Report on sewage discharge: Ashton Rd, Siddington
December 2025 to February 2026

Based on monitoring by Huw Jones, Parkway, Siddington

SUMMARY

Huge volumes of wastewater contaminated with untreated sewage were discharged for several weeks during Winter 2025-26 from two Thames Water manholes on Ashton Road, just south of Siddington village. This has led to heavy pollution of roadside ditches including an extensive dead zone, flow of contaminated water along at least 300m of roadside ditches and onto adjacent farmland and field ditches. Much of the wastewater may have drained into the River Churn about 1km away.

The sewage discharges appear to have become a routine and deliberate part of Thames Water's strategy for coping with its inadequate local sewer system. The Winter 2025-26 discharges are a repeat of what has happened in previous years. In spite of this, as in previous years, there has been no visible attempt at preventing the discharges or cleaning up the resulting pollution.

MONITORING

The discharges were monitored daily for three months and found to continue for a total of 38 days during Winter 2025-26. The discharges were reported promptly to both Thames Water and the Environment Agency. Dates of discharge are recorded in Table 1 below along with Thames Water and Environment Agency case/reference numbers if known.

Table 1. Duration of discharges of wastewater contaminated with untreated sewage

First observed[1]	Last observed[1]	Duration of discharge (days)	EA ref no	TW case no	TW ref no
8 Dec 25	24 Dec 25	16	02455151	01426740	2831273
27 Jan 26	31 Jan 25	4	02461334		
3 Feb 26	4 Feb 26	2	02463609	01520581	2999333
6 Feb 26	22 Feb 26	16	02465312	01527568	

1. Full photographic record retained on file

On each occasion, manhole covers were lifted, apparently by the pressure of water in the sewer. On two occasions, the discharges lasted over two weeks, during which Ashton Road was partially closed with temporary traffic lights limiting access to a single carriageway. Thames Water erected signage alongside the road barriers indicating an emergency closure, which if valid, would bypass road closure permit requirements. On the second occasion, the traffic lights and partial road closure were left in place for over a week after the end of the discharge.

Flow was continuous and was greater at the start of each period of discharge, gradually reducing as river levels fell to more normal levels. A very rough visual estimate was made of the maximum discharge rate of up to approximately 5 litres per second, which is equivalent to 0.5 million litres or 500 cubic metres every day, enough to fill Cirencester's Open Air Swimming Pool.

EXTENT OF POLLUTION

The manholes are on Ashton Road, 300m south of the edge of Siddington village. The extent of visible pollution is shown in Figure 1 below. This includes a 100m dead zone in the roadside ditch with no surviving vegetation other than filamentous algae.

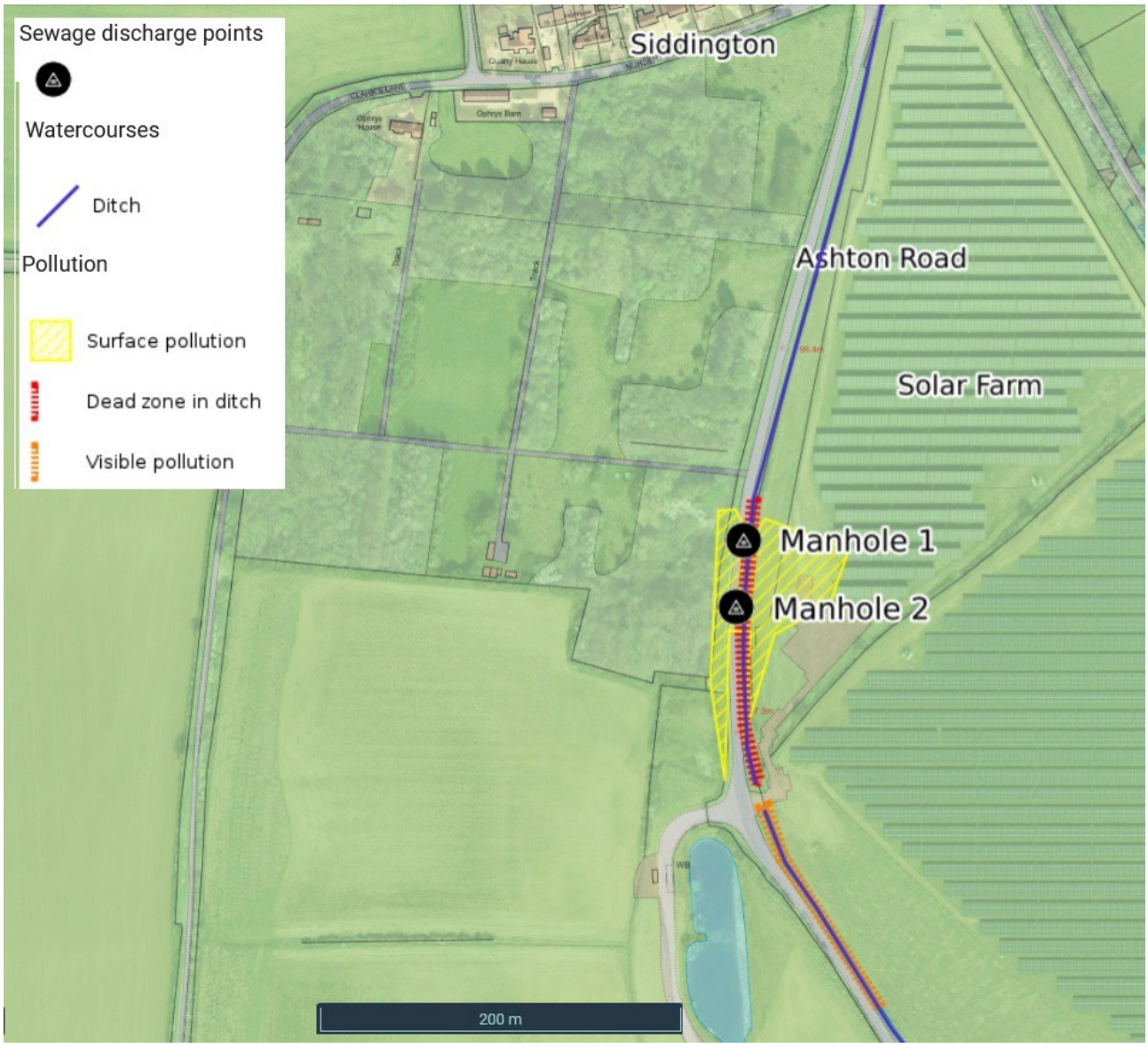

Figure 1. Observed extent of visible pollution

Accumulation of sewage debris was observed for more than 100m beyond that in the roadside ditch. Contaminated water also flowed onto the Solar Farm east of Ashton Road and into the private woodland to the west.

The contaminated ditch and roadside has also seen an accumulation of rubbish, as local litter-pickers are unwilling to clear in that area and avoid it.

Table 2 records the extent of visible pollution as well as precise locations for the two manholes discharging wastewater.

Table 2. Visible extent of pollution	
North to South	Grid reference
Northern limit of visible sewage and sewage flow in ditch	SU 03247 98998
Manhole 1 – main discharge	SU 03244 98985
Manhole 2 – secondary discharge	SU 03239 98948
Extent of heavy sewage contamination in ditch. Southern limit of dead zone Start of side ditch to the East	SU 03252 98854
Solid sewage debris visible as far as this.	SU 03322 98710
Start of second side ditch to the East	SU 03375 98625

Based on observations of the flow and ground contours , it is probable that contaminated water drained towards the River Churn (Figure 2)

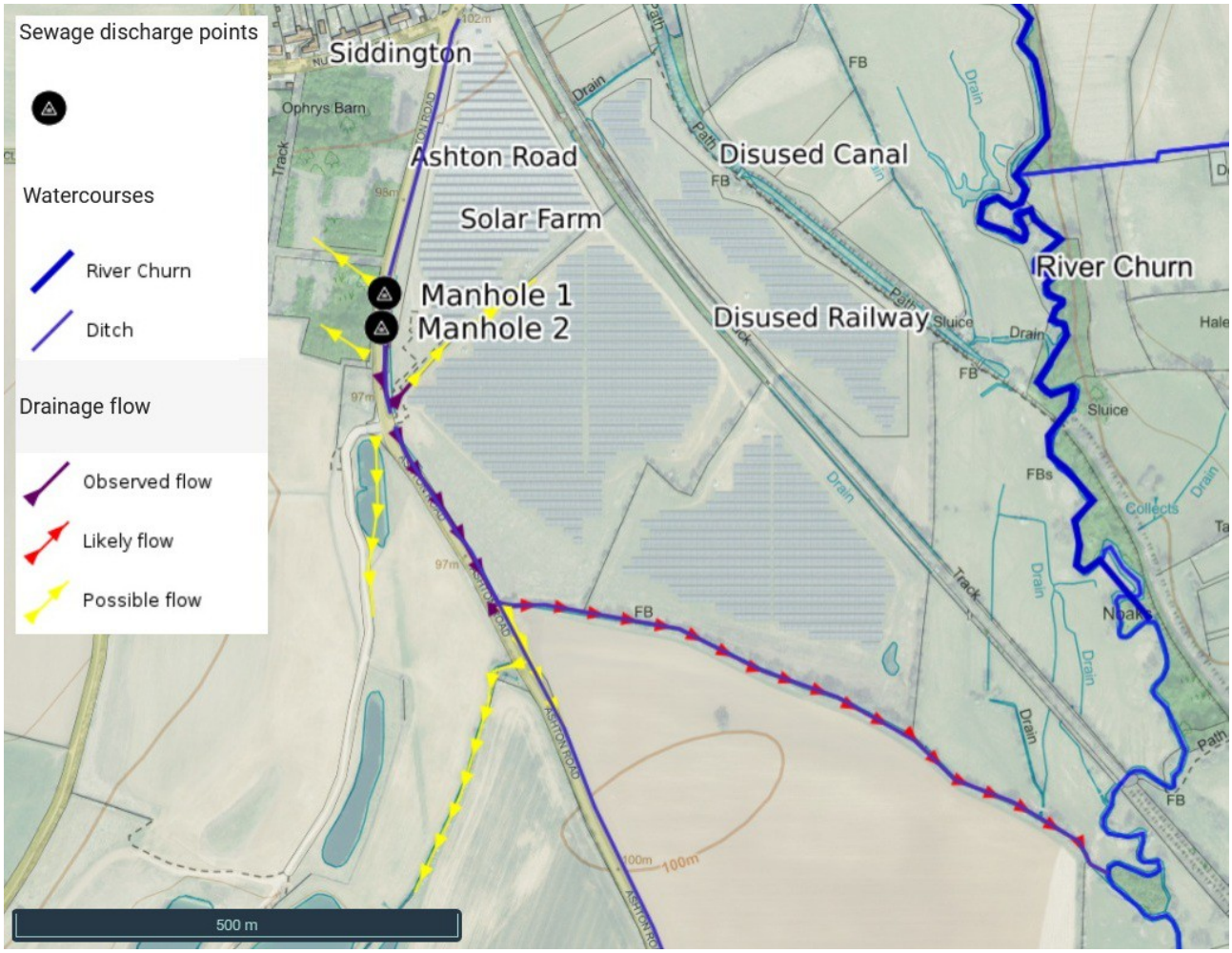

Figure 2. Observed and estimated drainage paths

SEWERAGE NETWORK

The manholes are on the main sewer which runs under Ashton Road from Cirencester to Shorncote Wastewater Treatment works which serves approximately 31, 720 people (Source: Thames Water, 2021: Reference 1 below).

The network is evidently seriously under capacity. At the same time as the Ashton Road spills, there were also discharges of contaminated wastewater in the north of Siddington Parish at Cherry Tree Drive and Wildwood Park. Additional discharges caused local flooding at several locations in Cirencester including City Bank where the Recreation field was closed for several weeks.

There is an additional capacity problem at Shorncote Wastewater treatment works which has a very poor record of sewage discharges. This continues despite recent improvement work. For instance the treatment works were discharging continuously throughout December 2025.

Reference 1: Groundwater Impacted System Management Plan, Cirencester (including South Cerney) River Churn, January 2021 (available at: https://www.thameswater.co.uk/media-library/drliftkz/cirencester-groundwater-impacted-system-management-plan.pdf). Figure 1, page 7 shows the sewerage network.