

River Ems Flood Alleviation Scheme Advisory Note

October 2018

As you will know, we have recently objected to APP/18/00672 (Land adjacent to Westwood Close, Emsworth) in our capacity as the statutory consultee on development within Flood Zone 2 or Flood Zone 3. The reasons for this objection are set out in our consultation response (dated 21 August 2018, our reference HA/2018/120592) and relate to deficiencies in the Flood Risk Assessment submitted in support of the application. We are also providing ongoing advice on the suitability, in flood risk and environmental terms, of sites being considered for allocation within the Havant Borough Local Plan. This includes land adjacent to Westwood Close.

In parallel to the above, we are progressing the River Ems Flood Alleviation Scheme. This project aims to reduce the flood risk to approximately 300 houses and is part of the government's target to better protect 300,000 homes by 2021. We have produced this advisory note to provide you with as much information as possible about our scheme, as any development on the land adjacent to Westwood Close (and within the wider River Ems catchment) could impact on the delivery of our project.

We are currently finalising the flood model created for the River Ems catchment and will be using this model to identify options to decrease flood risk in the catchment. We anticipate option selection to be complete by spring 2019. If the model created as part of the River Ems project shows an option would be suitable in this area, our work will be heavily impacted by the proposal. Early conceptual work has identified the potential for flood storage on land adjacent to and/or within the development site, facilitated by the construction of embankments to direct and hold floodwater in a safe and appropriate manner to reduce the risk of flooding to the existing community.

Agreeing the principle of locating housing (or other built development) here would discount an area which could be safeguarded for such flood risk mitigation options.

This project is economically very marginal. Any impact on what we can achieve in the area could increase costs and cause the project to become unviable. This would not only mean that the community continues to be at flood risk but would render the current spend on the project to get to this stage as abortive.

Background to the project

Flooding in the River Ems catchment, especially in the village of Westbourne, occurs frequently and the frequency is anticipated to increase in the future due to sea level rise and climate change. This aligns with the Arun and Western Streams Catchment Flood Management Plan (CFMP) for the area.

At Strategic Outline Business Case it was planned to appraise the flood risk of the village of Westbourne, West Sussex, within the River Ems catchment. During the initial phases of the appraisal it was found that the existing hydraulic model did not meet the project's needs and required re-building. Due to this requirement the project team has decided it will be more efficient to consider the flood risk for the whole of the River Ems catchment. The new model encompasses the whole of the River Ems catchment providing a more holistic analysis of the catchment, containing improved groundwater hydrology, and is constructed in Infoworks-ICM which provides greater accuracy in determining surface water flood risks.

Current status of the project

- Topographic surveys have been completed and a new model has been built by our supplier's modelling team. Outputs from the model have not yet been shared with the Environment Agency (EA) to review.
- The Hydrology methodology has been reviewed by the EA. Requested updates are being addressed during quality assurance of the hydraulic model build.
- Engagement with the Sussex Flow Initiative team at Sussex Wildlife Trust has commenced to gain further insight into potential Natural Flood Management (NFM) measures that could be implemented in the area.

Following the modelling, the long and shortlisting of options will take place. This will build on the long-list defined in the Strategic Outline Case (SOC) with the inclusion of information ascertained from the new model with greater emphasis on NFM measures. The shortlisted options will then be modelled and an updated economic assessment will take place to provide the required information on the viability of the project and the direction it will take.

Recommendations

The Environment Agency would like the above points to be considered when reviewing this area for development, and recommend the area should be safeguarded under the Local Plan at least until after the project has decided on the preferred way forward for the River Ems Flood Alleviation Scheme.