

SUMMARY OF DRAINAGE ISSUES AT FIELDSIDE AND ATTEMPTED REMEDIAL ACTION TAKEN

AUDIENCE: Beth Hoyland-Smith (Team Leader Planning Enforcement Mid Sussex)

Drainage Design produced by EAS Ltd, based in Wineham.

Design 1: July 2018. The plan shows that a Klargestar would be located east of the house, close to the road, with water being pumped under Tott Lane into the field to the south, with the owner's permission.

Design 2: September 2019. This design was based on 'Soakaway'. The Sewage treatment plant was sited slightly east of the house.

Both designs also included a soakaway along the boundary with the lane.

18 November 2022 - we moved into Fieldside.

2 December 2022 - Building Control (Socotec) stated that they had not received confirmation about what drainage system had been installed.

4 February 2023 - Gould Baxter appointed Southern Contractors to landscape the site. They found the drains were blocked with rubble and that raw sewage was on the surface. The septic tank was emptied.

23 February 2023 - water was running off our site; Gould Baxter suggested a holding tank be buried and they would contact EAS about the issue. The proposal was never mentioned again.

4 May 2023 - Godfrey Baker (Senior Partner, Gould Baxter), stated at a meeting that Gould Baxter had no details of the specification of the septic tank, as Phoenix Builders had provided no documentation. He also confirmed that **Building Control had not signed off the Drainage System.**

24 July 2023 - Southern Contractors investigated the soakaway. They found that only 50% of the proposed soakaway had ever been installed. Malcolm McKemey (EAS) made a site visit and expressed surprise that his design was not implemented and that the septic tank had been installed at the lowest point of the site. **Angela Simpson (Socotec)** also visited and approved the proposed work to remedy the drainage issues.

8 August 2023 - we asked Hamilton Construction Services to visit to give a second opinion. They thought that there should have been a power supply to the septic tank to connect to a grinder. They also expressed amazement that the latest work had been passed by a Building Inspector.

9 January 2024 - Adam Dracott, (EHO) visits to say that foul water discharge from our site is emerging 30m down the lane from our house. It later emerges that foul water is going through an electricity duct under the lane, which had been installed many years before by the Blake family who sold us the site and who were now complaining to Environmental Health.

13 February 2024 - The EHO visits again to confirm that, following the capping of the duct, he was happy to withdraw the notice as the problem was solved.

23 February 2024 - Gould Baxter instructed a company, **Drain Detectives**, to put a camera in the drains. They said that there was seepage from some of the joints and suggested that we paid

£11568.00 to put in a resin liner. We were not convinced that the problem would be solved and didn't go ahead.

4 April 2024 - The EHO emailed us to say that he had had another complaint from the neighbour to say that the fould smell had returned. There was no evidence of foul water emerging, and no action was taken.

13 June 2024 - Hamilton Construction put a camera down into the drains. No evidence of water ingress was found.

So far in 2024, the septic tank had been emptied 11 times, at a cost to us of nearly £1500.

10 July 2024- We emailed **Tracy Robinson, Socotec Operations Director**, to raise a number of issues about their role as Building Inspectors. We copied the email to Adam Dracott, Building Control at Mid Sussex and Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors. We made it clear that we were seeking redress in order to correct the many failures by Socotec.

7 August 2024 - **Tracy Robinson responded in a letter**, to the issues we raised. She stated that Socotec were not aware that the septic had been moved and 'believe it to be in the position shown on the Gould Baxter drawing'. She stated that it wasn't their responsibility 'for the works complying with building regulations'.

6 January 2025 - We emailed Malcolm McKerney (EAS) about his design and issues we were having. He stated in a reply '**for reasons unclear to us, our design could not be implemented.....the present arrangement is not our design**'. Gould Baxter were copied in by us but did not respond.

MM questioned why the septic tank was installed at the lowest point on the site. Gould Baxter have never answered the question. MM also stated that Gould Baxter had fallen out with the landowner which is why the Klargester was abandoned. A member of the Blake family who own the land said this was not true.

18 February 2025 - we emailed drainage@midsussex.gov.uk saying that we were trying to find the original planning document. We never received a reply.

6 May 2025 - **Tom Coll** from Mid Sussex Planning came to the house, unannounced. John was not at home, but Sharon found him very helpful and supportive to our situation. He said that he would return to talk to us together. He never did. Sharon emailed him on 11 May, and left voice mails subsequently but he never responded to any of these.

August 2025 - we engaged yet another contractor to try to address the issues, again at our expense. The Company is 'We Inspire Construction' based in Horsham. These are remedies that were carried out, according to Reece Moss, owner of the company:

1. Checked all manholes to assess that all drains were free flowing in the correct directions; Reece confirmed that they were.
2. 'We found that the septic tank had been placed at the lowest point of site' and that all gradients led to where the septic tank is situated.
3. 'We landscaped the area, removing all gradients using retainer walls creating a large flat garden space which was turfed in order to slow the flow of storm water off the site.
4. The end of the electricity duct was surrounded in concrete to prevent water, foul or otherwise, from entering it.
5. The septic lids were found to be unsuitable and not sealed allowing storm water ingress. The level of the lids was raised and 'concrete sealed around'.

'The manhole lids/septic tank now sits in a flat tiered area that is retained and stops all water flowing off site in and around the manhole themselves'. (Reece Moss)

Sharon and John Flower. 3 November 2025

