United Utilities Water Limited
Haweswater House
Lingley Mere Business Park
Lingley Green Avenue
Great Sankey
Warrington WA5 3LP

Telephone: 01925 237000
unitedutilities.com

Our ref: EIR-824
Date: 22/05/2026
Email: EIRRequests@uuplc.co.uk

Dear [redacted]

Thank you for your request for information. We appreciate your interest, and we want to let you know that your request has been carefully considered in accordance with the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR). As your request contained a number of specific questions, this response, restates each part of the request (in bold) and then follows this with our response.

I am writing to request detailed wastewater treatment capacity information for Helsby Wastewater Treatment Works (WwTW) to support ongoing assessment work relating to development proposals within the Helsby–Frodsham corridor.

United Utilities is aware of recent planning applications in Helsby as you have replied to these individual applications. The table below shows the applications along with others that are still in the construction phase or are proposed.

We believe if all these plans are approved then the impact on the population could be an increase of 41% above 2021 census level of 5,274.

To enable a robust appraisal of foul drainage capacity and potential network constraints, I would be grateful if you could provide the following information.

Firstly, as you are requesting information relating to wastewater treatment works (WwTW), we believe it will be helpful to provide some background information on the operation and management of the WwTW before providing the direct response to your specific points about Helsby WwTW.

WwTWs operate under permits that are set by the Environment Agency. In principle, these permits are designed to protect river water quality and ensure that the discharges from our assets do not cause pollution, violate water quality standards, or harm aquatic life. Specific requirements are set out in each permit, and they ensure that the watercourse, and the discharges to it, comply with all relevant environmental regulations. These environmental regulations having been progressively improving over time.

For WwTWs, the permit conditions reflect the size and nature of the receiving water course as well as the incoming flows and "load" to the works. The load to a works is usually measured in terms of "Population equivalent," which measure the household or domestic population in the catchment plus the equivalent load from any traders in the catchment. Typically, a WwTW permit will include consent conditions, for the flow rates that the works needs to treat and the maximum concentrations of various potentially polluting substances within the treated effluent that is discharged from the works.

United Utilities is responsible for the choice and size of the specific treatment processes that

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are installed at individual WwTW, with many WwTW having had new process stages added, or existing processes extended as a result of new environmental legislation or growth within the catchment.

The nature and capabilities of the processes at any WwTW, need to be sufficient to ensure that each treatment works can consistently comply with its consent conditions, in both the short and longer term. We, therefore, continually monitor the performance of our WwTW to assess the potential risks against each of their consent conditions.

We use this information to both ensure that the assets are being operated and maintained effectively and to identify any potential risks to future compliance as a result of both actual and proposed future growth and development within the catchment. The results of this analysis is then used to develop and implement improvement schemes at these sites, in advance of the growth occurring and the works potential becoming unable to comply with its consent conditions.

With respect to the capacity of treatment works, the appropriate measure of "capacity" varies for the different stages of each treatment process. Capacities are expressed in different formats, for example volume, flow, or load or remaining percentage. In practice, this means two identically "sized" works can have different population assessments depending on other variables. Therefore, the effective capacity of each works will, in practice, be based upon a series of different measures for the different process stages.

Our focus is therefore, on ensuring that the combined capability of each works is sufficient to treat the flow and load they receive, in line with their environmental permits, and to analyse the ability of our WwTWs to accommodate future population growth or other new requirements or changes in their catchments. As a result of this we do not routinely update "capacity" data for our WwTW's.

The process that we and other water companies use to assess the impact of potential future growth or new requirements for our WwTW is contained within our Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP), with plans being published both for the entire region and for a number of sub catchments within the region. The DWMPs are 25-year, holistic plans that cover all elements across drainage and wastewater. The latest versions of the DWMPs were published in May 2023 and the outputs can be viewed on the DWMP customer portal, with a link provided to this portal later in this response.

The customer portal holds information across different aspects of drainage and wastewater, for example flooding, pollution, and WwTW capacity. For WwTW capacity, we assess the risk that our WwTW will not have the capacity to meet our permitted volumes as a result of forecast population and business use growth in the area. Within the portal, you can navigate across the Northwest and click areas of interest.

For each drainage area, the data presents risk/opportunities at the following design horizons:

- Current view for the drainage area (2020)
- Developing view for the drainage area

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• Future view for the drainage area (2050)

For each design horizon, the drainage area is considered to be;

• No concern
• Minimal risk
• Potential area of focus

The latest versions of our DWMPs were published in May 2023 and can be accessed via this link: Drainage and wastewater management plan. The outputs from these plans and links to the sub regional plans, can be viewed on the DWMP customer portal via this link: DWMP Customer Portal Environment.

1. **Design Population Equivalent (PE) for Helsby WwTW**

We do not hold the design population equivalent, as set out above. As such, we are unable to provide you with a copy of this in line with Regulation 12(4)(a) of the EIR.

2. **Current operational load (PE) based on the most recent monitoring period**

Helsby WwTW treats flows from Helsby and the surrounding area, and as of 2024/25, the population equivalent for Helsby WwTW is 20,037.

3. **Available treatment headroom, including any constraints associated with flow, load, storm storage, or discharge permit limits**

An assessment of future capacity requirements at Helsby WwTW has been made as part of our DWMP. As you will be able to see from this document, Helsby is considered to be a potential area of focus. As such, we will consider planning applications as we receive them on a case by case basis.

4. **Details of any committed or planned investment affecting the works, including upgrades programmed within the AMP cycle**

We are currently investigating a refurbishment project at Helsby WwTW, which would improve the sites resilience. This is in the early stages of development, therefore we cannot share any further information with you at this time in line with Regulation 12(4)(d) as the information is still within the course of completion.

5. **Confirmation of the foul drainage catchment served by Helsby WwTW, together with a GIS shapefile or plan if available**

The drainage catchment for Helsby WwTW is publicly available via United Utilities Sewer Catchment Boundaries | Stream - Portal.

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6. **Clarification on whether properties within Alvanley, Hapsford, Dunham-on-the-Hill, or Ince fall within the Helsby WwTW catchment**

The Helsby WwTW catchment includes Alvanley, Hapsford, and Dunham-on-the-Hill. Ince does not fall within the catchment.

We hope that this response answers your request. However, if you're not satisfied with how we've handled it, you can request an internal review. To do this, please write to us at Environmental Information Office, Haweswater House, Lingley Mere, Warrington, WA5 3LP or email us at EIRRequests@uuplc.co.uk, addressing your request to [redacted], and explaining why you're unhappy with our response. We'll be very happy to review your request and ensure we've done everything we can to assist you.

Any request for an internal review should be made within 40 working days of receipt of this response, and we will reply within 40 working days from receipt of the request for internal review.

Many thanks
[redacted]

We'd love to hear your feedback on how we handled your request! If you have a moment, please complete our short survey here – your input helps us improve our service.