Subject: Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
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Summary
A Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) covering the District was produced by Halcrow in January 2008 and forms part of the evidence base for the Local Development Framework. Following advice from the Environment Agency, an update to the SFRA has been commissioned. This includes significant additional technical information and data and reflects recent legislative changes. The updated SFRA provides more refined information on flooding from all potential sources. It also includes information on applying the Sequential Test, which forms the basis for decision-making at the planning application stage and in the preparation of development plan documents when allocating sites away from areas at risk of flooding.

NB: A copy of the SFRA is available as a supplement to this Agenda pack and a copy placed in the Members Room and on public display. A paper copy will be made available to Members of The Cabinet.

Recommendation
That the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (Level 1) Update be received as evidence to inform the preparation of the Core Strategy and the Site Allocations Development Plan Documents and also as a source of evidence to inform decision making at planning application stage.

1 Background/Information
1.1 URS Consultants were appointed in June 2013 to undertake an update to the SFRA Level 1 in accordance with the brief reported that month to the Enterprise, Housing and Planning Policy Advisory Panel. The study was jointly commissioned between North Warwickshire and Rugby Borough Councils and Warwickshire County Council.

1.2 An SFRA had been produced by Halcrow for a sub-regional group in January 2008. Since that date there have been a number of significant changes including the revocation of the Regional Spatial Strategies, the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Flood and Water Management Act, the production of national surface water mapping, (Areas Susceptible to Surface Water Flooding (ASTSWP)
and the Flood Map for Surface Water (FMfSW) and a significant update of the Environment Agency’s Flood Map in 2012.

1.3 The purpose of a SFRA is to assess and map all forms of flood risk. This includes flood risk arising from ground water, artificial (canal and reservoirs) surface water and river sources, taking into account climate change predictions. The SFRA is primarily used to inform the location of future development in the District via the development plan and planning application processes. However, it does have other uses such as helping the Council to improve existing emergency planning procedures.

1.4 The NPPF and its accompanying Technical Guidance emphasise the responsibility of Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to ensure that flood risk is understood and managed effectively using a risk-based approach throughout all stages of the planning process. The NPPF requires LPAs to undertake a SFRA to support the preparation of the Local Plan.

2 Options available to The Cabinet

2.1 Option 1: to receive the contents of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Update 2013 as evidence to inform the Core Strategy and other related documents.

2.2 Option 2: to identify further issues which need to be addressed in relation to the Strategic Flood Assessment Update.

2.3 Option 3: to discount the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Update as evidence.

3 Evidence Base

3.1.1 The methodology for this SFRA Level 1 Update accords with the requirements set out in the NPPF and its Technical Guidance.

3.1.2 In addition to the revised policy and guidance documents that have recently been published, many of the data sets used to inform the 2008 SFRA have been updated, and/or improved through the use of new modelling approaches. The availability of new policy guidance and improved flood risk data sets makes this an appropriate time to update existing SFRA documents, to ensure that they are using the best available data.

3.1.3 The preparation of the SFRA Update included holding two stakeholder meetings attended by the Environment Agency and Severn Trent Water, URS consultants and the local authorities.

3.1.4 A copy of the SFRA Update report is published electronically as a background paper to this report and a paper copy is available in the Members’ Room.

3.2 Key Findings

3.2.1 The SFRA report provides an overview of flood risk in Stratford-on-Avon District. The core output of the study is a series of maps which detail the flood risk from rivers, surface water, groundwater and artificial sources. The mapping is provided in electronic format and in due course will be available for use on the Council’s website.

3.2.2 The SFRA report identifies the variation in flood risk across the District. It includes the Flood Zone Maps that delineate the flood zones outlined in
the NPPF as Flood Zone One – Low Probability, Flood Zone 2 - Medium Probability and Flood Zone 3a – High Probability. Flood Zone 3b – the functional flood plain - has also been mapped. It also provides guidance on the application of the Sequential Approach, in order to enable the Council to guide development to areas of lower probability of flood risk. The Flooding Zones remain the starting point for the sequential approach. The report also incorporates further guidance on SFRA Level 2 and site specific Flood Risk Assessments requirements.

3.2.3 Updated information and guidance has been provided for emergency planning and flood risk management, in line with the Environment Agency and Defra advice. The update also contains further guidance on the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, detailing information on the appropriate locations, types and techniques within the District. As regards the plan-making function, the update makes recommendations relating to flood risk, surface water flooding, sewer and groundwater flooding and flooding from artificial sources that should be built into policy.

3.2.4 The findings highlight a number of potential future flood alleviation schemes in the District. These are schemes that have been identified by the Environment Agency as potentially benefiting local communities. These comprise the following locations:-

- Gaydon;
- Bell Brook, Snitterfield;
- Lot Brook, Southam;
- Cherington;
- Fenny Compton.

3.2.5 It is recommended that the schemes are incorporated into the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

4 Members’ Comments

4.1 None received.

5 Implications of the Proposal

5.1 Legal/Human Rights Implications

5.1.1 It is a legal requirement that the preparation of Local Plans is based on robust evidence.

5.2 Financial

5.2.1 There are no direct costs arising from the recommendation within this report.

5.3 Environmental

5.3.1 The identification of flood risk from all sources by the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment is an environmental, economic and social consideration. The SFRA helps the Council to direct development towards areas of lower vulnerability from flood risk.

5.4 Corporate Strategy

5.4.1 One of the core aims of the District Council’s Corporate Strategy is
‘Minimising the impacts of climate change’. The SFRA is directly relevant to this priority. It informs planning policy concerning the water environment and identifies proposals by flood relief agencies to minimise the number of properties at risk from flooding. It is also instrumental in delivering one of identified outcomes, namely the reduction of risk of flooding.

5.5 Analysis of the effects on Equality

5.1.1 A key aspect of the planning process is to take account of climate change which includes the sustainable management of flood risk from all sources. The SFRA Update will assist the District Council in advising appropriate policies relating to this issue. The policies of Core Strategy will be subject to a full Equality Impact Assessment.

6 Risk Assessment

6.1 Preparation of the Core Strategy is contingent upon endorsement of the evidence base. Without this, preparation of the Core Strategy will be delayed.

6.2 Policy decisions that are not supported by evidence from a reputable source will result in a significant risk that the Core Strategy would be found unsound at Examination in Public. This would have considerable implications for the District Council, in terms of cost and delaying the establishment of an up-to-date development plan and framework for planning decisions.

7 Conclusion

7.1 The study provides an up-to-date basis for considering flood risk from all sources within the District.

7.2 The findings do not represent District Council policy as this will only become the case once they are applied to the planning policies in the Local Plan, initially the Core Strategy. However, since it is a public document, the update should be treated as a material consideration for the purposes of assessing and determining planning applications.

Paul Lankester
Chief Executive

Background papers:
None