

# Code for Adoption Agreements

## Sewerage sector documents: Change proposal (Ref 013)

<b>Modification proposal</b>	Sewerage Sector Guidance Appendix C – Design and Construction Guidance: Position of a reducing slab over a cover slab
<b>Independent Sewerage Adoption Panel Recommendation</b>	The Panel recommended making a change, but proposed using an alternative approach
<b>Decision</b>	Ofwat has approved making a change using the alternative approach recommended by the Panel.
<b>Publication date</b>	16 March 2023
<b>Implementation date</b>	01 April 2023

## Background

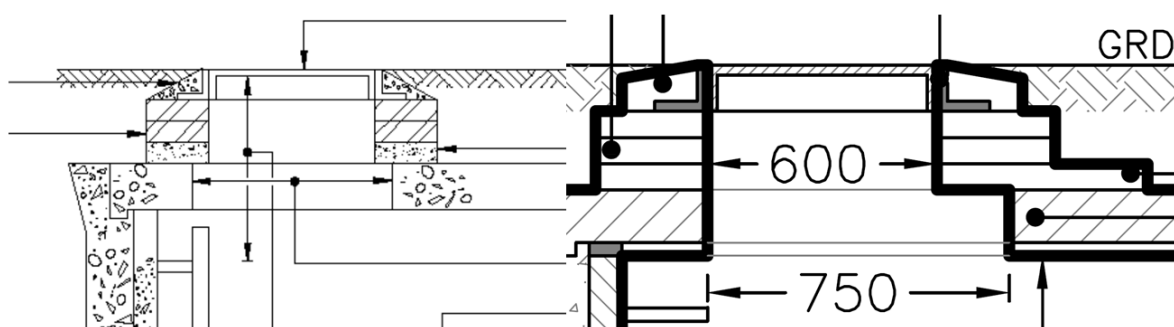
Vistry Group (**Vistry**) submitted this change proposal on 5 September 2022 to the Independent Sewerage Adoption Panel (**the Panel**), with the Panel publishing the proposal on its website on the same day. The function of the Panel is to consider change proposals to the [sewerage sector guidance and model sewerage adoption agreement](#) (**the Sewerage Sector Documents**) which apply to companies operating wholly or mainly in England. These documents were developed by companies as required by the [Code for Adoption Agreements](#) (**the Code**) and came into effect in April 2020. A change proposal is defined in the Code as a proposed change to the sector guidance or the model agreements.

Vistry has proposed a change to the Sewerage Sector Guidance Appendix C – Design and Construction Guidance (**DCG**). The proposed change is to the guidance and diagrams setting out the design of sewer maintenance holes, specifically the position of the reducing slab over the cover slab. Vistry considers that the diagrams currently in the DCG are not correct.

## The change proposal

In its change proposal, Vistry stated that the diagrams used in section B5 of the DCG for the design of sewer maintenance holes are incorrect. Vistry considers the sewer cover slab should be eccentric rather than symmetrical. It stated that the current diagram “...should not have that lip/overhang, it simply needs to be square and the eccentric larger opening spans the rear 150mm.” It provided an example diagram (figure 1) of a reducing slab over a cover slab. It considers that the design on the left, which is taken from the DCG is incorrect and provides an example of a correctly designed diagram on the right.

**Figure 1 – diagrams of reducing slabs over a sewer cover slab**



## Consultation and assessment

In submitting its recommendation, the Panel confirmed that it met the Code requirement<sup>1</sup> to assess the change in terms of:

- The need for change, for example, is it a service improvement or is it needed to address a particular issue?
- Consistency with the principles and objectives of the Code, and any relevant statutory requirements; and
- The impact of the change (be it positive and/or negative) on customers and on sewerage companies.

In considering the change proposal, the Panel has:

- discussed the proposal at two meetings;
- sought feedback from Panel members' companies;
- consulted with the Panel's technical sub-group;
- consulted with water companies via Water UK's Standards Board; and
- consulted with the Water Research Council ([WRc](#)) and asked them to review the diagram.

<sup>1</sup> See paragraph 3.8.11 of the Code.

## Panel recommendation

On 3 February 2023, the Panel recommended to Ofwat, by unanimous decision, that we approve a change to the Sewerage Sector Documents. However, the Panel has proposed an alternative change be made to the DCG than that which was proposed by Vistry.

In reaching its decision, the Panel stated that it considered that the proposal appears to have conflated diagrams for maintenance holes with ladders with those with step rungs. In particular, the response from the Water UK Standards Board clarified this point:

“Step rungs nominally project 125mm from the face of the manhole chamber but ladders nominally project 200mm. To accommodate these different offset distances the corbel slab is placed in different positions. It would be flush with the edge as drawn by your correspondent if there are step rungs in the chamber, but it would be offset by 75mm as shown in the Sewerage Sector Guidance in the case of a ladder.”

Accordingly, the Panel was not satisfied that the figures in the DCG should be amended as proposed, as this would create errors depending on the type of maintenance hole being used.

However, the Panel noted that the change proposal highlighted the potential for confusion in the DCG as currently drafted and considered that the issue around the different types of maintenance holes could be clarified.

The Panel concluded that, although it was not persuaded to recommend the specific changes to Figures B4 to B8 set out in the change proposal (for the reasons given above), the DCG could be improved to clarify the diagrams on the basis of the issues raised by Vistry in the change proposal. The Panel asked WRc to review this and suggest any improvements that could be made to provide greater clarity.

The Panel therefore recommended that the following changes are made to the DCG:

- Insert the following wording at the end of paragraph B5.2.28:

“The stand-off distance from the wall of the manhole to the rungs of a ladder is typically greater than the stand-off for double step rungs. To align the opening correctly using standard components, a cover slab with a larger opening should be used together a corbel slab to avoid the ladder obstructing the clear opening.”

- Amend the note on the corbel slab in figures B4 to B8 to read:

“Corbel slab to E.30.2 aligned so that the ladder does not reduce the clear opening of the cover (see B5.2.28)”

## **Our decision and reasons**

We have considered the above issues, and all the supporting documentation provided to us by the Panel, and have decided to approve the alternative change proposed by the Panel.

We agree with the Panel that it would be beneficial to amend the information in the DCG regarding the design of maintenance holes to ensure that it is as clear as possible for all stakeholders. We therefore agree with the Panel's recommended changes to the DCG as set out in the previous section. This aligns with the Code principle of being clear, complete, and current, along with the fair and proportionate principle in ensuring that the arrangements under the Code are, and remain, fit for purpose.

## **Decision notice**

In accordance with paragraph 3.9.4 of the Code Ofwat approves this change proposal using the alternative approach recommended by the Panel.

**Emily Bulman**  
**Director, Performance and Outcomes**