

28 August 2019

Trust in water

Proposal to grant a variation of appointment to Independent Water Networks Limited to enable it to provide water services to a site called Manse Farm, Knaresborough, North Yorkshire

Contents

1. About this document	3
2. The Site	4
3. The applicant	5
4. The proposal	6
5. Our approach to the assessment of this application	7
6. The application	8
7. Conclusion and next steps	11
8. Site maps	12

1. About this document

We propose granting a variation of appointment to Independent Water Networks Limited as a water company and varying the appointment of Yorkshire Water as a water company. This notice is a consultation on this proposal under section 8(3) of the Water Industry Act 1991 (“**WIA91**”).

The consultation period will last for 28 days from the date of publication of this notice. Having considered any representations submitted during the consultation period in response to this consultation notice, Ofwat will decide whether or not to grant the variation of appointment, as set out above.

2. The Site

Independent Water Networks Limited (“**IWN**”) has applied for a variation to its appointment to be able to provide water services to a site called Manse Farm, Knaresborough (“**the Site**”). The Site will consist of 623 household customers and 1 business customer. The Site is in Knaresborough, North Yorkshire.

Site boundary maps can be viewed in section 8 of this document.

The Site is within the water and sewerage services area of Yorkshire Water (“**YKY**”) and water services will be provided by way of a bulk supply agreement between IWN and YKY. The Site is due to be fully built out by 2025.

3. The applicant

In October 2007, IWN obtained its first appointment as a water and sewerage undertaker for a housing development at the Long Croft Road site in Anglian Water's (ANH) area. Since then Ofwat has agreed to vary IWN's area of appointment so it can serve a further 28 sites for water and/or sewerage. The register of new appointments and variations can be viewed [here](#).

4. The proposal

Ofwat proposes to:

- grant a variation of appointment to IWN as a water company to include the Site in its water supply area; and
- vary the appointment of Yorkshire Water as a water company by excluding the Site from its water supply area.

By means of the above, IWN will become the water services supplier for the Site.

5. Our approach to the assessment of this application

The new appointment and variation mechanism, set out in primary legislation¹, provides an opportunity for entry and expansion into the water and sewerage sectors by allowing one company to replace the existing appointee as the provider of water and / or sewerage services for a specific area. This mechanism can be used by new companies to enter the market and by existing appointees to expand their businesses.

When considering applications for new appointments and variations, Ofwat operates within the statutory framework set out by Parliament, including our statutory duty to protect consumers, wherever appropriate by promoting effective competition. In particular, in relation to unserved sites, we consider that we must ensure that the future customers on a site – who do not have a choice of supplier – are adequately protected. When assessing applications for new appointments and variations, the two key policy principles we apply are that:

- customers, or future customers, should be no worse off than if the site had been supplied by the existing appointee; and
- Ofwat must be satisfied that an applicant will be able to finance the proper carrying out of its functions as a water and/or sewerage company.

We clarified these two policy principles in February 2011, and updated them more recently, when we published our New appointments and variations – [policy](#) (2015) and [process](#) (2018) documents. In December 2015, we published our '[Statement on our approach for assessing financial viability of applications for new appointments and variations](#)'. This states that we will adopt a company-based assessment of financial viability, rather than a detailed site-based assessment, where it is appropriate to do so.

When we assess whether customers will be no worse off as a result of the appointment, we not only consider the customers on the site but also the generality of customers – i.e. customers of the existing provider and customers more generally across England and Wales, who in our view benefit from the effective operation of the new appointment and variation mechanism.

¹ The legal framework for new appointments is set out in the WIA91. Section 7 of the WIA91 sets out the criteria by which an appointment or variation may be made. Section 8 of the WIA91 sets out the procedure for making that appointment or variation.

6. The application

IWN has applied to be the water company for the Site under the unserved criterion, set out in section 7(4)(b) of the WIA91.

6.1 Unserved status of the Site

To qualify under the unserved criterion, an applicant must show that at the time the appointment is made, none of the premises in the proposed area of appointment is served by the existing appointee.

IWN is applying for a variation based on the unserved criterion. YKY has provided a letter, dated 7 June 2019, confirming that, in its view, the Site is unserved. This site is greenfield and having reviewed online satellite maps these also confirm that there are no buildings on the Site.

Given the information provided by the applicant and YKY, we consider that the Site is unserved.

6.2 Protecting customers

Ofwat acts to protect consumers, especially those who are unable to choose their supplier. In assessing applications to supply new development sites, Ofwat acts on behalf of both existing customers as well as potential new customers who are not yet on site, to protect their interests. The fact that future customers on a site have not directly chosen their supplier is not a position unique to new appointments and variations – only business, charity and public sector customers (“Business Customers”) in England and Wales are able to choose their supplier².

Recognising this, our assessment of an applicant’s proposals includes analysis of its plans to ensure customers will be at least no worse off in terms of their annual bills and levels of service than if they had been supplied by the existing appointee in whose geographical area the relevant site sits.

² The majority of Business Customers where the area of the relevant appointed company is not wholly or mainly in Wales (and whose premises are, or are likely to be, supplied with at least 50 MI where the relevant area is wholly or mainly in Wales) can effectively switch suppliers of water and/or sewerage from 1 April 2017.

6.3 Price

IWN proposes to match the charges to customers on the Site of YKY – i.e. – it will not offer a discount.

6.4 Levels of service

Every appointee is required under its licence conditions to publish and make available the Core Customer Information for its household customers. We have assessed IWN's proposed Core Customer Information, and our view is that these are of an appropriate standard. Our view is that customers on the Site would be no worse off in relation to the points covered by the above Codes of Practice and the Customer Code than they would be if YKY were to be the customers' water services supplier.

6.5 Site owner choice

IWN has the consent of the developer, Linden Homes, to become the water services provider.

6.6 Environment Agency (EA) and Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI)

We take the views of these organisations into account before progressing to formal consultation on an application for a new appointment. Both the EA and DWI informed us that they are content for us to consult on this application³.

6.7 Incumbent's existing customers

In considering whether customers will be no worse off, we also considered the potential effects of this variation on the prices that YKY's existing customer base may face.

The calculation necessarily depends on a range of assumptions, and there are clearly difficulties involved in quantifying the effect. It is therefore necessary to use a

³ The Environment Agency and the Drinking Water Inspectorate will also be formally consulted on the proposals, as they are on the list of organisations which must be formally consulted as set out in section 8(4)(b) of WIA91.

simplified set of figures. We have expressed the effect in 'per bill' terms to try to quantify the possible effect in an easily understandable way.

We have assessed the potential magnitude of this impact by comparing how much YKY might have expected to receive in revenue from serving the Site directly, were they to serve the Site, with the revenues they might expect from the proposed arrangement with IWN.

We estimate a potential £0.006 annual increase on the water bills of existing YKY customers if we grant this variation to IWN. This is once the Site is fully built out.

This estimate does not take into account the potential spill-over benefits to customers arising from dynamic efficiencies achieved as a result of the competitive process to win sites.

Therefore we consider that granting this variation to IWN would have a very small financial impact on customers' bills and could have potential benefits for customers.

6.8 Ability to finance and properly carry out its functions

We have a statutory duty to ensure that efficient appointees can finance the proper carrying out of their functions. When a company applies for a new appointment or variation, it must satisfy us that it is able to carry out all of the duties and obligations associated with being an appointed water or sewerage company.

Following our risk assessment a decision was made to move to a company based assessment of financial viability for IWN, rather than the site-by-site assessment of each individual application.

IWN has an unlimited Keepwell agreement from its owner Brookfield Utilities UL Limited (BUUK) in July 2013. IWN has confirmed that this agreement is still in place and will cover this proposed new site. BUUK continue to hold an investment grade credit rating with Moody's.

We have considered the current financial position of the company as a whole and are satisfied that the company can finance its functions.

7. Conclusion and next steps

In assessing IWS's application, we have considered the general benefits of new appointments. Our view is that our two key policy principles would be met in this case, as customers would be no worse off, and IWS would be able to finance, and carry out, its functions. We have also considered the effects of granting the proposed variation on the existing customers of Yorkshire Water.

We are currently minded to grant the variation under the unserved criterion. We are consulting on our proposal to do so.

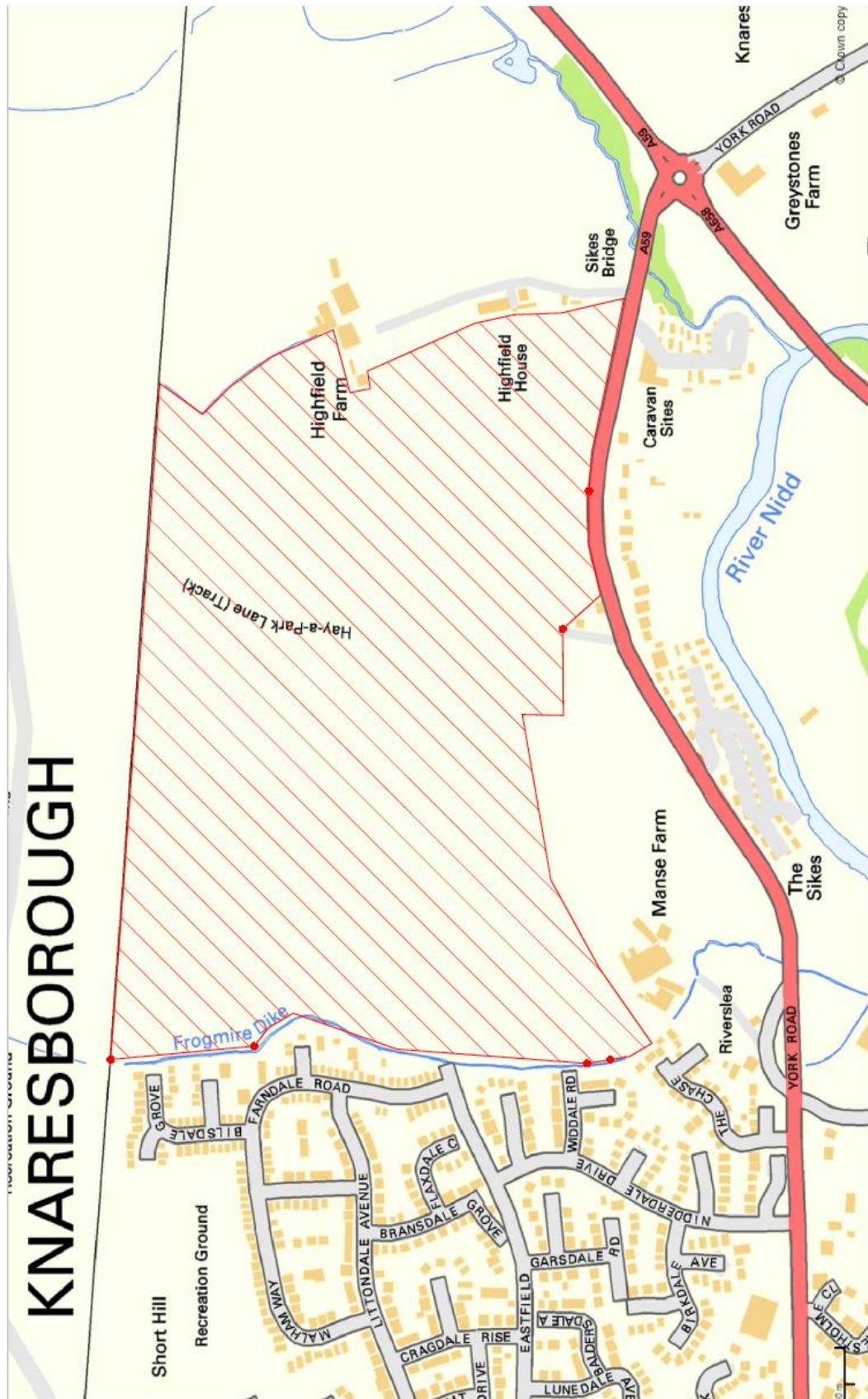
Where to send submissions

Any person who wishes to make representations or objections with respect to the application should do so in writing to Laura Easterbrook at Centre City Tower, 7 Hill Street, Birmingham, B5 4UA or by email at Laura.Easterbrook@ofwat.gov.uk

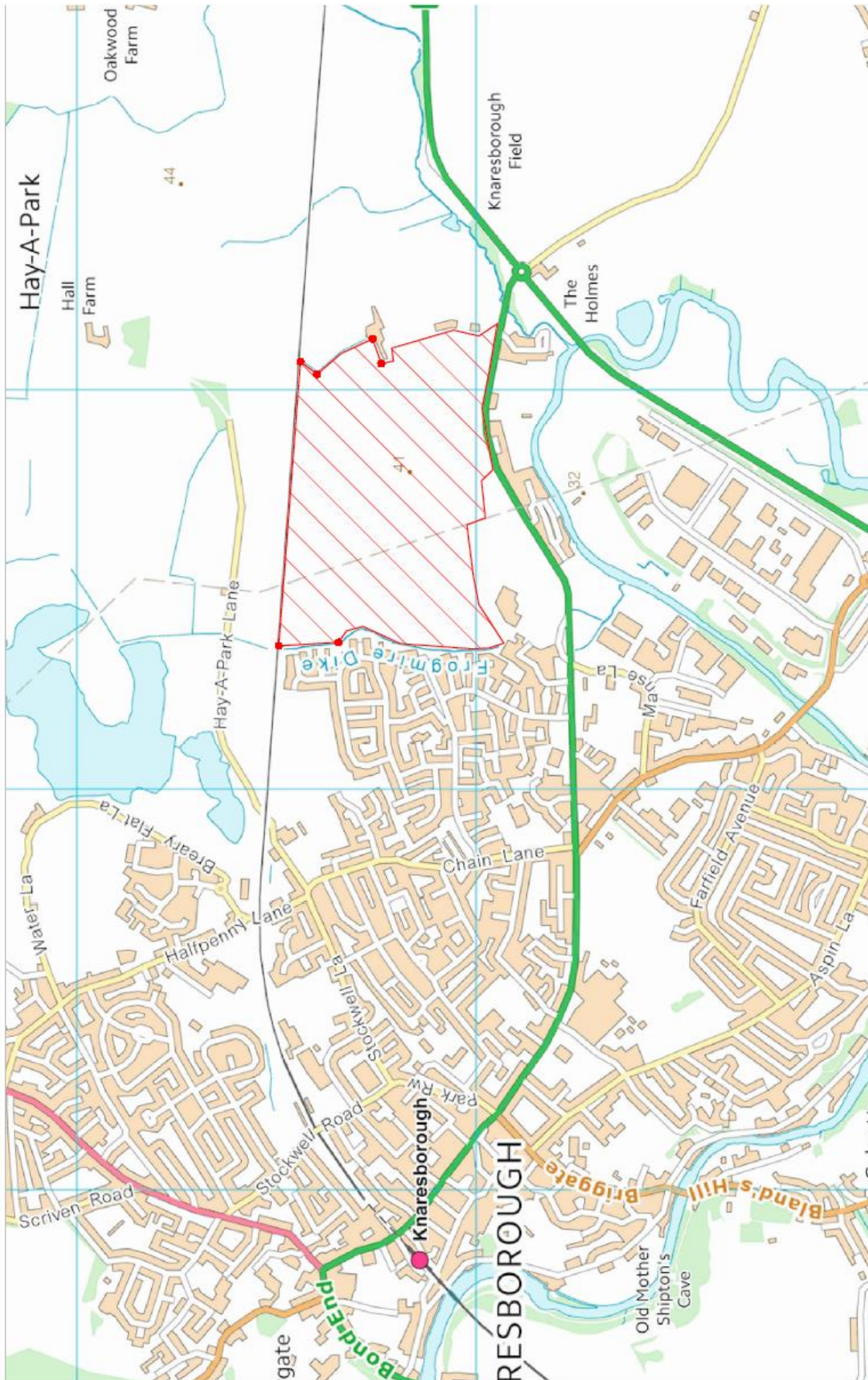
Representations must be received by Ofwat no later than 17.00 hours on 25 September 2019. Further information about how to make representations or objections, including information on the treatment of confidential information, can be obtained from Ofwat at the above address or at <http://www.ofwat.gov.uk/foi/>

Ofwat will only use the information you have provided for the purpose of this consultation. We will retain your information in accordance with Ofwat's retention schedule and will not share with third parties unless we have a legal obligation to do so. For further information please see Ofwat's Privacy Policy in our [Publication Scheme](#).

8. Site maps



<p>PLAN REFERRED TO IN THE VARIATIONS OF THE APPOINTMENT TO INDEPENDENT WATER NETWORKS LIMITED AND YORKSHIRE WATER SERVICES LIMITED, AS WATER UNDERTAKERS, MADE BY THE WATER SERVICES REGULATION AUTHORITY ON.....</p>		<p>WATER SUPPLY PROJECT: 34104386 ADDRESS: Manse Farm, Knaresborough, HG5 0ST OS GRID REFERENCE: 436759, 457206</p>	<p>INSET MAP 1 DRAWN: EA DATE: 07/02/2019</p>	<p>SCALE: 1:15 000 at A3</p>
--	---	---	---	---



INSET MAP 1
 DRAWN: EA
 DATE: 07/06/2019



WATER SUPPLY
 Project: 34104386
 Address: Manse Farm, Knaresborough, HG5 0ST
 OS GRID REFERENCE: 436759, 457206



PLAN REFERRED TO IN THE VARIATIONS OF THE APPOINTMENTS OF INDEPENDENT WATER NETWORKS LIMITED AND YORKSHIRE WATER SERVICES LIMITED, AS VARIATIONS OF APPOINTMENT OF THE WATER SERVICES REGULATION AUTHORITY ON.....

Ofwat (The Water Services Regulation Authority) is a non-ministerial government department. We regulate the water sector in England and Wales. Our vision is to be a trusted and respected regulator, working at the leading edge, challenging ourselves and others to build trust and confidence in water.

Ofwat
Centre City Tower
7 Hill Street
Birmingham B5 4UA

Phone: 0121 644 7500
Fax: 0121 644 7533
Website: www.ofwat.gov.uk
Email: mailbox@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk

August 2019

© Crown copyright 2019

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3.

Where we have identified any third party copyright information, you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This document is also available from our website at www.ofwat.gov.uk.

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at mailbox@ofwat.gsi.gov.uk.

