

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Environment
2.	Date:	6 June 2011
3.	Title:	Flood Risk Toolkit: Overcoming the Flood Risk Challenge in Rotherham Town Centre
4.	Programme Area:	Forward Planning, Environment & Development Services

5. Summary

This report provides information on the Flood Risk Toolkit which has been produced. Focused on Rotherham town centre and surrounding areas, it is intended to help developers and decision makers address planning policy flood risk requirements within the context of the Council's regeneration aspirations for Rotherham town centre. This report summarises the content and implications of the documents and how they will be taken forward.

6. Recommendations

1. That Cabinet Member notes the content of this report and the Flood Risk Toolkit
2. That Cabinet Member endorse the use of the Flood Risk Toolkit in determining planning applications, making other planning decisions and as part of the evidence base for preparing the Local Development Framework

7. Proposals and Details

Background

The Council, along with partners such as the Environment Agency, has invested significantly in responding to flood risk issues within Rotherham following the flood events in 2000 and 2007. Crucially this has resulted in the development of a community wide Rotherham Renaissance Flood Alleviation Scheme intended to reduce the threat of flood risk through the centre of Rotherham, which is a key focus for regeneration and Rotherham's Renaissance aspirations.

The Council is also producing its Local Development Framework which will set out the policies to guide new development in the future and allocate land for new development. The Flood Risk Toolkit will act as a vital piece of evidence base to inform the policies and content of the Local Development Framework.

The Council already provides guidance for developers when considering developing within the Town Centre and throughout the Borough of Rotherham. The document is known as Development Control Requirements for Flood Risk Assessments, and provides general guidance to developers. However the Flood Risk Toolkit, produced for the Council by consultants Jacobs, is intended to help address specific flood risk issues in and around Rotherham town centre. The toolkit includes:

- A 'how to guide' setting out how it can be used to assist developers when submitting planning applications (including a checklist which will provide a useful aid for developers and decision makers)
- A Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for Rotherham town centre and surrounding areas. This is accompanied by a guide to the Sequential Approach required by Planning Policy Statement 25 (Development and Flood Risk).
- A Design Guide setting out technical specifications intended to ensure that new development of flood defence works meets the requirements of the Rotherham Regeneration Flood Alleviation Scheme.

Planning Policy Statement 25 (Development and Flood Risk) requires that local authorities prepare Strategic Flood Risk Assessments (SFRA) to inform planning decisions and contribute to the evidence base for preparing Local Development Frameworks, for example by guiding the allocation of land in order to limit flood risk to people and to new and existing properties. These documents consider a number of key questions: what may flood, how, where, when and how often. They also consider the likely extent of flooding.

Two documents have been produced in Rotherham; a Level 1 SFRA (in 2008) covering the whole borough, and a Level 2 SFRA for Rotherham town centre and surrounding areas.

The Level 1 SFRA recognised that parts of Rotherham town centre and surrounding areas contain areas of medium to high flood risk. However as the Borough's principal service centre and given its location at the heart of the urban area, it is a key development and regeneration area. In conjunction with the Environment Agency

significant investment has already gone into the community wide flood alleviation scheme, to address flood issues in these areas.

The Level 2 SFRA has been produced to help address these more specific challenges. It splits the study area into nine character zones and provides guidance on the acceptability of different types of uses, advises on applying the sequential and exception tests and addresses flood mitigation and resilience issues.

It recognises the flood risks present but acknowledges that continuing development is necessary for wider sustainable development and town centre regeneration reasons. It concludes that the flood risk and regeneration challenges within and adjacent to Rotherham Town Centre can be overcome through a pro-active and comprehensive strategy towards flood risk management. This will involve all parties working together from the outset to deliver the vision by managing flood risk.

The Toolkit it is intended to strengthen the planning links with the Rotherham Renaissance Flood Alleviation Scheme to reduce the risk of flooding in the Town Centre and provide greater certainty to support the regeneration and planning objectives for the Town Centre. It therefore also provides more practical assistance to developers when submitting planning applications.

It also recognises the importance of the Flood Alleviation Scheme to achieving Rotherham's Renaissance objectives. Phase 1 of the Scheme has been delivered, however the remainder is likely to be delivered incrementally as new development proceeds. Given this incremental approach the Toolkit contains a design guide which has set out how new flood risk management works should be designed to be compatible with the requirements of the Flood Alleviation Scheme, acknowledging that until the Scheme is completed (and to the parameters it has been designed to) the full benefits in terms of reduced threat of flood risk will not be realised.

Next Steps

It is intended that the Flood Risk Toolkit will eventually be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document. Until this can be achieved it is intended that it will be used as a best practice document. It is intended that it will be used to assist in the determination of planning applications which fall within the Flood Risk Toolkit area by the local Planning Authority, and by the Environment Agency in responding to planning application consultations. An update report will be taken to Planning Board to ensure that Members are aware of the Flood Risk Toolkit.

It will form part of the evidence base to inform production of the Local Development Framework, in particular the development of policies and the allocation of sites for new development. The Core Strategy, which is expected to be subject to further consultation in summer 2011, will include draft policies relating to flood risk in the Town Centre to support the delivery of the Town Centre Vision and to support the regeneration objectives for this area.

8. Finance

This report has no direct financial implications for the Council. The Flood Risk Toolkit has been jointly funded by Forward Planning and RIDO, including ERDF funding through the Managing Adaptive Responses to changing flood risk (MARE) scheme.

In implementing the guidance in the Flood Risk Toolkit there may be financial implications for future developers in ensuring that flood risk is minimised and that appropriate design / mitigation measures are adopted.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

Strategic Flood Risk Assessments are required as part of the LDF evidence base. They also help inform decision making for planning applications. In their absence there is a risk that the Core Strategy and Sites and Policies DPDs may be found unsound at examination. It is important that the content of the Flood Risk Toolkit documents is taken into account by decision makers to ensure that flood risk is not increased by new development and that appropriate mitigation measures are undertaken.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The Flood Risk Toolkit contributes positively towards the aims of Rotherham's Community Strategy and Rotherham's Renaissance aspirations. It contributes towards ensuring certainty for developers and decision makers, and in seeking to overcome flood risk challenges it supports investment within Rotherham town centre and its surrounding areas.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

Flood Risk Toolkit:

<http://intranet.rotherhamconnect.com/C0/PlanningRegen/default.aspx>

Documents are within the 'Flood Risk Toolkit' folder of the document library.

Borough Wide Strategic Flood Risk Assessment:

http://www.rotherham.gov.uk/downloads/856/local_development_framework

Development Control Requirements for Flood Risk Assessments

https://www.rotherham.gov.uk/downloads/file/3671/development_control_requirements_for_flood_risk_assessments

Planning Policy Statement 25: Development and Flood Risk

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps25floodrisk>

The Flood Risk Toolkit has been produced in conjunction with the Council's drainage, planning and regeneration programme areas, and in consultation with the Environment Agency.

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