

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

DATE OF MEETING: 15 AUGUST 2023

TITLE OF REPORT: UPDATE ON FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEMES

Report of: Executive Director – Place

Cabinet Portfolio: Planning Policy and Place

Key Decision: No

Confidentiality: Non-Exempt

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To provide an update on the three Flood Alleviation Schemes currently coordinated by Hart District Council and seek the views of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee prior to its consideration by Cabinet. The three projects are:
 - Mill Corner, North Warnborough,
 - Phoenix Green, Hartley Wintney, and
 - Kingsway, Blackwater.

RECOMMENDATION

2. That the Overview & Scrutiny Committee provides comments to Cabinet on the following daft recommendations:
 - a. to close the current project at Mill Corner, North Warnborough but to continue working with the Environment Agency which is carrying out an assessment of flooding in this area,
 - b. to undertake new modelling work at Phoenix Green, Hartley Wintney to re-evaluate the flood risk to properties, and
 - c. to continue the scheme at Kingsway, Blackwater in its current form, working with the Environment Agency and Thames Water.

BACKGROUND

3. The Council have no statutory duty to progress flood alleviation projects. Appendix 1 summarises the responsibilities of different flood risk management organisations within Hart district. However, The Council can coordinate flood projects and gain access to funding that other flood risk organisations cannot access. In this regard it is supporting the delivery of the following three projects:
 - Mill Corner, North Warnborough,
 - Phoenix Green, Hartley Wintney, and
 - Kingsway, BlackwaterHowever, for a range of reasons these projects have not been implemented. In line with project management best practice, it is appropriate to have a critical review of any project which appears to have stalled.
4. Funding for these three projects mainly comes from external sources administered by the Environment Agency (EA). In some cases, this is supplemented with funding from the Council and other parties.

MILL CORNER, NORTH WARNBOROUGH

5. The Mill Corner project was set up in response to flooding that occurred in 2000 and 2007 where several properties were impacted. Flooding also occurred in 2013, 2014 and 2020.

6. The original scheme would use Natural Flood Management (NFM) to reduce flood risk to 21 properties. NFM is when natural processes are used to reduce flood risk including woody debris dams, balancing ponds and wetland habitats.
7. The scheme as originally intended is no longer deliverable. This is because the respective landowners will not give their permission. Furthermore, the modelling demonstrates the scheme would lead to some agricultural land and other private land being flooded. Again, no affected landowners permission has been given.
8. There are also further complications. Even if the scheme were to proceed numerous regulatory consents would still be needed for the scheme to be implemented. For example, part of the land is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which would require consent from Natural England. This permission is not yet forthcoming.
9. There has now also been a change in circumstances. The EA is currently carrying out an 'Initial Assessment' of North Warnborough to determine the feasibility for alternative Flood Alleviation Projects in this area.
10. At present it is understood that the current Mill Corner project will be removed from the initial assessments. The EA itself is more likely to succeed in delivering alternative solutions as they have a broader scope covered by their project and the EA has found additional solutions to the issues that were not covered under the current Mill Lane scheme.
11. There is no prospect of the original Mill Corner scheme being delivered. It therefore should be closed. The Council will however, continue to work with the EA on its new approach, although the EA itself would lead and manage any alternative project.
12. Updates on the EA project will be reported to the Council's Multi-Agency Flood Forum (a sub-group of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee) so Members will be kept informed of progress.

PHOENIX GREEN, HARTLEY WINTNEY

13. This project was set up in response to a flood event in 2007 where 20 properties experienced internal flooding caused by surface water run-off. Flooding also occurred in 2000 and 2009 where up to 38 properties were either directly or indirectly impacted. Some of the 38 properties affected are owned by Vivid Homes.
14. The original scheme would use a combination of Property Flood Resilience (PFR) measures (e.g. flood doors, barriers and air brick covers installed onto properties) and Natural Flood Management (NFM) to reduce the risk of flooding to 38 properties.
15. Due to the nature of the project, the Environment Agency (EA) was unable to claim for the relevant funding and therefore the Council took on the Project Management role and was able to access the funding.
16. A feasibility study funded by the EA, completed in 2016 investigated several alternative options. It recommended a scheme involving both PFR and NFM measures:
 - the PFR measures would involve 38 properties (some private, some owned by Vivid Homes). Legal agreements would be required with each individual property owner and an agreement with Vivid Homes for their properties. There

was no consensus with residents to agree to the measures required to protect their homes.

- the NFM measures included were impoundment areas created by embankments and wooded debris dams upstream of the Phoenix Green area. The challenge here again was a combination of mixed land ownership, working on common land, and the impact on Ancient Woodland. All of this mean that it is unlikely to be delivered.

17. In reviewing this project, it is noted that:

- there have been no reports of flooding to the properties in the area since 2009,
- the St. Mary's Park development at Dilly Lane Hartley Wintney had a positive impact on the surface water drainage in the area. That development included a sustainable drainage strategy with several soakaways, an attenuation basin, wetland features and swales. The development has reduced the surface water flow that leaves the site from 41 litres per second to 25 litres per second meaning flood risk to the area has been reduced,
- Whilst there have been incidents of flash flooding since the St. Mary's Park development was completed, this did not affect the properties previously considered to be at risk, nor any other properties.

18. It would appear that the scheme at Phoenix Green is now no longer required as the properties have not flooded for the last 14 years. However, it is considered prudent for reassurance purposes to commission new modelling to re-evaluate the risk to properties in this area. A decision can then be taken as to whether any interventions are justified and what they would look like, or to close the project.

19. £23,500 of EA funding remains from the original grant EA grant of £147,000. This and additional funding available from the EA can used to fund the modelling work. The procurement process can commence following EA and approval by Cabinet.

KINGSWAY, BLACKWATER

20. Of all three schemes, Kingsway, Blackwater has the most significant flooding issues, suffering regularly from both surface and foul water flooding which affects 42 properties. Some of the 42 properties are owned by Vivid Homes.

21. The proposed scheme would include two elements:

- Property Flood Resilience (PFR) measures (e.g. flood doors, barriers and air brick covers installed onto properties), and
- a multi-agency group comprising the Council, Hampshire County Council, EA, Thames Water and Network Rail to discuss the drainage / culvert issues and identify solutions.
- Thames Water have included the Kingsway rain garden scheme in their Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan 2025-2050 (DWMP) which sets out their long-term approach to protecting the environment, reducing the risk of sewer flooding to homes, and reducing storm discharges.

22. More recently, Thames Water has included the Kingsway rain garden scheme in its Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan 2025-2050 (DWMP) which sets out their long-term approach to protecting the environment, reducing the risk of sewer flooding to homes, and reducing storm discharges.

23. Whilst the second and third measures will reduce flood risk to the benefit of the area, they will not negate the need for the PFR measures.

24. The PFR measures would require legal agreements with each individual property owner and an agreement with Vivid Homes will need to be signed for all Vivid-owned properties.
25. Due to the nature of the project, the Environment Agency (EA) is unable to claim for the relevant funding. The Council therefore took on the Project Management role and were able to access the funding.
26. This scheme does not rely on any funding from the Council. The Council has secured the following funding:
 - £53,500 remains from a previous funding claim and a further £234,000 has been secured but not yet claimed from grants administered by the EA (a combination of Flood Defence Grant in Aid from the Department for Environment Fisheries and Rural Affairs, and local levy from the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee),
 - £38,000 from Hampshire County Council,
 - Contributions from Blackwater & Hawley Town Council and Vivid Homes were previously agreed but would need to be reconfirmed.
27. The project is deliverable. The recommendation is to continue in its current form. There is however, a risk that property owners do not take up the PFR offer which would reduce the effectiveness of PFR for adjoining properties. This risk always exists with PFR on such properties and in this case is not considered to be a reason to stop the project.
28. Thames Water are considering improvements to Hawley Hill Balancing Pond to reduce flood impacts. The Council will work with Thames Water on this, however they would lead and manage the project.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

29. There is no alternative option but to close down the Mil Corner project. It is not deliverable. Instead, the Council will work with the EA on its projects for this area.
30. The challenges for the Phoenix Green, Hartley Wintney project mean that there continuing with the project is not feasible. Furthermore, the need for the project has diminished. There has been no flooding to properties since 2009 and the drainage improvements resulting from the St. Mary's Park development remove its necessity. However, it would be prudent to commission new modelling to re-evaluate the risk to properties in this area.
31. Closing down the Kingsway, Blackwater project is rejected because of the severity and regularity of flood events. Funding is secured from external partners, and it is a deliverable project where progress is being made. Without it properties will continue to flood even if other measures are implemented to reduce flood risk.

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or The Hart Vision 2040

32. Corporate Plan 2023/2027:
 - Planet: a carbon neutral and climate resilient district by 2040 - Support climate mitigation schemes such as flood alleviation, and the delivery of low or carbon neutral electricity generation.

- Building a resilient Council: Delivering what matters to you - Ensuring effective use of our assets and to make the council more financially self-sustaining.

Service Plan

- Is the proposal identified in the Service Plan? Yes
- Is the proposal being funded from current budgets? Yes
- Have staffing resources already been identified and set aside for this proposal? Yes

Legal and Constitutional Issues

33. To deliver the Property Flood Resilience (PFR) measures the Council will need to enter into legal agreements with the relevant property owners. If such agreements cannot be reached with each individual landowner, then the project is not feasible. There is also no agreement with the respective private property owners to contribute to measures that are solely proposed for their private benefit.

Financial and Resource Implications

34. Mill Corner:

- £26,000 remains from £50,000 that was previously secured from the Environment Agency (EA) expenditure on studies and designs. This would be returned to the EA if the project closes.

35. Phoenix Green:

- The Council originally claimed £147,500 from the EA for this scheme, £23,500 of which remains which it is proposed will be used for the new modelling work.
- In January 2020 Cabinet agreed that HDC would fund £70,000 towards this project, match funding £70,000 from Vivid Homes. If the project does not proceed after the modelling work this money will be retained in reserves.
- As it stands there is a further £336,000 of available external funding for this project from the EA and DEFRA. However, the project could change, or close down, in light of the modelling work.
- Officer time is required to progress the procurement of modelling work which is a resource implication for the Council.

36. Kingsway:

- £53,500 remains from a previous EA funding claim of £142,500.
- Also available for this project is a further £234,000 from the EA and £38,000 from Hampshire County Council. Both have been secured but not yet claimed.
- Contributions from Blackwater & Hawley Town Council and Vivid Homes were previously agreed but would need to be reconfirmed.
- The Council does not need to contribute any funds.
- Should the project costs exceed the current funding allowances then further funds could be accessed from the EA.
- The intention is to capitalise Officer time so that it is funded as part of the overall project costs.

Risk Management

37. **Mill Corner:** The risk of closing this project is minimal as it is not a deliverable project. There is a greater chance of success by supporting the EA with its work in this area.

38. **Phoenix Green:** The risk is that the results of new modelling identify the need for a project in this area. If this is the case the Council will work with partner organisations to see what solutions may be deliverable. However, this is unlikely given the evidence of changes that have happened in the area and the absence of reported flood events in recent years.
39. **Kingsway:** The main risk is that some residents within a row of terraced properties decline the PFR measures. That would potentially reduce the effectiveness of the PFR measures as flood water might be able to access those properties via adjoining unprotected properties. However, given the need for the measures, there is little more the Council can do other than offer the PFR free of charge to the affected residents.

EQUALITIES

40. The proposals set out in this paper are not considered to have an impact on equality. They are based around properties at flood risk regardless of occupancy.

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

41. Addressing flood risk is a means of adapting to the effects of climate change which is expected to increase the risk of flooding. The recommendations are not expected to impact on carbon reduction targets.

ACTION

42. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee's comments will be reported to Cabinet.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Responsibilities for Flood Risk Management

Appendix 2: Overview Map of the Flood Schemes