

# The Developer's Guide to Sewer Adoptions: Navigating Section 104 and Section 106

**Category:** Commercial & Technical

A comprehensive guide for property developers and main contractors in the West Midlands on successfully managing sewer adoptions. Learn the critical differences between Section 104 and Section 106 agreements, the common pitfalls that delay water authority sign-off, and how Tilsley Groundworks ensures a "right first time" installation.

Struggling with Severn Trent sewer adoptions? This guide explains the Section 104 and Section 106 processes for developers. Discover how Tilsley Groundworks uses owned plant and expert civil engineering squads to deliver compliant deep drainage infrastructure across Staffordshire and the West Midlands, preventing costly delays and remedial works.

For commercial developers and residential housebuilders across the West Midlands and Staffordshire, few civil engineering processes are as notoriously frustrating as sewer adoptions. Getting your underground drainage infrastructure signed off and officially adopted by the local water authority (typically Severn Trent in our region) is a critical project milestone.

Failing to secure this adoption can delay your plot handovers, trap your capital in expensive surety bonds, and create a massive administrative headache. We understand that your priority is to build and sell, not to spend months arguing with water authority inspectors over pipe gradients. This guide outlines the fundamental legal frameworks for sewer adoption and explains how partnering with a highly competent groundworks contractor like Tilsley Groundworks eliminates the friction from the process.

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## Understanding the Legal Framework

When developing a new site, you are essentially building a private drainage network. To avoid being liable for the maintenance of this network forever, you must legally transfer

ownership to the statutory water provider. This process is governed by the Water Industry Act 1991, primarily through two specific sections.

**Section 104: The Adoption Agreement** A Section 104 agreement is the legal contract between the developer and the water authority to adopt a newly constructed private sewer.

- **The Principle:** You design and build the sewer to their exact specifications. Once they are satisfied it meets these standards, they take over the ownership and future maintenance.
- **The Timing:** Crucially, a Section 104 agreement must be in place before construction begins. Building a sewer and asking for it to be adopted retrospectively is a recipe for disaster.
- **The Bond:** Developers are required to pay a surety bond (often 10% of the estimated construction cost). This protects the water authority if the developer goes bankrupt or fails to complete the works to the required standard.

**Section 106: The Right to Connect** While Section 104 deals with the new pipes you are building, a Section 106 agreement grants you the legal right to connect your new network into the existing public sewer system.

- **The Requirement:** You cannot simply dig up the road and tap into a Severn Trent main. You must submit a formal application detailing the connection method, the flow rates, and the exact location.
  - **The Execution:** The physical connection (often involving constructing a new manhole over the existing sewer) must be carried out by highly trained, approved contractors to prevent damage to the live public network.
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### **The Technical Challenges of Sewer Construction**

The water authorities do not compromise on quality. Every pipe, manhole, and attenuation tank must be constructed in strict accordance with the Design and Construction Guidance (DCG), which recently replaced the old "Sewers for Adoption" manual.

**Important Note:** Water authority inspectors will reject an entire drainage run if a pipe is even marginally out of tolerance, if there is debris in the line, or if the bedding material is incorrect.

**Deep Drainage and Trench Safety** Sewer infrastructure often requires laying pipes at significant depths to achieve the necessary gravity falls. Digging trenches that are three, four, or five metres deep in unpredictable West Midlands soil is highly hazardous. It requires specialist temporary works and trench shoring to protect the operatives and ensure the pipes can be laid on a perfectly stable, laser-levelled bed.

**Ground Conditions** Whether you are dealing with the heavy, waterlogged clay of Staffordshire or the complex made ground of a Birmingham brownfield site, poor ground conditions can cause pipes to dip or joints to fail after installation. If a CCTV drain survey reveals a "belly" in the pipe where water pools, the water authority will refuse adoption until it is dug up and replaced.

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### **How Tilsley Groundworks De-risks the Adoption Process**

The single biggest mistake a developer can make is awarding the deep drainage package to a sub-contractor based purely on the lowest price. Cheap contractors often cut corners on bedding stone, rush the pipe laying, and lack the heavy machinery required to do the job safely. When the sewer fails the final Severn Trent inspection, you pay twice to have it ripped out and relaid.

Tilsley Groundworks operates on a "Right First Time" philosophy. We de-risk your Section 104 and Section 106 agreements through superior operational capacity.

- **Owned Heavy Plant:** We do not rely on local hire shops for our machinery. We own a comprehensive fleet of Stage V Volvo excavators and specialist trench shoring equipment. When we need a 22-tonne machine to dig a deep sewer safely, it is already on our low-loader.
- **Directly Employed Experts:** Our deep drainage squads are not transient agency workers. They are direct employees, fully CPCS and CSCS carded, with years of experience working to Severn Trent DCG standards.
- **Precision Engineering:** We utilise advanced laser levels and GPS setting-out equipment to ensure every invert level is absolutely perfect, eliminating the risk of failed CCTV surveys.

By partnering with Tilsley Groundworks, you are investing in certainty. We lay the pipes correctly, we manage the testing, and we provide the flawless infrastructure required for a smooth, stress-free handover to the water authority.

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**Services:** Civil Engineering, Deep Drainage, Section 104 Sewer Adoptions, Section 106 Sewer Connections, Commercial Groundworks, Residential Infrastructure.

**Location:** West Midlands, Staffordshire, Birmingham, Solihull, Sutton Coldfield, Derby, Tamworth.