

# Specifications for plastic pipes, chambers, manholes and covers for drainage and sewerage applications

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## Introduction

Plastic pipes and inspection chambers for the construction of gravity drains and sewers have been widely used for many years in the UK.

British Standards, such as BS 4660 for unplasticized PVC underground drain pipe and fittings (first published 1971), have led the way in setting performance and installation principles. With the development of European Standards, British Standards were used to formulate the UK's input into drafting. European Standards (EN) are adopted in the UK directly as British Standards (BS EN).

The use of the correct standard for purchasing products which are suitable for their intended application ensures ease of installation and a long service life.

**The purpose of this short guide is to provide information on specifications applicable to plastic pipes for drains and sewers, inspection chambers, manholes and covers for drainage and sewerage applications in both private and public applications. It is therefore suitable for work carried out to the Building Regulations (Part H) / Building Standards and when designing adoptable sewers across the UK.**

This guide has been updated (issue 5) to include further information on standards for chambers covers and links to two new BPF Pipes Group documents on selection and installation of plastic inspection chambers and leaktightness testing of drains and sewers.

## Drain and sewer pipes

To manage the removal of foul water from sanitary ware and appliances in a building, there are effectively three areas of application: above ground soil and waste systems within the building, private drainage and sewerage systems, and public sewerage systems. This guide covers the latter two applications.

### Terminology:

For the purposes of this guide, the definitions given in the Design and Construction Guidance and Sewers for Adoption are used; namely:

- Drain—a pipeline usually underground, designed to carry foul sewage or surface water from buildings and paved areas associated with buildings within the same curtilage.
- Sewer—a pipeline, usually underground, designed to carry foul sewage or surface water from buildings and paved areas associated with buildings in more than one curtilage.

With a few exceptions, the ownership and responsibility for sewers are formally transferred to the Water Undertaker from the house developer, subject to meeting the relevant performance and construction standards set out in the *Design and Construction Guide, Sewers for Adoption, Sewers for Scotland or Sewers for Adoption (Northern Ireland)* (see Table 1: Key documents). These sewers are subsequently maintained by the Water Undertaker. This is known as adoption or vesting (public sewer).

A drain from a single premises (a block of flats would constitute a single premises) remains the responsibility of the building owner. All work on drainage systems needs to comply with requirements of the Building Regulations or Building Standards (see Table 1: Key documents).

Table 1: Key documents for construction of drains and sewers in the UK

	Drain	Public Sewer
England	Building Regulations: Part H. Approved Document H	Design and Construction Guidance
Northern Ireland	Building Regulations: Part N	Sewers for Adoption – Northern
Scotland	Building Standards: Part M. Technical Handbook – Domestic: Environment Technical Handbook - Non-Domestic:	Sewers for Scotland (4 <sup>th</sup> edition)
Wales	Building Regulations: Part H. Approved Document H	Sewers for Adoption (7 <sup>th</sup> Edition)

NOTES:

The Design and Construction Guidance is available to download free of charge from Water UK	Sewers for Adoption and Sewers for Adoption – Northern Ireland can be purchased through WRc	Sewers for Scotland 4th edition is available to download free of charge from Scottish Water
<a href="https://www.water.org.uk/sewerage-sector-guidance-approved-documents/">https://www.water.org.uk/sewerage-sector-guidance-approved-documents/</a>	<a href="https://wrcknowledgestore.co.uk/">https://wrcknowledgestore.co.uk/</a>	<a href="https://www.scottishwater.co.uk/Help-and-Resources/Document-Hub/Business-and-Developers/Connecting-to-Our-Network">https://www.scottishwater.co.uk/Help-and-Resources/Document-Hub/Business-and-Developers/Connecting-to-Our-Network</a>
		

The Technical Handbooks are available to download free of charge from the Scottish Government	Approved Document H is available to download free of charge from GOV.UK
<a href="https://www.gov.scot/policies/building-standards/">https://www.gov.scot/policies/building-standards/</a>	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/approved-documents">https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/approved-documents</a>
	

### Product specifications:

**BS EN 1401-1 *Plastics piping systems for non-pressure underground drainage and sewerage. Unplasticized poly(vinylchloride) (PVC-U): Specifications for pipes, fittings and the system***

This standard specifies the requirements for the solid wall pipes, fittings and the system for two fields of use:

- Outside the building structure only (area code "U");
- Outside the building structure and buried in ground within the building structure (area code "UD").

The standard covers minimum diameters and wall thicknesses, types of fittings, mechanical and performance characteristics for PVC-U pipes up to 1000 mm.

BS EN 1401-1:2019+A1:2023 contains a UK National Foreword which provides advice when specifying PVC-U solid wall pipes for the UK market.

**BS EN 13476 *Plastic piping systems for non-pressure underground drainage and sewerage – Structured-wall piping systems of unplasticized poly(vinyl chloride) (PVC-U), polypropylene (PP) and polyethylene (PE)***

BS EN 13476 is a three-part standard which identifies requirements for structured wall piping systems including pipes and jointing.

Part 1: General requirements and performance characteristics - this part specifies general aspects for both smooth wall and profiled pipes including definitions, material, geometrical characteristics and types of fittings.

Part 2: Specifications for pipes and fittings with smooth internal and external surface and the system, Type A - this part specifies the nominal dimensions, test methods, parameters and performance requirements for a product with smooth walls on both the inner and outer surface. It describes the types of wall construction as well as typical jointing methods for nominal pipe diameters up to 3000 mm.

Part 3: Specifications for pipes and fittings with smooth internal and profiled external surface and the system, Type B - this part specifies the nominal dimensions, test methods, parameters and performance requirements for a product with ribbed or corrugated walls on the outer surface. It describes the types of wall construction as well as typical jointing methods for nominal pipe diameters up to 3000 mm.

BS EN 13476 Parts 1–3:2025 contains UK National Annexes which provide advice when specifying structured wall pipes for the UK market. It also clarifies the intended scope of the standard.

**WIS 4-35-01 *Specification for thermoplastics structured wall pipe - supplementary test requirements***

The tests include resistance to water jetting for nominal diameters up to 300 mm, resistance to internal puncture and a maximum limit on longitudinal bending.

**BS 4660 *Thermoplastics ancillary fittings of nominal sizes 110 and 160 for below ground gravity drainage and sewerage***

BS 4660 contains UK-specific ancillary products not covered by European Standards. This standard specifies the materials, dimensions and performance requirements for access fittings, rodding points (eyes), gullies and adaptors.

## NOTES:

Reference is made in the Building Regulations to BS EN 1852 for solid wall polypropylene (PP) pipes and BS EN 12666 for solid wall polyethylene (PE) pipes. Both can be, but are not commonly, used in the UK for gravity drains and sewers.

All British Standards can be purchased through BSI (<https://knowledge.bsigroup.com/>).



WIS 4-35-01 can be downloaded free of charge from Water UK (<https://standards-board.water.org.uk/wis-ign>).



## Recommendations when specifying drains and sewers:

The product specifications allow for a wide range of product applications and design methodologies across Europe. Therefore, recommendations are given here to guide users when specifying products for UK applications.

**Colour:** Preferred orange / brown or less commonly dusty grey.

**Pipe ring stiffness:** Stiffness is defined by "SN", a numerical designation indicating the minimum required ring stiffness of a pipe or stiffness of a fitting to resist loading when installed.

- For structured walled pipes in adoptable sewer systems, a minimum ring stiffness of 8 kN/m<sup>2</sup> (SN8) is required for pipes up to 500 mm. For pipes greater than 500 mm, the required ring stiffness may be reduced to 2 kN/m<sup>2</sup> (SN2) subject to structural design load calculations for the specific project.
- For solid wall pipes in adoptable sewer systems (BS EN 1401-1, BS EN 1852-1, BS EN 12666-1), a minimum ring stiffness of 4 kN/m<sup>2</sup> (SN4) is required if pipes and fittings are to be installed in accordance with BS EN 1610. Pipes classified as SN2 should be subject to a structural design calculation and the installation technique modified to suit the results of that calculation.

**Pipe jointing:** For both solid wall and structured wall pipes, socket and spigot joints and fittings are manufactured and supplied by BPF Pipe Group members as part of the overall plastic piping system. For pipes and joints to BS EN 1401-1, products are dimensionally compatible between manufacturers. For products to BS EN 13476-2, PVC pipes and joints are dimensionally compatible with BS EN 1401-1. For products to BS EN 13476-3, pipes and joints are designed as a single system and are not interchangeable. All pipes and joints should be installed in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations.

To minimise impact on fluid flow along the pipe length, BS EN 476: 2011 'General requirements for components used in drains and sewers' recommends that the maximum step between pipe invert and a joint is 6 mm (for pipes up to DN/ID 300) and 0.02 x DN mm (for pipes greater than DN/ID 300) up to a limit of 30mm.



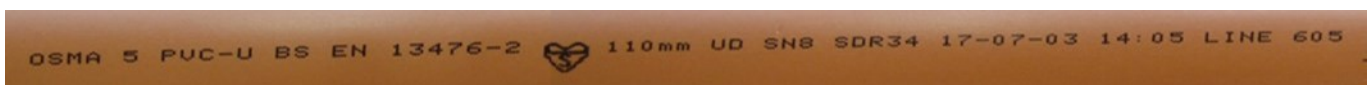
**Product certification:** The British Plastics Federation (BPF) Pipes Group and its members strongly advise that compliance with the product standards listed in this guide is verified by a third-party certification scheme (for example, the BSI Kitemark).

**Marking:** Marking on a pipe is defined by the standard and demonstrates compliance with the standard and its scope of use.

For pipes to BS EN 1401-1, in addition to the manufacturer's information, materials, dimensions and any third-party certification, each product is marked with the area code U or D. The area code indicates the application: U, buried in the ground outside the building structure and UD, buried in ground both within the building structure and outside the building.

For pipes to BS EN 13476-2, marking includes manufacturer's information, materials, dimensions, ring stiffness and application (area) code U or UD. Area codes description as BS EN 1401-1.

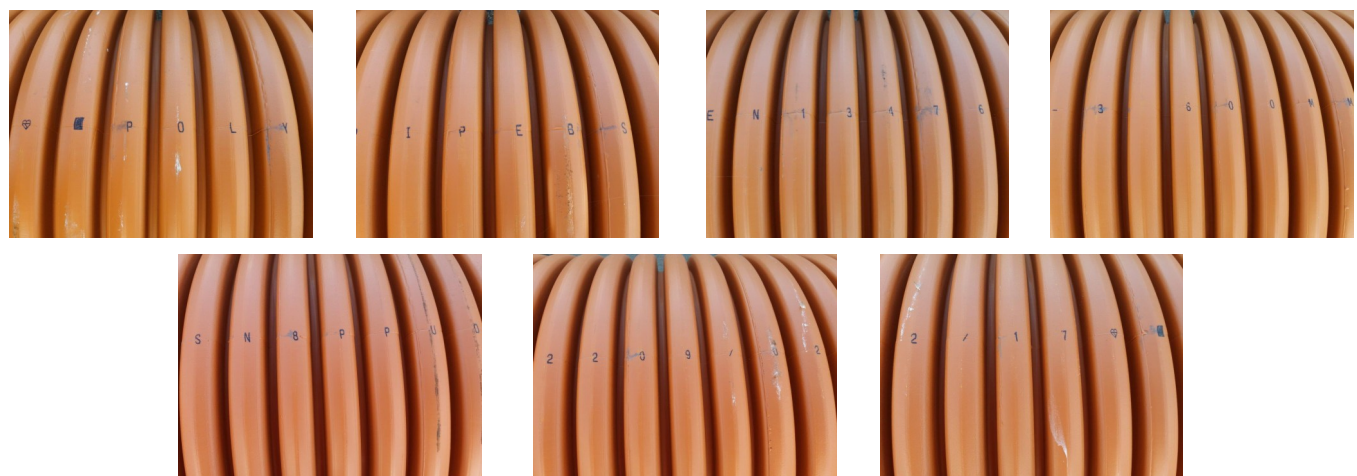
**Photograph 1: Example of marking of pipes (smooth outer wall)**



**Photograph 1: Example of marking of pipes (smooth outer wall)**



**Photograph 3: Example of marking of pipes (smooth outer wall)**



It is currently not legally possible to apply either CE or UKCA marking to products covered by this guidance document. The BPF Pipes Group statement "*UKCA Marking for Plastic Piping Systems*" provides further guidance.

<https://www.bpfpipesgroup.com/technical-information/position-statements/>



## Inspection chambers

Access is required to drain and sewer systems for testing, inspection, maintenance and removal of debris. In line with the Confined Spaces Regulations 1997, operations should be carried out, where practicable, without entering the confined space. The National Annex to BS EN 752: 2017 "*Drain and Sewer Systems outside Buildings*" states a strong preference for working at ground level i.e. non-man-entry wherever possible. Inspection chambers provides a means of access compatible with this aim.

### Terminology

The term 'inspection chamber' used by European Standards is:

- Chamber with a removable cover constructed in a drain or sewer that permits the introduction of cleaning and inspection equipment from surface level, but does not provide access for personnel with a riser shaft of 200 mm minimum outer diameter and an inner diameter of less than 800 mm.

This has been simplified, but is broadly similar, in other key reference documents.

The intended use and local preferences lead a number of other terms which specifiers will encounter:

- Non-man chambers – meaning the same as inspection chamber
- Demarcation chamber / disconnecting chamber / disconnecting inspecting chamber – an inspection chamber placed near the boundary of the property at the upstream end of the lateral drain.
- Shared disconnecting chamber – an inspection chamber to accommodate the lateral drains from more than one property where it is not possible to provide a chamber for individual houses.

Plastic inspection chambers for all of these applications should be designed and tested to the product specifications described in the next section.

### Product specifications

**BS EN 13598 *Plastics piping systems for non-pressure underground drainage and sewerage. Unplasticized poly(vinyl chloride) (PVC-U), polypropylene (PP) and polyethylene (PE). Specifications for manholes, inspection chambers and ancillary fittings.***

BS EN 13598 is a two-part specification which identifies the requirements for plastic inspection chambers, together with sealed access fittings, mechanical saddles, rodding points and manholes. It was updated in 2020 and significant changes made to the scope of the two parts.

**Part 1:** Specification for ancillary fittings and shallow chambers. This part now covers shallow chambers on private drains which are located in pedestrian areas above the ground water table to a maximum depth of 2.0 m from ground level to the invert of the main channel. It specifies materials and geometrical characteristics, and performance requirements.

**Part 2:** Specification for manholes and inspection chambers. This part now covers inspection chambers intended to be used in pedestrian or vehicular traffic areas outside the building



structure. It specifies materials and geometrical characteristics, and performance requirements.

#### NOTES:

BS EN 13598-2: 2020 covers chambers for all other locations. It accommodates practice from across Europe and therefore includes the use of chambers to depths of six metres. UK Regulation and guidance for adoption of sewers should be followed.

#### **BS 7158 *Plastics inspection chambers for drains and sewers. Specification***

BS 7158 has largely been superseded by BS EN 13598 and was withdrawn from general sale by BSI in 2013. However, this standard is quoted in Approved Document H to the Building Regulations. As such, the Department of Communities and Local Government (now Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government) has confirmed that it is still possible to install product to BS 7158 under the Building Regulations.

#### Recommendations when specifying chambers:

**Design and Layout:** The National Annex to BS EN 752: 2017 "*Drain and Sewer Systems outside Buildings*" provides useful guidance on a number of aspects including:

- Minimum clear opening (cover size) to provide for the introduction of equipment;
- recommended restriction to opening size on chambers greater than one metre deep to prevent unauthorised access;
- recommended maximum spacing between inspection chambers and other access points in the system to allow for cleaning of the whole drain / sewer;
- bends and branches;
- a reminder that access to a drain / sewer system may comprise both non-man entry and man entry points to minimise risk to operatives by above ground working.

More guidance can be found in the BPF Pipes Group document "*Selection and installation of plastics inspection chambers for underground drain and sewer systems*"

<https://www.bpfpipesgroup.com/technical-information/technical-guidance/>



**Product certification:** The British Plastics Federation (BPF) Pipes Group and its members strongly advise that compliance with BS EN 13598 is verified by a third-party certification scheme (for example, the BSI Kitemark or BBA certification). It is recognised that Approved Document H to the Building Regulations permits the installation of products to BS 7158 and where manufactured, products to BS 7158 should also be verified by a third-party certification

It is currently not legally possible to apply either CE or UKCA marking to products covered by this guidance document. The BPF Pipes Group statement "*UKCA Marking for Plastic Piping Systems*" provides further guidance.

<https://www.bpfpipesgroup.com/technical-information/position-statements/>



## Manholes

### Terminology:

The term 'manhole' used by European Standards is:

- Chamber with a removable cover constructed in a drain or sewer to permit entry by personnel with a riser shaft of 800mm minimum inner diameter.

### NOTE:

Plastic manholes are included in the Design and Construction Guidance. The terminology is aligned with European Standards.

### Product specifications:

**BS EN 13598 *Plastics piping systems for non-pressure underground drainage and sewerage.*** Unplasticized poly(vinyl chloride) (PVC-U), polypropylene (PP) and polyethylene (PE). Specifications for manholes, inspection chambers and ancillary fittings.

BS EN 13598 is a two-part specification which identifies the requirements for plastic inspection chambers, together with sealed access fittings, mechanical saddles, rodding points and manholes.

Part 2: Specification for manholes and inspection chambers. It specifies materials and geometrical characteristics, and performance requirements.

### Recommendations when specifying manholes:

The preference is for above ground working wherever possible to minimise risk to operatives.

**Design and Layout:** The National Annex to BS EN 752: 2017 "*Drain and Sewer Systems outside Buildings*" provides useful guidance on a number of aspects including:

- the minimum clear opening size for a manhole is 600 mm x 600 mm for safe access / egress;
- manholes should not generally be used at depths less than 1.5 m but where they are provided, the minimum clear opening size is larger than the minimum above to allow for crouching / standing during working;
- the recommended maximum spacing between manholes and other access points in the system to allow for cleaning of the whole drain / sewer;
- that manholes should be designed to be watertight, durable and designed to minimise the risk of blockages; and
- that manholes should be designed to withstand ground loading, lateral loadings, and flotation.

## Covers for inspection chambers and manholes

BS ISO 15398 "*Specifications for thermoplastics covers and frames for manholes and inspection chambers used in non-traffic areas*" was published in 2012 for applications which are not in the highway.

BS EN 124 Parts 1 to 6 "*Gully tops and manhole tops for vehicular and pedestrian areas*" was published in 2015 and completely replaced BS EN 124: 1994. The expansion into six parts reflects the wide range of materials now used for manufacture of covers – with common requirements set out in Part 1 and material specific requirements (iron, steel, aluminium, composites and thermoplastics) in Parts 2 to 6.

With the publication of BS EN 124, Part 6: 2015, thermoplastic covers have been included in the EN 124 suite and for some applications, the use of thermoplastic covers on chambers and manholes in public drain and sewer systems is now possible.

### Product specifications:

**BS EN 124 *Gully tops and manhole tops for vehicular and pedestrian areas.***

All covers to EN 124 are required to meet the relevant performance requirements specified in BS EN 124: Part 1: 2015 together with material specific requirements set out in the relevant Part.

**Part 6 *Gully tops and manhole tops made of polypropylene (PP), polyethylene (PE) or unplasticized poly(vinyl chloride) (PVC-U)***

This part specifies the materials specific requirements for thermoplastic covers for covering gullies, manholes and inspection chambers for installation within areas subjected to pedestrian and/or vehicular traffic.

It is applicable for covers for use in:

- areas which can only be used by pedestrians and pedal cyclists (Class A 15); and
- pedestrian areas and comparable areas, car parks or car parking decks (Class B 125).

**BS ISO 15398 *Specifications for thermoplastics covers and frames for manholes and inspection chambers used in non-traffic areas***

BS ISO 15398 specifies requirements for thermoplastics covers and frames for inspection chambers and other access points manufactured from unplasticized poly(vinyl chloride) (PVC-U), polypropylene (PP), polypropylene with mineral modifier (PP-MD) or polyethylene (PE).

It is applicable covers for use:

- in areas of light vehicular (Class A35 or B125) and pedestrian access (Class A15);
- inside or outside buildings.

### Recommendations when specifying covers:

Selection: BS 7903: 2020 "*A guide to the selection and installation of covers for manholes and inspection chambers*" provides information to help those designing drain and sewer systems in highways to deliver safe, durable, maintainable and usable installed cover systems through appropriate selection and installation of products to the latest version of BS EN 124.

More detail can be found in the BPF Pipes Group document "*A guide to the Selection and installation of covers for manholes and inspection chambers - BS 7903: 2020, version 2*", <https://www.bpfpipesgroup.com/technical-information/specification-guidance/>



More guidance on the selection of covers for specific applications can be found in the BPF Pipes Group document "*Selection and installation of plastics inspection chambers for underground drain and sewer systems*", <https://www.bpfpipesgroup.com/technical-information/technical-guidance/>



#### NOTE:

The Design and Construction Guidance (Version 2.3, Section E2.32) specifies that Class B 125 shall be used in footways, pedestrian areas, driveways serving a single house and comparable locations. For consistency with Section E2.32, the schematic in Figure B.23 of that document should indicate that a Class A15 cover would typically be used for domestic gardens.

**Product certification:** The British Plastics Federation (BPF) Pipes Group and its members strongly advise that compliance with BS EN 124 and BS ISO 15398 is verified by a third-party certification scheme (for example, the BSI Kitemark or BBA certification).

Covers are required to meet both BS EN 124-1: 2015 and the Part relevant to the material. The certificate should list both parts of the standard.

It is currently not legally possible to apply either CE or UKCA marking to products covered by this guidance document. The BPF Pipes Group statement "*UKCA Marking for Plastic Piping Systems*" provides further guidance. <https://www.bpfpipesgroup.com/technical-information/position-statements/>



## Proving the integrity of the wastewater system

### Pipes and joints:

All key documents listed in Table 1 require that drains and sewers are tested before backfilling to demonstrate watertightness (leaktightness) against infiltration and exfiltration.

The BPF Pipes Group document "*Guide to leaktightness testing of gravity drains and sewers*", <https://www.bpfpipesgroup.com/technical-information/specification-guidance/>, summarises the procedures for undertaking site tests on gravity systems to demonstrate watertightness against infiltration and exfiltration and provides practical guidance on using the tests for plastic piping systems.



### Chambers:

The leaktightness against both infiltration and exfiltration of inspection chambers to BS EN 13598 is part of the compliance testing to the standard. The Design and Construction Guidance, Sewers for Adoption, Sewers for Scotland and Sewers for Adoption (Northern Ireland) therefore do not require additional testing of water tightness, once constructed, beyond visual inspection.

The final performance of the system is dependent on the quality of construction work - it is important to follow the manufacturer's installation guidance and take special care during jointing to pipework to ensure a good seal is made.