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NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING AND FLOOD RISK



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The Localism Act governing Parish and Neighbourhood planning came into effect in April 2012 and set out a series of measures to shift power away from central government to local communities.

A Neighbourhood Plan can allow the community to have a much greater say in the future development of their community. Environmental risks and resilience to climate change can be planned for through Neighbourhood planning. By highlighting local problems and developing policies for land use, a community can manage the risk of flooding. This can be achieved through landscaping to manage and store water and by promoting the use of sustainable drainage systems. Planting trees can also help towards creating green spaces as they can store water, and provide shade for people and wildlife.

Neighbourhood planning

Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their Neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area. They are able to inform where new homes, shops and offices could be built and when. The community is able to have their say on what the new buildings should look like and what infrastructure should be provided. Neighbourhood planning provides a powerful set of tools for local people to ensure that they get the right type of development for their community.

A Neighbourhood plan should incorporate evidence from the community to provide safe, sensible and sustainable development that prevents flooding by:

- 1 Providing local knowledge about historic local flooding, the areas worst hit and depth. Allowing mitigation measures to be included within future development proposals. Any development in those areas should mitigate against existing flooding problems and any potential future flooding, instead of intensifying the problem due to further poorly planned development.
- 2 Using the tools available to assess potential site/s for future development. Local planning authorities' Strategic Flood Risk Assessments should be the primary source of flood risk information in considering whether particular neighbourhood planning areas may be appropriate for development. Other important sources include the interactive maps of flood risk available on the Environment Agency's "What's in my back yard" webpage.

- 3 Ensure policies steer development to areas of lower flood risk as far as possible.
- 4 Ensure that any development in an area at risk of flooding would be safe, for its lifetime taking account of climate change impacts.

It is essential to ensure that the flood risk in the surrounding areas of a new development is decreased by the mitigation measures agreed on any new development site. Any development holds the possibility of worsening flood risk in the surrounding areas as more water could run over hard surfaces. The Neighbourhood Plan can ensure developers are informed of areas that are likely to have a problem if more water flows over the area, e.g. if water runs off of a field and down onto a proposed development site, the developer should build in measures that prevent this from happening.

Ensuring mitigation measures include Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) lowering the risk of foul sewers becoming overwhelmed and causing flooding. SuDS often provide a green area that can be used when not holding water and utilising existing green spaces to reduce flood risk such as the village green or parks can be considered.

New home owners should be made aware of their responsibilities to the watercourse behind their fence. Most people are unaware of their maintenance responsibilities of watercourses near their home, even if it is behind the fence they are the riparian owner.

Ensuring the correct consents and permissions are obtained before a development starts. If a development is going to disturb a watercourse it could cause flood problems, ensuring the correct consent and permission is obtained will mean the flood risk has been assessed and measures within the consents and permissions will mitigate the risk.

WHEN CONSIDERING THE INFRASTRUCTURE IN RELATION TO FLOODING, SOME THINGS THAT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED INCLUDE:

- Is the infrastructure sufficient in the event of a flood, and to what flood event extent.
- Have plans been made for maintenance on water courses? (in line with Riparian Ownership rights and responsibilities)
- Is there a gully cleaning or gully watch regime?
- Is there a Community Flood Warden/s and have they had any training?
- Is there a Flood store, should one be supplied on new developments?

Why does Neighbourhood planning matter?

The planning system helps decide what gets built, where and when. It is essential for supporting economic growth, improving people's quality of life, and protecting the natural environment. In theory, planning was always supposed to give local communities a say in decisions that affect them. In practice, communities have often found it hard to have a meaningful say in what goes ahead.

The government wants to put power back in the hands of local communities – those who know best the needs of their local areas.

A plan can strengthen neighbourhoods by bringing people together to identify issues that are the most important to that community and giving them the desire and drive to achieve those goals in their community.



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