to safeguard the ability to operate, maintain and, where necessary, expand these facilities in the future. AWS can provide the local authority with a list of assets located within proposed site boundaries, should this assist in site assessment and plan-making. The Local Plan should provide a supportive policy framework for the protection of existing operational and underground assets and for delivery of new essential utilities infrastructure (including in rural/countryside locations where a functional need is demonstrated). It is essential that such infrastructure is properly considered at the design and layout stage of development. Existing assets are protected by easements and should not be built over or located within private gardens, where access for maintenance and repair may be constrained. Wherever possible, sewerage infrastructure should be located within highways or areas of public open space. Where this cannot be achieved, a formal application may be required to divert existing AWS assets. Further guidance on asset encroachment is available at: https://www.anglianwater.co.uk/developing/planning--capacity/asset-encroachment/
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