

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD**

**22 February 2011**

**Report of the Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure**

**Part 1- Public**

**Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)**

**1 STRATEGIC FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT UPDATE**

**Summary**

**The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) identifies those areas in Tonbridge, Aylesford and East Peckham that are at high risk from flooding. This report explains the background to the initial SFRA and highlights the recent updates with the recommendation to adopt the revised SFRA as a material consideration for Development Control purposes.**

**1.1 Background to the SFRA**

- 1.1.1 In 2006, the Council, in partnership with the Environment Agency (EA), produced an SFRA for the Borough. This SFRA focussed on Tonbridge and Aylesford because these areas are where future development or redevelopment is anticipated within a high risk flood zone.
- 1.1.2 The purpose of the original SFRA was to inform the decision-making on the Council's spatial strategy that was being drafted in the Local Development Framework (LDF) Development Plan Documents (DPDs), in particular the Core Strategy, Development Land Allocations DPD and the Tonbridge Central Area Action Plan. In this respect, the SFRA produced in 2006 formed part of the evidence base for the first tranche of DPDs.
- 1.1.3 In preparing the original SFRA, Officers of the Council and EA recognised that in order to deliver wider sustainability benefits for the community, development would be required to take place in central Tonbridge, a high flood risk area – there were no alternatives to deliver regeneration benefits through the use of previously developed land. In response to this the SFRA included a chapter (Chapter 9) on 'Flood Risk Management, Mitigation and Enhancement Measures'. This section sets out measures aimed at further reducing the residual flood risk and making development safe.
- 1.1.4 In addition to forming part of the evidence base for the first tranches of LDF DPDs, the SFRA has, in the subsequent years, been used during the consideration of

planning applications in areas at high risk from flooding and has formed the starting point from which site-specific Flood Risk Assessments have been prepared in relation to development proposals. In this respect Chapter 9 of the SFRA has provided useful guidance on how to reduce the residual flood risk at proposed development sites.

## **1.2 Reasons for Updating the SFRA**

- 1.2.1 There were two principal reasons why the SFRA needed to be updated. Firstly, the national planning policy on flooding, 'Planning Policy Guidance Note 25' was updated, initially in 2006 and then more recently in March 2010, by 'Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 25: Development and Flood Risk'. The original SFRA acknowledged the emerging changes in what was at the time a draft of PPS25, in particular the need to follow the Exception Test after the sequential test for the location of development allocations has been applied. However at the time of the SFRA's preparation the PPS was still in draft form and there was therefore the potential for it to change once adopted. The revised SFRA now makes reference to the advice in the final version of PPS25. The changes are not very significant, with the categories of flood risk remaining the same.
- 1.2.2 The other change worth highlighting is the integration of the need to follow the Exception Test. This applies in Tonbridge where there are no practical alternative sites to the ones allocated in the Central Area Action Plan to deliver wider sustainability benefits for the community and meet other policy objectives. As a result, the emphasis is on pursuing mitigation measures that further reduce the residual flood risk and make the development safe. This is the major task for Tonbridge; to recognise the scope of flood risk and to bring forward imaginative and sustainable techniques to manage and mitigate flood risk. These mitigation measures feature in chapter 9 of the SFRA, the relevant extracts from which accompany this agenda. Chapter 9 has been updated with cross-reference to the Government's guidance document: 'Improving the Flood Performance of New Buildings: Flood Resilient Construction' (2007), which highlights good practice.
- 1.2.3 The second reason for the update was a purely technical one. An opportunity to improve the accuracy and currency of the flood mapping with updated and more detailed modelling presented itself in 2010. Consultants Mott MacDonald, were commissioned by the EA, in partnership with the Council, to undertake the technical work to produce the mapping, based on more advanced modelling and hydrology work, using improved ground surface data that looked at both the depth and velocity of flow along the Medway. Significantly, the latest technical work also took into account the latest revised operational procedures for the Leigh Barrier, which is a significant factor affecting the flow rate and volume of water running through Tonbridge during a major flood event.

### **1.3 Outputs from the updating of the SFRA**

- 1.3.1 The outcomes of the process are a series of updated flood maps for central Tonbridge, as well as for Aylesford and East Peckham (please see the relevant extracts from the SFRA which accompany this agenda). These maps are essentially updates of the maps that feature in the original SFRA produced in 2006.
- 1.3.2 An additional map has been produced for Tonbridge illustrating the hazard rating in the high risk flood zones. The hazard rating is a calculation involving the depth and velocity of flow and the likely presence of debris. The purpose of the hazard mapping is to assist Planning Officers and Environment Agency Officers in understanding and planning for detailed and practical flood safety in new development. The hazard mapping complements the flood mapping and provides useful guidance for the development of site-specific Flood Risk Assessments and for making decisions about the location of specific uses, appropriate mitigation measures and securing safe access and egress from new development.
- 1.3.3 The extracts from the SFRA which accompany this agenda focus on the significant outputs from the latest revision to the SFRA which will be of practical use to Council officers and planning applicants and in appropriate cases will provide advice for members in taking development control decisions, (ie. the flood mapping and flood risk management, mitigation and enhancement measures). The sections of the SFRA on the detailed hydrology and modelling behind the mapping have been excluded because they are purely technical in nature.

### **1.4 Legal Implications**

- 1.4.1 The SFRA has been prepared in accordance with national planning policy guidance in partnership with the Environment Agency. Whilst providing evidence to inform the decision-making on the first tranche of DPDs and in development control it does not in itself form part of the Council's Local Development Framework.

### **1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

- 1.5.1 The cost of the exercise was shared equally with the Environment Agency. The Council's contribution was covered by a contribution from the previous Housing and Planning Delivery Grant.

### **1.6 Risk Assessment**

- 1.6.1 The SFRA provides useful flood mapping at the strategic scale. The greatest risk of not adopting the SFRA as a material consideration for Development Control purposes would be an information void on flood risk matters within areas of the Borough where there are the opportunities for development. By adopting the SFRA as a material consideration for Development Control purposes, all parties would be aware of the strategic flood risk issues affecting an area and an

understanding of the options for the location of uses, layout and design that could be pursued to make the development safe.

## 1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

1.7.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report

## 1.8 Recommendations

1.8.1 The revised Strategic Flood Risk Assessment be adopted as a material consideration for Development Control purposes.

The Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

contact: Nigel De Wit

Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2006)

Planning Policy Statement 25: Development and Flood Risk (March 2010)

Improving the Flood Performance of New Buildings:

Flood Resilient Construction (DCLG, 2007)

Steve Humphrey

Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure

<b>Screening for equality impacts:</b>		
<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>	<b>Explanation of impacts</b>
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	

<b>Screening for equality impacts:</b>		
<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>	<b>Explanation of impacts</b>
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	Yes	The SFRA identifies areas at risk from flooding and the hazard rating within these areas. This is important information that can help Council Officer and planning applicants understand the degree of risk and hazard and the options available to help make the development safe. This is particularly important when assessing safe access and egress to developments for persons with disabilities or those who may be old or frail.

*In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.*