

REIGATE AND BANSTEAD BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY STATEMENT ON FLOOD DEFENCE

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This policy statement will be made available to the public and describes how Reigate & Banstead Borough Council intends to exercise its permissive powers in relation to flood defence.
- 1.2 The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) is responsible for policy on flood and coastal defence in England. However, the delivery is the responsibility of the “operating authorities” which include the Environment Agency, local authorities and internal drainage boards. These responsibilities vary according to the type of operating authority and Reigate & Banstead Borough Council’s responsibilities are set out in paragraphs 3.1 to 3.3 below.
- 1.3 The Government has published a policy aim and three objectives for flood and coastal defence. In order to ensure the aim and objectives are delivered by the operating authorities, the Government has published a series of high level targets. The first target requires each operating authority to publish a policy statement setting out their plans for delivering the Government’s policy aim and objectives in their area. This will include an assessment of the risk of flooding in their area and what plans they have to reduce the risk.
- 1.4 This policy statement fulfils that requirement. Copies will be available on request from the Council’s offices at the Town Hall, Castlefield Road, Reigate, Surrey, RH2 0SH and the Help Shops at Redhill, Banstead, Merstham and Horley. It is also available via the Internet at the Council’s website www.reigate-banstead.gov.uk. A copy is being sent to;
 - i) The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA)
 - ii) The Environment Agency (EA)

2. HOW THE COUNCIL WILL DELIVER THE GOVERNMENT’S POLICY AIM AND OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 Reigate & Banstead Borough Council acknowledges and supports the Government’s aim and objectives for flood and coastal defence as shown below.

Government’s policy aim: To reduce the risk to people and the developed and natural environment from flooding and coastal erosion by encouraging the provision of technically, environmentally and economically sound and sustainable defence measures.

Section 3 below sets out our plans for reducing or managing the risk of flooding in the Council’s area.

- 2.2 **Objective (a):** To encourage the provision of adequate and cost effective flood warning systems.

The provision of flood warning systems is the responsibility of the Environment Agency. However Reigate & Banstead Borough Council recognises that it can also assist in this role. Therefore we will:

- 2.2.1 Be aware of the Environment Agency's flood warning plans for our area.
- 2.2.2 Ensure that our flood emergency response plans are appropriate and that these plans are reviewed in consultation with the Environment Agency at least every two years.
- 2.2.3 Play an agreed role in any flood warning exercises as organised by the Environment Agency.
- 2.2.4 Make available information and guidance on self-help for residents.

- 2.3 **Objective (b):** To encourage the provision of adequate, economically, technically and environmentally sound and sustainable flood and coastal defence measures.

Whilst Reigate & Banstead Borough Council does not have a coastline, we will provide adequate, economically, technically and environmentally sound and sustainable flood defence measures in the following manner.

- 2.3.1 Adopt a strategic approach to the provision of flood defences, particularly by assessing any potentially wider effects of any proposed defences.
- 2.3.2 Aim to provide sustainable flood defences which provide social and economic benefits to people whilst taking account of natural processes, using resources wisely and, as far as possible, avoiding committing future generations to inappropriate flood defence options.
- 2.3.3 Consider alternative approaches to funding.
- 2.3.4 Where appropriate seek suitable contributions from developers or other direct beneficiaries of works, in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance Note 25.
- 2.3.5 Promote the use of sustainable drainage systems in order to control surface water run-off as close to its origin, before it enters a watercourse.
- 2.3.6 Ensure that appropriate maintenance regimes are set up based on likely costs and benefits in those areas where the Council takes responsibility.
- 2.3.7 Make publicly available the Council's expenditure plans for flood defence maintenance and any capital improvement works.
- 2.3.8 Inform riparian landowners of their own responsibilities for land drainage maintenance and also promote greater public awareness.
- 2.3.9 When requested, provide sandbags to any property owner/occupier suffering from internal flooding of habitable rooms.

- 2.3.10 Play a positive role in fulfilling our statutory and other responsibilities for furthering nature conservation including achievement of the Government's environmental obligations and targets.
- 2.3.11 Fulfil our responsibilities in relation to nationally and internationally important conservation areas, under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and as a competent authority under the terms of Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) Regulations 1994.
- 2.3.12 When undertaking flood defence works, we will aim to avoid damage to environmental interest and, where possible, seek opportunities for enhancement.
- 2.3.13 Aim to ensure no net loss to habitats covered by Biodiversity Action Plans and as such will monitor all losses and gains of such habitats.

2.4 Objective (c): To discourage inappropriate development in areas at risk from flooding.

As the local planning authority, Reigate and Banstead Borough Council will take account of flooding risks in all matters relating to development control including development plans and individual planning applications, in accordance with Planning Policy Statement No. 25. In situations where there is a risk to areas beyond the Borough boundary, we will also consult with the adjoining authorities. In addition we will publish Planning Guidance on Flooding for the assistance of developers. When considering applications we will seek to fulfil the following;

- 2.4.1 Development should not take place that has an unacceptable risk of flooding, leading to danger to life, damage to property and wasteful expenditure on remedial works.
- 2.4.2 Development should not create or exacerbate flooding elsewhere.
- 2.4.3 Development should not prejudice possible works to reduce flood risk or cause unacceptable detriment to the environment.
- 2.4.4 Natural floodplain areas are to be retained and where practicable restored.

In undertaking the activities shown above, we will apply the following priority sequence to the use of available funds:

- 2.4.5 Regulatory activity
- 2.4.6 Emergency response
- 2.4.7 Maintenance of existing flood defences to existing levels of service
- 2.4.8 Renewal of existing flood defences to existing levels of service
- 2.4.9 Improvements to flood defences above the existing level of service for existing defended areas
- 2.4.10 Improvements to flood defences above the existing level of service for new areas

3. OUR ASSESSMENT OF THE RISK OF FLOODING IN OUR AREA AND WHAT WE WILL DO TO REDUCE OR MANAGE THE RISK

Flood Defence Responsibilities

- 3.1 Apart from certain obligations to protect internationally important habitats under the EU Habitats Directive, all flood defence works are undertaken under permissive powers within the Land Drainage Act 1991. This means that operating authorities, such as Reigate & Banstead Borough Council, are not obliged to carry out flood defence works but may choose to do so in order to minimise the risk of flooding. It is also important to note that Reigate & Banstead Borough Council does not normally accept responsibility for the maintenance of flood defences on private land, as this is the responsibility of the landowner.
- 3.2 The Environment Agency is the relevant operating authority for flood defences on designated main rivers. Culverts under roads are generally the responsibility of the Highway Authority (Surrey County Council).
- 3.3 Reigate & Banstead Borough Council is the relevant operating authority for flood defences on non-main river watercourses. At present, the Council does not own or manage any flood defences although Earlswood Lake, Priory Pond and Frenches Pond do act as surface water attenuation facilities and will continue to be monitored.

Assessment of Flood Risk

- 3.4 A section of the River Mole (15Km) runs through the southern part of the borough and provides the primary outfall for that region of the borough. There are also 24 other designated main-river watercourses within the Borough (totally 40 Km.) that discharge into the River Mole; namely, Salfords Stream, Burstow Stream, Redhill Brook, Earlswood Brook, Wallace Brook, Deanoak Brook, Gatwick Stream, Saturday Ditch, Silverlea Ditch, Haroldslea Stream, South Merstham Ditch, Woodhatch Ditch, Two Mile Ditch, New Pond Ditch, Earlswood Lake Ditch, Heathfield Ditch, Gatton Brook, Poynes Road Ditch, Ladbroke Road Ditch, Lee Street Ditch, Fishers Farm Ditch, Meath Green Ditch, Lynwood Ditch and Balcombe Road Ditch. Whilst there is minimal risk to human life created by flooding from non-main river watercourses, the Council is keen to emphasize the need for the Environment Agency's flood warnings to be heeded.
- 3.5 The geological features of the borough provide three distinct areas;
 - 3.5.1 The chalk in the north leads to this area being served almost exclusively by soakaways with virtually no surface water sewer system or watercourses. The soakaways are either private or belong to the Highway Authority (Surrey County Council). Flooding is therefore a

result of insufficient capacity or soakage capability of the soakaways. The risk of flooding from land drainage is relatively small although run-off from fields occurred during the record rainfall of the winter of 2000/2001.

- 3.5.2 The middle of the Borough is mainly urbanized and sewerred with the surface water sewers discharging into watercourses. Flooding can result either through insufficient capacity in the public sewer system or the receiving watercourses. In areas adjacent to these watercourses, there is a small risk of flooding.
- 3.5.3 The south is mainly clay and is predominately flat with some areas of high water table. Apart from the sewerred urban areas, the remaining areas drain very slowly via ditches and watercourses. The combination of clay, slack gradients and high water table leads to this area being at considerable risk of flooding during prolonged wet periods or intense rainfall.

What we will do to manage the risk

- 3.6 5 Km. of the ordinary watercourses in the middle and southern regions of the borough have been identified as having a history of flooding. These have been designated as 'Strategic Ordinary Watercourses'. Reigate & Banstead Borough Council will act as the operating authority for these strategic ordinary watercourses. These will be inspected at least once a year and action taken to ensure that proper maintenance is undertaken by the landowner. By keeping these strategic watercourses clear of blockages and excessive growth, the risk of flooding can be reduced. Where expedient, the Council may decide to take action itself in order to speed up the clearance. Following each inspection, a review of the maintenance schedule will be undertaken as well as prioritising the remedial works programme. If necessary, a programme of capital works will be considered.
- 3.7 Reigate & Banstead Borough Council is the Riparian Owner for 3Km of Main River. These will continue to be inspected at least once a year and action taken to ensure they are kept clear of blockages and excessive growth.
- 3.8 Reigate & Banstead Borough Council introduced its own Land Drainage Byelaws in May 2001. The Borough Council will continue to use these Byelaws to assist in the enforcement of maintenance on non-main river watercourses and also to control any works within 9m of these watercourses.
- 3.9 A record of all reported flooding of property is kept at the Council offices. This not only provides information for future owners but also helps in building up a picture of the known flood risk areas as well as assisting in gauging the performance of our service provision.
- 3.10 As described in 2.4 above we will exercise our planning powers to reduce the risk of flooding in vulnerable areas. In addition we will encourage the use of

sustainable drainage systems in order to control the surface water run-off from new developments in areas of risk.

- 3.11 The Council will maintain a sandbagging facility at the Earlswood Depot, which will enable us to provide sandbags to protect homes from internal flooding.

4. PARTNERSHIPS AND REVIEW OF THE POLICY STATEMENT

- 4.1 Reigate & Banstead Borough Council has set out its policy and approach to flood defence in the above sections. We recognise the need to work in partnership with Central Government and other operating authorities in order to deliver a seamless and integrated service. In addition, we recognise our role in promoting greater public awareness.
- 4.2 Our local population has an important part to play in recognising and understanding their own role in maintaining watercourses and helping to protect themselves from flooding. We ask members of the public to take heed of all flood warnings and to let us know of any problems that might increase the risk of flooding from watercourses.
- 4.3 Reigate & Banstead Borough Council intends to review this policy statement within three years, when it will be revised and reissued as necessary. We welcome any comments on the above policy statement.

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