Section 19 Flood Investigation Report

Date: June 2024

Version: 1.0

Section 19 Flood Investigation Report: East Hagbourne, Didcot, OX11 9

Date of Flood Incident: 04-05 January 2024

Revision Schedule

Version	Date	Details	Author	Checked	Approved
1.0	14/06/2024	Oxfordshire County Council Draft Flood Investigation Report	David Bell (South Oxfordshire District Council)	Leigh Travers (South Oxfordshire District Council)	Clare Mills (Oxfordshire County Council)
2.0	05/02/2026	Accessibility check	AF	L Travers	C Mills

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This Section 19 Flood Investigation Report has been issued by Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) in its capacity as Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA). It is based upon an investigation by Oxfordshire County Council and South Oxfordshire District Council. The draft report was shared for comment with East Hagbourne Parish Council and Oxfordshire County Council Highways.

January 2024 flood

It was deemed necessary to complete a formal investigation as the flooding of 04-05 January led to flooding of 9 properties in East Hagbourne.

As such the flooding met one of the OCC thresholds for undertaking a formal investigation:

"*-Internal flooding (excluding to basements) to five or more residential properties or businesses within an area of 1km2."*

The flooding followed wet weather between October 2023 and January 2024, with especially heavy rainfall on 03-04 January.

This led to the flooding of the Hakka's Brook in several locations. In addition, high groundwater and flooding in the highway were considered contributing factors.

It is considered that in some cases, improved property flood resilient measures (PFR) could reduce risk and the maintenance of a downstream relief channel may assist with flow.

Conclusion

The flooding in the area was caused by flooding from the Hakka's Brook, which flooded as a result of a wet autumn and winter, followed by especially heavy rainfall on 03-04 January.

Although the risk of flooding cannot be fully eliminated, there are recommendations that could reduce the likelihood and impact of any future floods.

Recommendations:

Recommendation	Lead Stakeholders	Consulting stakeholders
Installing property flood resilient measures such as flood guards, flood walls, tanking, sump and pump systems, air-brick telescopic covers, non-return valves etc. Guidance on PFR measures can be viewed through Ciria document	Property owners	OCC (Flood Risk Management Team)

(C790F) and a link to this document is provided below: https://www.ciria.org/ItemDetail?iProductCode=C790F&Category=FREEPUBS		
Clear a relief channel	Landowner	South Oxfordshire District Council (Drainage Team), OCC (Flood Risk Management Team)
Remove a disused bridge over the relief channel	Landowner	OCC (Flood Risk Management Team), South Oxfordshire District Council (Drainage Team)
Consider relocating utilities running through the Hakka's Brook box culvert beneath Blewbury Road	Utility Provider	South Oxfordshire District Council (Planning and Drainage Teams), OCC (Flood Risk Management Team)
Ensure highway gullies and pipe links are clear and able to flow	OCC Highways	OCC (Flood Risk Management Team)
Set up a local flood group	East Hagbourne Parish Council	OCC (Resilience Team), OCC (Flood Risk Management Team), South Oxfordshire District Council (Drainage Team)

The Water Authority to survey their foul water sewers to check for any obstructions and hydraulic deficiencies	Thames Water	Landowners
Inspect the Hakka's Brook (main river) along its length downstream of Blewbury Road and write to landowners making them aware of their riparian responsibilities	Landowners	EA (Environment Agency)

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Lead Local Flood Authority Investigation

Section 19 (S.19) of the Flood and Water Management Act, 2010 states:

1) On becoming aware of a flood in its area, a Lead Local Flood Authority [Oxfordshire County Council] must, to the extent that it considers it necessary or appropriate, investigate: -
   a. which risk management authorities have relevant flood risk management functions, and
   b. whether each of those risk management authorities has exercised, or is proposing to exercise, those functions in response to the flood.

2) Where an authority carries out an investigation under subsection (1) it must: -
   a. publish the results of its investigation, and
   b. notify any relevant risk management authorities.

The thresholds set by Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) for carrying out a Section19 investigation are set out on the Oxfordshire Flood Toolkit website.
Flood Investigation Reports - Oxfordshire Flood Toolkit

The flooding in East Hagbourne met the criteria based on the number of properties which were internally flooded.

1.2 Site Location and context

This report relates to a flood event at East Hagbourne near Didcot in postcode area OX11 9.

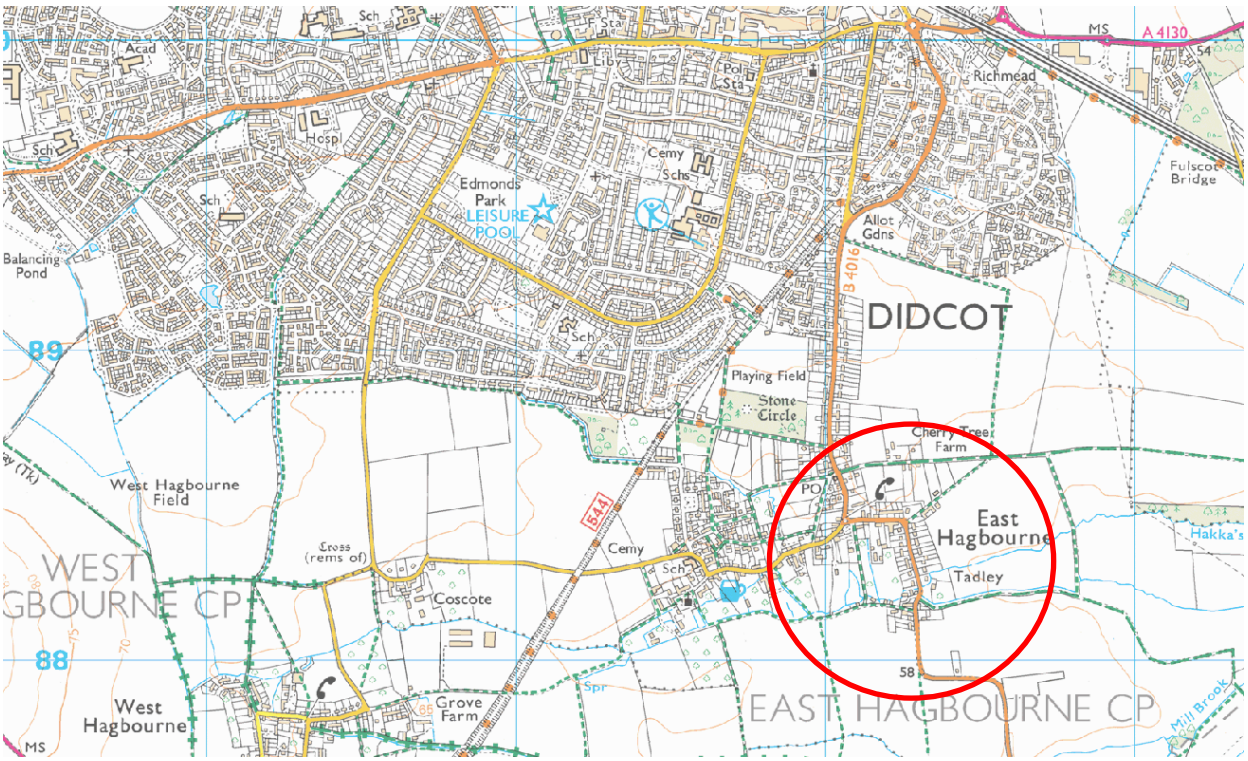

Figure 1 – site location *(crown copyright and data base rights OS(1000018668))*

An ordinary watercourse, the Hakka's Brook flows roughly from west to east through East Hagbourne before it becomes a main river as it leaves the village on the east side of the Blewbury Road. Approximately 4 m east of Blewbury Road there is a fixed concrete side weir structure transfering some of the flow from the Hakka's Brook into a box culvert and onto an unnamed ordinary watercourse approximately 30 m to the south. This flows eastwards before joining the Mill Brook approximately 1.3km to the south east. The plan in Figure 2 shows these watercourses.

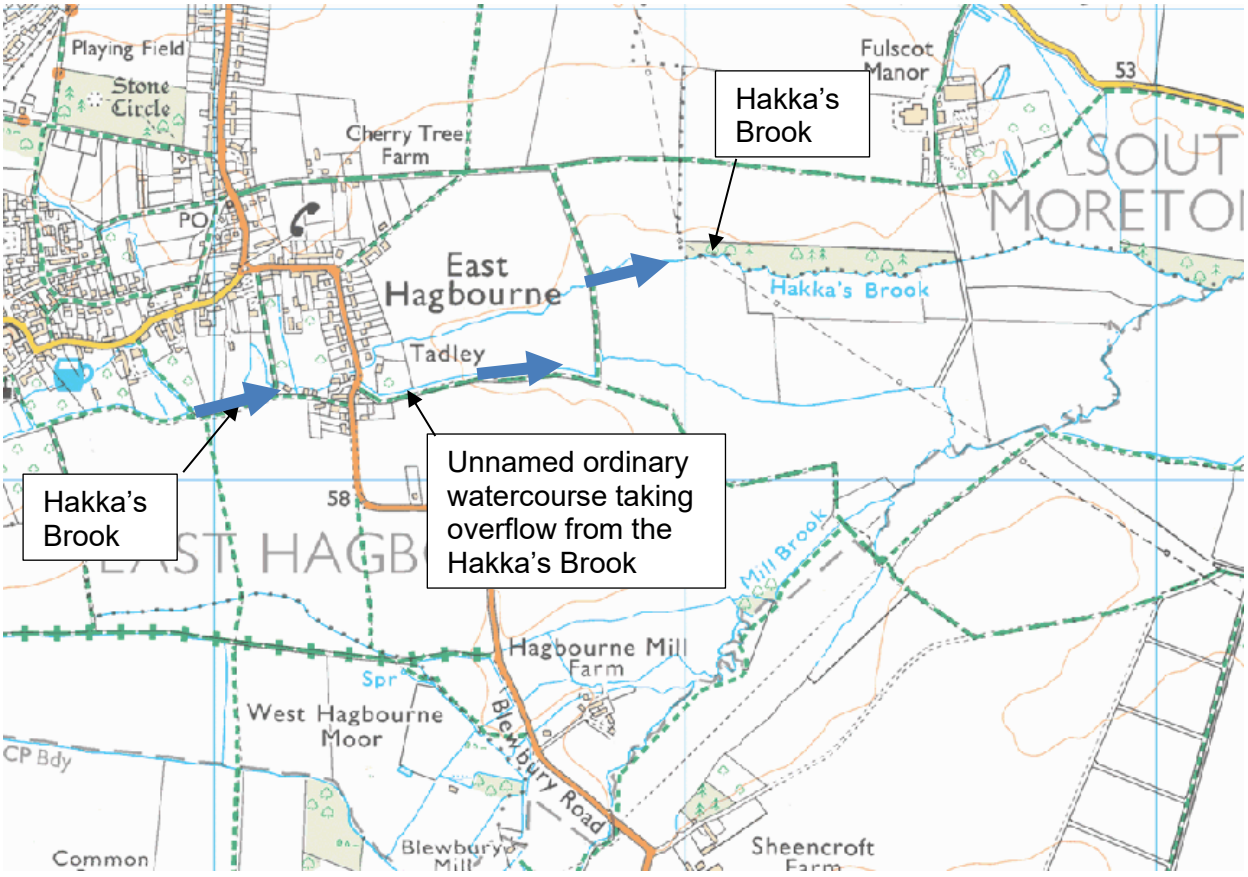

Figure 2: Key watercourses and direction of flow (blue arrows) - source South Oxfordshire District Council using OS base mapping under license © Crown copyright and database rights 2024 Ordnance Survey 100018668

This area of East Hagbourne is shown to be located in a mixture of flood zones with areas along the Hakka's Brook corridor within Flood Zone 3, i.e. the zone with a potential risk of flooding of greater than 1% in any given year and categorised as high risk. The flood zone map is shown in Figure 3.

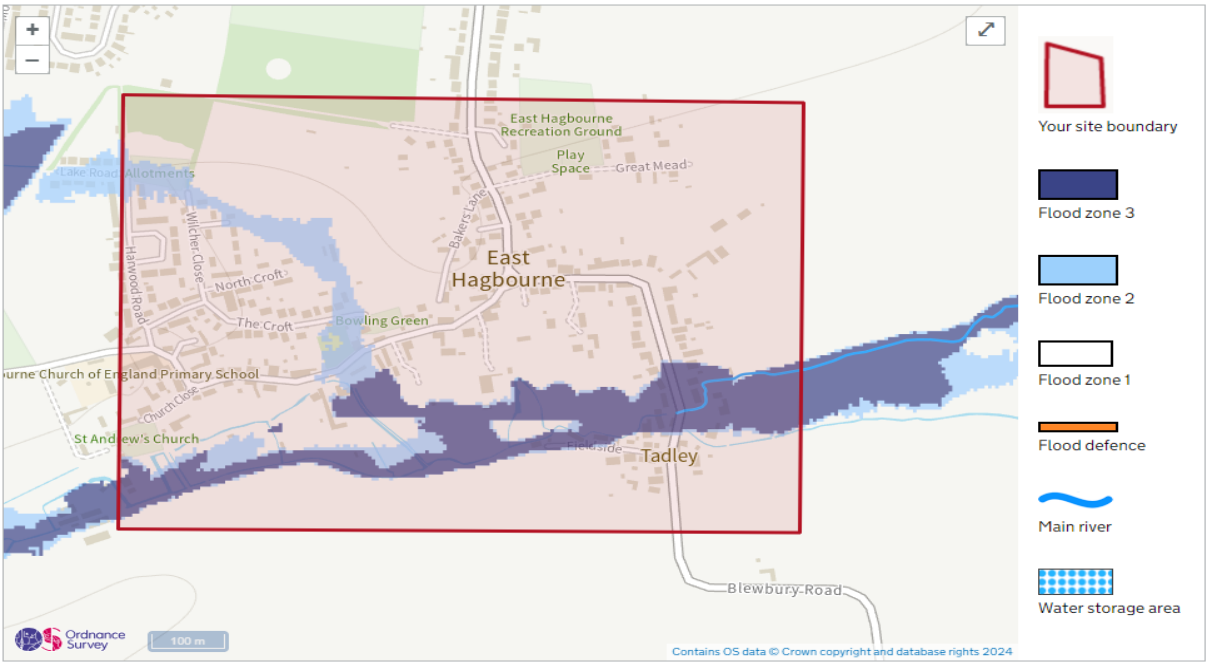

Figure 3 –Risk of flooding from rivers and the sea (showing flood risk from the Hakka's Brook) - source Environment Agency.

Similar areas of East Hagbourne are shown to be at risk of surface water flooding. These are shown on the map in Figure 4.

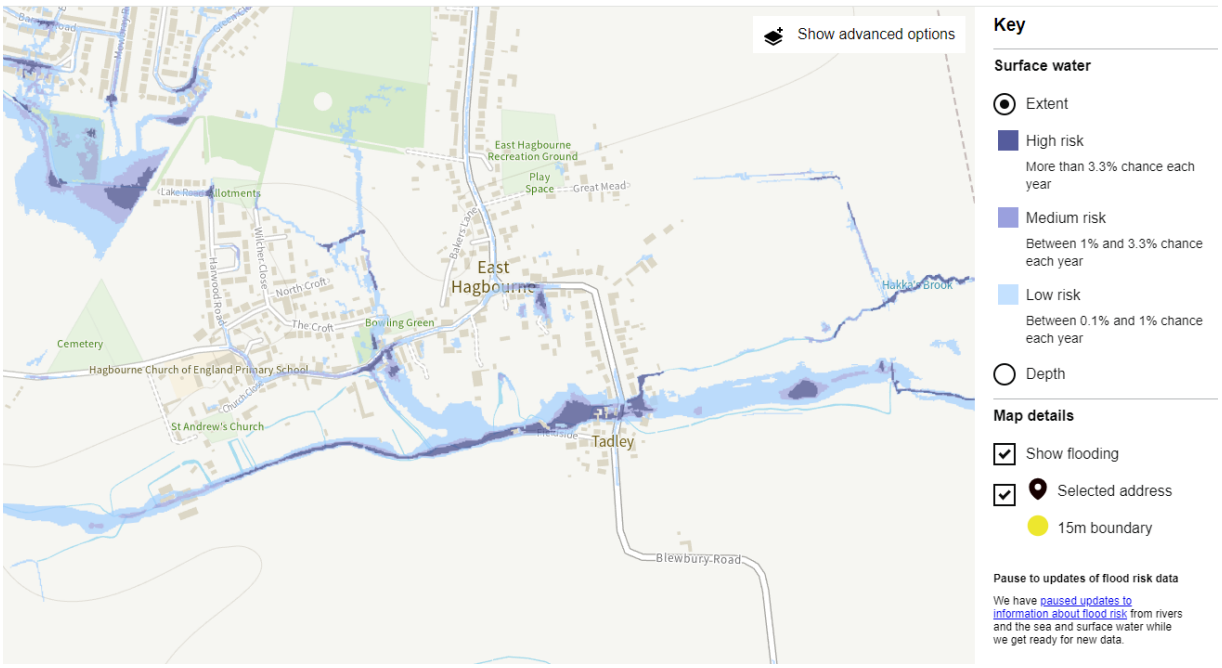

Figure 4 – Flood map for surface water – source Environment Agency © Crown copyright and database rights 2024 OS AC0000807064.

1.3 Geology

Based on national geology mapping data, East Hagbourne is located on Upper Greensand Formation consisting of siltstone and sandstone. This sedimentary bedrock can be quite variable in terms of groundwater transmission. Springs do form within the deposits in West Hagbourne Moor to the south of the village. There are also superficial deposits of alluvium along the Hakka's Brook corridor.

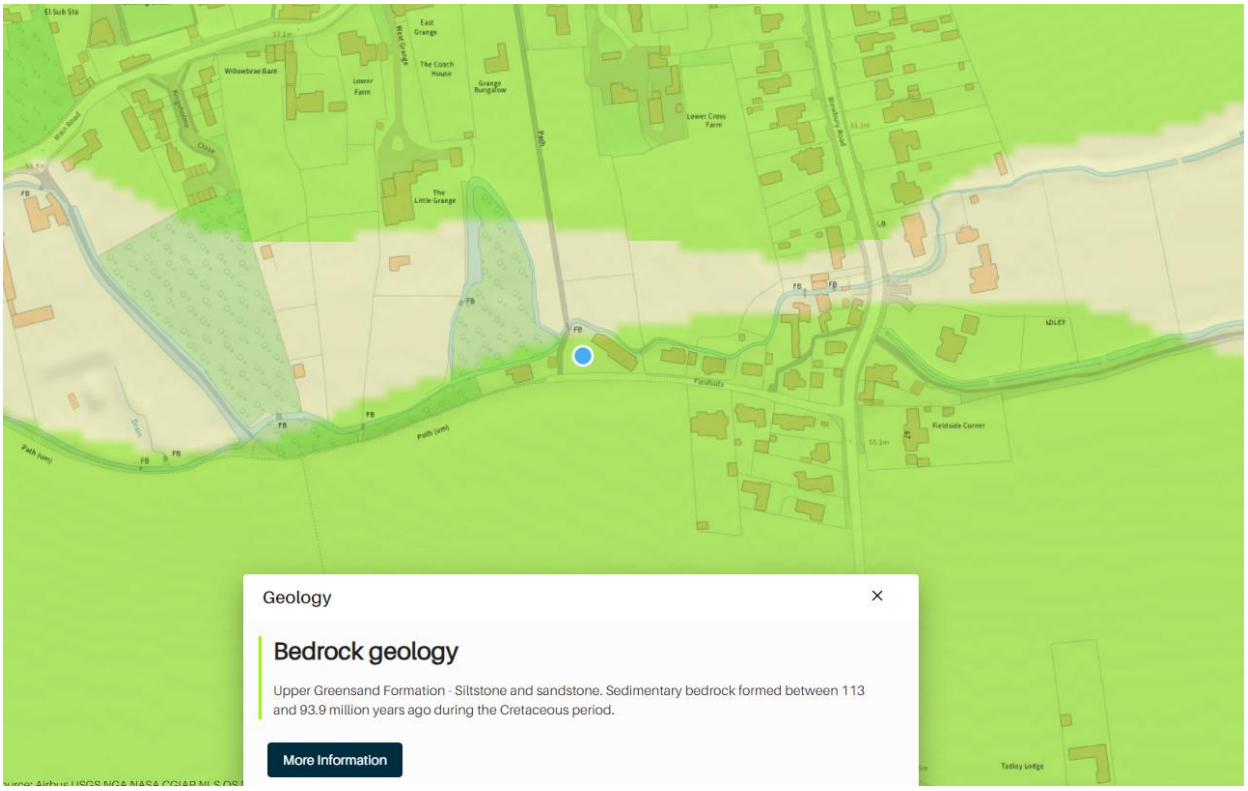

Figure 5 – Bedrock geology details – source British Geological Society © NERC 2011 and Crown copyright and database rights 2024 OS AC0000807064.

2. RECENT FLOOD ISSUES AND INVESTIGATION

2.1 Summary of January 2024 Floods

It was necessary to complete a formal investigation into the flood as the flooding of Storm Henk led to internal flooding of more than 5 properties in East Hagbourne.

As such the flooding met one of our thresholds for undertaking a formal investigation:

"*Internal flooding (excluding to basements) to five or more residential properties or businesses within an area of 1km2."*

The flooding was caused by wet weather between October 2023 and January 2024, followed by especially heavy rainfall on 03 to 04 January.

This led to the flooding of the Hakka's Brook in several locations. In addition, high groundwater and flooding in the highway were considered contributing factors with some residents reporting water entering their property before the stream breached its banks.

It is noted that one property was not flooded from the watercourse, but instead water rising into the property. In this case, pumps located to pump water over a flood protection wall were of inadequate capacity. It was confirmed that advice was being sought to improve measures in this instance.

Other residents indicated that flooding was potentially caused by sub-optimal flow conditions in the channels downstream of Blewbury Road and inability for water to drain away from the highway and into the relief channel.

Some residents also confirmed that foul drainage was affected during the event with flooding and inability of toilets to be flushed.

2.2 Rainfall and river data analysis

To help understand the cause of the January 2024 flooding rainfall and river flow data for the surrounding area has been reviewed.

The nearest rain gauge for which data is available is Abingdon rain gauge. There are no river level gauges on the Hakka's Brook.

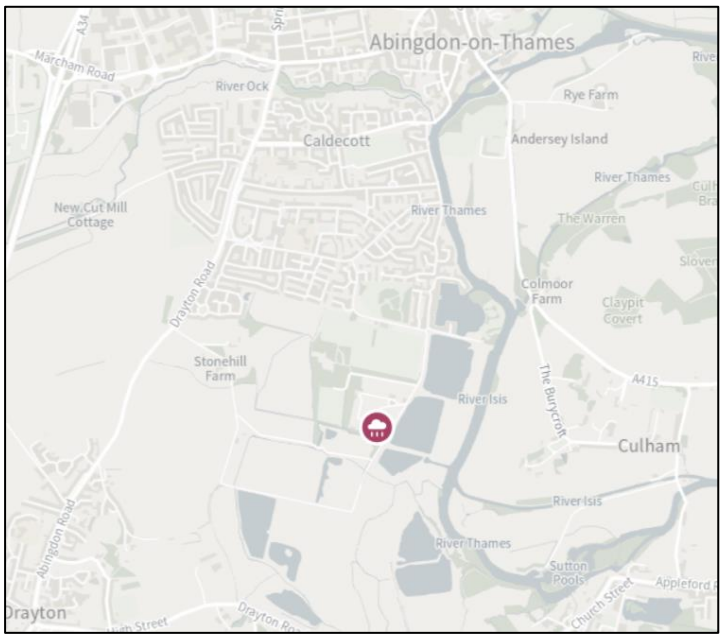

Figure 5 - Location of Abingdon rain gauge – source Environment Agency (https://environment.data.gov.uk/hydrology/explore)

The rainfall summary below shows that high levels of rainfall occurred across much of the country, including in Oxfordshire between the end of October 2023 and start of January 2024.

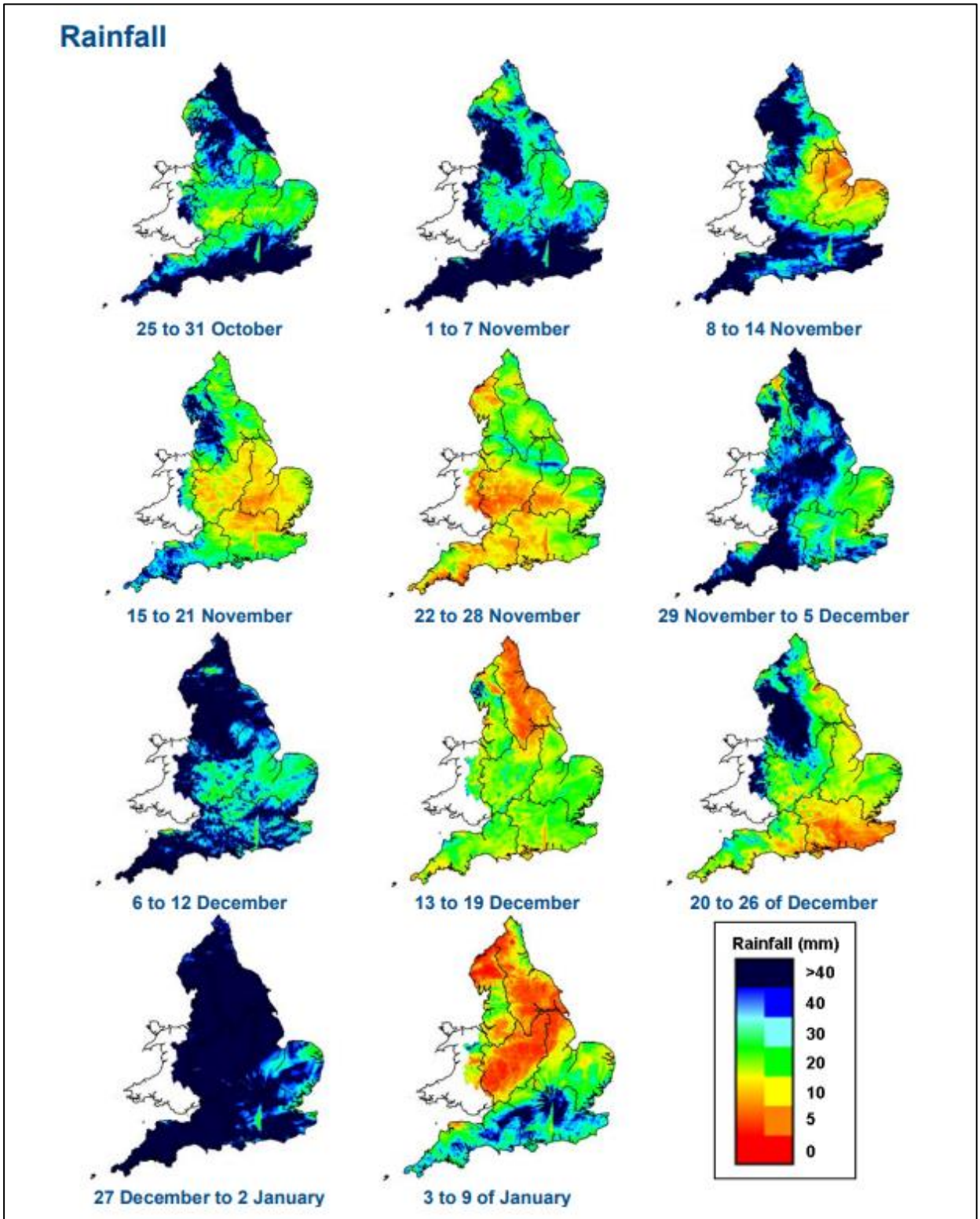

Figure 1 Weekly precipitation across England and Wales for the past 11 weeks. UKPP radar data (Source: Met Office © Crown Copyright, 2023). Note: Images may sometimes include straight lines originating from the centre of the radar, resulting from tall trees and buildings located near the radar installation affecting its performance. This does not reflect actual conditions on the ground. Crown copyright. All rights reserved. Environment Agency, 100024198, 2023.

Figure 6: Rainfall summary for England for the weeks leading up to flooding of 04 to 05 January 2024 – source Met Office.

There was regular rainfall recorded at Abingdon rain gauge between September 2023 and the start of January 2024, including heavy rain of over 10mm on 12 days.

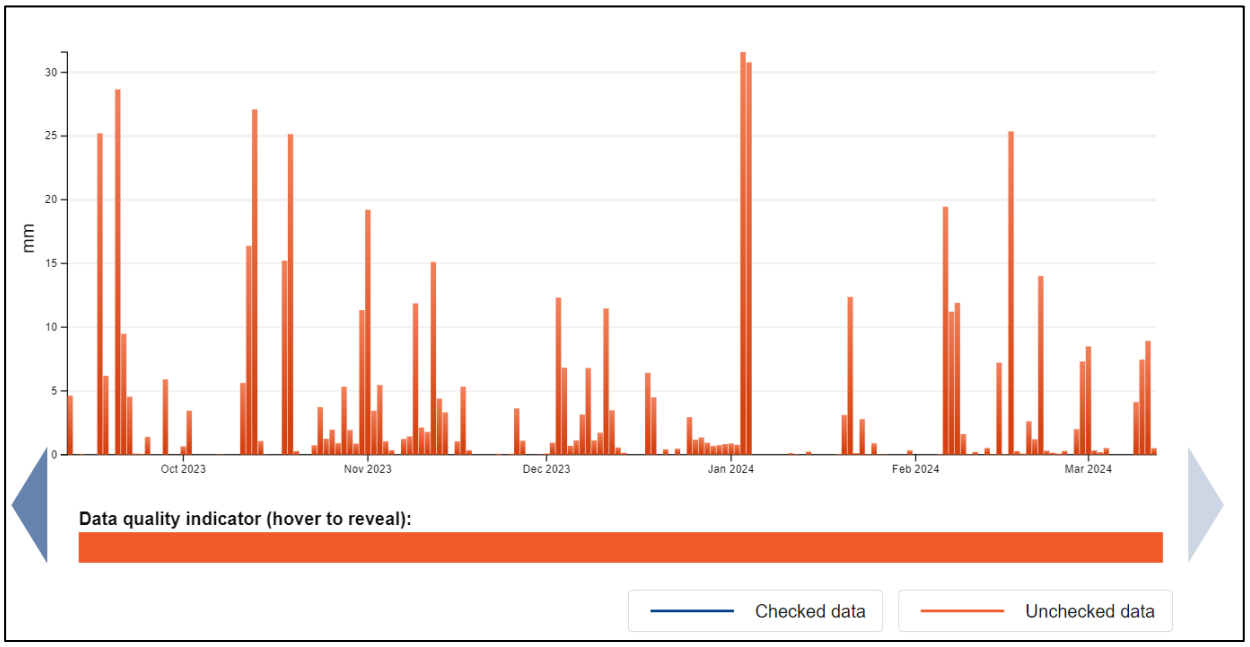

Figure 7 - Rainfall Abingdon Rain Gauge September to March 2024 - source Environment Agency

There was over 30mm of rain recorded at Abingdon rain gauge on both 03 and 04 January 2024, putting them both in the top 20 wettest days recorded at this rain gauge since it opened in 1985. This was the first time this has been recorded on consecutive days at this gauge.

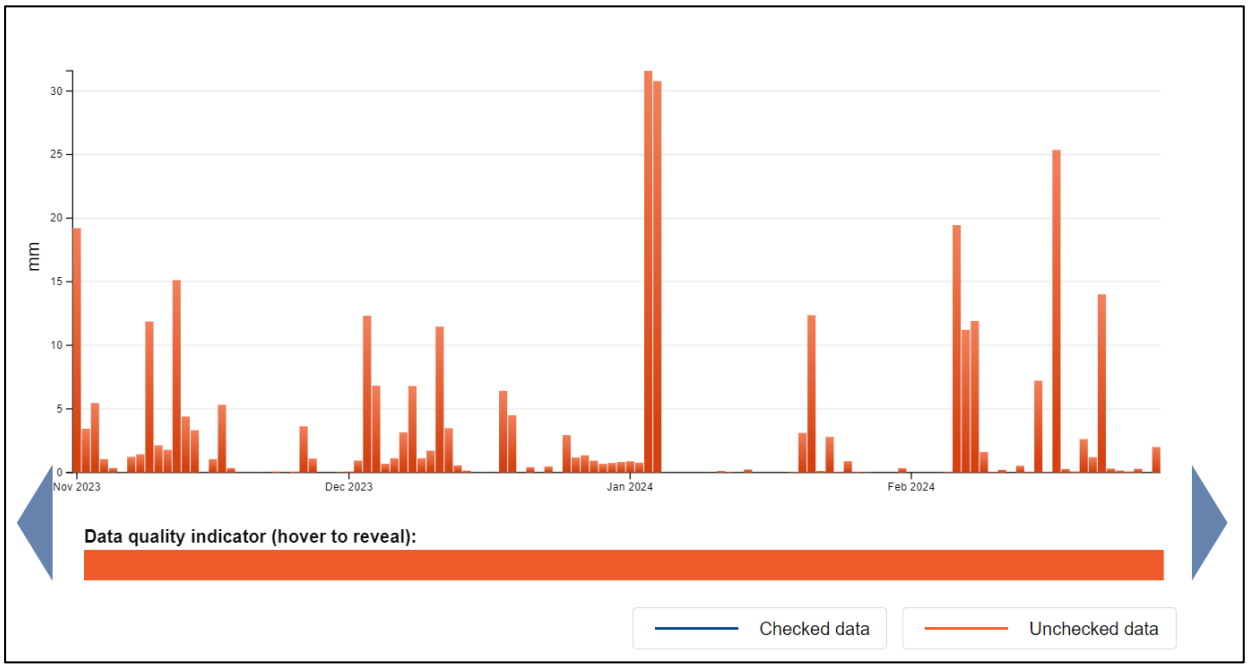

Figure 8 - Rainfall Abingdon rain gauge 01 Nov 2023 - 28 Feb 2024 – source Environment Agency

The data suggests that the flooding of 05 and 06 January was due to the persistent, sometimes heavy rainfall across the catchment and much of the rest of the country in the months leading up to January 2024, followed by particularly heavy rainfall on the 03 and 04 January.

This led to river levels in the Hakka's Brook rising to a point where it impacted roads and properties in East Hagbourne. Surface water runoff from surrounding fields and groundwater following heavy rainfall on 03 and 04 January may have contributed to the flooding too, with local reports indicating that the direct source of flooding of some property was not from the watercourse but instead from groundwater.

2.3 Previous flood events

There are records of flooding affecting East Hagbourne in January 2003, July 2007 and January 2008. These are all attributed to the overflowing of the Hakka's Brook. The worst recorded flooding was identified as being in July 2007.

2.4 Site visits and observations

A site meeting was held on the 20 February 2024 with representatives of East Hagbourne Parish Council, Environment Agency, OCC (Highways Team) and South Oxfordshire (Drainage Team). A further site meeting was held on the 08 April 2024 with representatives of East Hagbourne Parish Council, OCC (Flood Risk Management Team) and South Oxfordshire District Council (Drainage Team).

The observations and discussions on site informed the investigations of the January 2024 floods and recommendations in this report.

On inspection, it was identified that silt levels were high in the Hakka's Brook relief channel potentially affecting the capacity, given that a culvert and highway drainage link to the relief channel appeared partially blocked. It is therefore recommended to survey the section of relief channel to assess silt levels and the extent of desilting required to restore its natural flow.

It may be that obstructions within and to the highway drainage system and its outfall into the relief channel were potentially reducing the capacity and performance of the highway drainage system. It is therefore recommended that the highway drainage is also surveyed to assess its condition.

There was also some vegetation in the Hakka's Brook channel downstream of Blewbury Road that could have reduced capacity. Whilst the responsibility for maintenance sits with the associated riparian owner, the Environment Agency have undertaken some clearance work using their permissive powers.

Utilities are identified within the box culvert beneath Blewbury Road causing reduced capacity during peak flows. It is therefore recommended that the utility undertakers are contacted to review whether these can be altered to reduce the risk of blockage and increase flow capacity. Photographs from the site visit are included below.

Photo 1 – Culvert under Blewbury Road with utilities visible crossing

Photo 2 – Side weir and overflow box culvert on Hakka's Brook

Photo 3 - Exit of overflow box culvert and highway pipe link to relief channel

Photo 4 – Disused bridge and culvert on relief channel

Photo 5 – Hakka's Brook and overflow side weir to box culvert following clearance work undertaken by Environment Agency.

2.5 Flood Model Review

Flood modelling was undertaken on the Hakka's Brook using some updated cross sections as part of a generalized modelling update using JFlow software in 2007. There hasn't been any detailed 1D – 2D modelling of the catchment.

2.6 Remedial Work Undertaken and Proposed

Since the flood incident the Environment Agency have undertaken some clearance of vegetation on the Hakka's Brook just downstream of where the watercourse is culverted under Blewbury Road.

South Oxfordshire District Council have undertaken some survey work on silt levels in the relief channel, as well as undertaking hydraulic calculations on the disused access bridge to assess siltation, requirements for removing silt and hydraulic performance of the disused access bridge. The Parish Council have applied to Oxfordshire County Council LLFA team for funding to undertake desilting and to remove the disused access bridge in this location and were successful in the application. It is therefore proposed to undertake this work once surveys have been completed and a Contractor can be appointed.

To date, Oxfordshire County Council Highways have surveyed and pressure jetted their highway drainage system to remove any obstructions. Moving forwards, they are investigating options to improve the performance of the highway drainage system.

3.0 CONCLUSION

The flooding on 04 to 05 January 2024 was caused by very heavy rainfall on 03 to 04 January following a wet autumn and winter. Flooding occurred in various areas of Oxfordshire including East Hagbourne.

Flooding in East Hagbourne occurred as a result of the Hakka's Brook breaching its banks, rising groundwater and inability for water to drain away from the Blewbury Road.

Whilst it may not be possible to fully eliminate the risk of flooding to this site, there are recommendations that can be made that could reduce the likelihood and impact of flooding.

All relevant organisations will be invited to respond to the recommendations made to them in this report.

In relation to this flooding OCC has carried out its duty to undertake a Section 19 flood report.

Section 19 (S.19) of the Flood and Water Management Act (F&WMA) states:

1) On becoming aware of a flood in its area, a Lead Local Flood Authority must, to the extent that it considers it necessary or appropriate, investigate: -

   a. which risk management authorities have relevant flood risk management functions
   OCC is the lead risk management authority in relation to flooding from ordinary watercourses and surface water. The Environment Agency leads in relation to flooding from main rivers.

   b. whether each of those risk management authorities has exercised, or is proposing to exercise, those functions in response to the flood.

   OCC has exercised is function to investigate the flooding of January 2024. We will also under our functions as Lead Local Flood Authority, Highways Authority and landowner consider the recommendations of this report.

2) Where an authority carries out an investigation under subsection (1) it must: -
   a. publish the results of its investigation

   This report is published on the Oxfordshire Flood Risk Management Toolkit - Oxfordshire County Council – Flood Toolkit (oxfordshirefloodtoolkit.com)

   b. notify any relevant risk management authorities.

   Relevant teams and individuals within OCC as the Lead Local Flood Authority have been notified and provided with this report. The draft report was shared for comment with East Hagbourne Parish Council,

OCC Highways, South Oxfordshire District Council, Thames Water and the Environment Agency. All relevant organisations will be notified of recommendations made to them in this report and invited to respond to them.

4.0 RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Communities and Residents

Communities may consist of the Town or Parish Council, Flood Forum, Community Group and affected residents, amongst others.

Communities and residents who are aware that they are at risk of flooding should take action to ensure that they and their properties are protected.

Community resilience is important in providing information and support to each other if flooding is anticipated. Actions taken can include subscribing to MET Office email alerts for weather warnings, nominating a Community Flood Warden, producing a community flood plan, implementing property level protection and moving valuable items to higher ground. Finally, individual households can create their own personal flood plans, such as collating important documents for quick removal from the property, torches, waterproof clothing etc.

Oxfordshire County Council has produced a number of flood guides covering various subjects, some of which relate to this type of flood incident. The relevant guides have been identified and are available at: www.oxfordshirefloodtoolkit.com

Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA)

As stated within the introduction section, OCC as the LLFA has a responsibility to investigate flood incidents under Section 19 of the F&WMA.

The LLFA also has a responsibility to maintain a register of assets which have a significant effect on flooding from surface runoff, groundwater or ordinary watercourses (non-Main River) as detailed within Section 21 of the F&WMA. The register must contain a record about each structure or feature, including the ownership and state of repair. OCC is also required to keep a record of flooding hotspots across the county.

OCC's practices relating to third party assets is to notify third party owners of their asset forming part of a flood risk system, and assist by advising those third party owners on the condition of their assets and their maintenance responsibilities.

As Lead Local Flood Authority, OCC will be looking for support from other risk management authorities, communities and individual home owners to ensure flood incidents are reported, and any assets which have a significant effect on flood risk are recorded on the asset register.

While OCC can suggest possible causes of flooding, and make recommendations to ensure flood risk is mitigated as far as possible, the F&WMA does not provide OCC with the mandate or funding to act on identified causes of flooding or force risk management authorities to undertake any recommended actions.

Highway Authority (Oxfordshire Highways)

Oxfordshire Highways have a duty to maintain the highway under Section 41 of the Highway Act 1980 but subject to the special defence in Section 58.

New highway drainage systems are designed to Highways England's Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (Volume 4, Section 2). They are only required to be constructed to drain surface water runoff from within the highway catchment rather than from the wider catchment.

There are historic drainage systems in historic highways which can become the responsibility of the Highway Authority due to dedication, as opposed to adoption. These drainage systems may not have been designed to any standard.

Oxfordshire Highways undertake regular highway drainage cleansing. Identify and develop a detailed plan of their assets.

If flooding occurs OCC will assess the capacity of the highway assets and identify any areas with insufficient capacity for draining runoff from the highway. Where this leads to flood risk to properties improvement works should be considered.

Oxfordshire highways should assess the suitability of third party drainage systems accepting discharge from Highway Drainage systems and report any unsatisfactory areas to the relevant Risk Management Authorities.

Water Authority - Thames Water Utilities (TW)

Water and sewerage companies are responsible for managing the risks of flooding from surface water, foul water or combined sewer systems. Public sewers are designed to protect properties from the risk of flooding in normal wet weather conditions. However, in extreme weather conditions there is a risk that sewer systems can become overwhelmed and result in sewer flooding.

Sewerage undertakers have a duty, under Section 94 of the Water Industry Act 1991, to provide sewers for the drainage of buildings and associated paved areas within property boundaries. Since the 1st October 2011 the majority of private sewers and lateral drains in England and Wales were transferred into public ownership, meaning they are now the responsibility of the relevant sewerage undertaker.

A public sewer is a conduit, normally a pipe that is vested in a Water and Sewerage Company or predecessor, that drains two or more properties and conveys foul, surface water or combined sewage from one point to another, and discharges via a positive outfall.

There is no automatic right of connection for other sources of drainage to the public sewer network. Connection is therefore discretionary following an application to connect.

South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC)

District Councils have powers under Section 14 of the Land Drainage Act 1991 (LDA) to undertake flood risk management works on ordinary watercourses (non Main River) where deemed necessary.

Under Section 20 of the LDA, District Councils have the powers to (by agreement of any person and at that person's expense) carry out any drainage work which that person is entitled to carry out. Agreement may not be required in certain emergency or legally upheld situations.

South Oxfordshire District Council also has delegated authority from OCC/LLFA to serve notice on persons requiring them to carry out necessary works to maintain the flow of ordinary watercourses under Section 25 of the LDA and receives funding from the LLFA to do this.

The District Council is the Planning Authority and has a role in Building Control and the Building Regulations.

Environment Agency (EA)

The EA is responsible for taking a strategic overview of the management of all sources of flooding and coastal erosion. This includes setting the direction for managing the risks through national and strategic plans; providing evidence and advice to inform Government policy and support others; working collaboratively to support the development of risk management skills and capacity; and providing a framework to support local delivery.

The EA also has operational responsibility for managing the risk of flooding from main rivers. Main rivers are usually larger river and streams and include all watercourses defined on the main river map which can be accessed at https://environment.data.gov.uk/DefraDataDownload/?mapService=EA/StatutoryMainRiverMap&Mode=spatial

The responsibility for maintenance and repair of rivers lies with the riparian owner, but the EA have permissive powers to carry out maintenance work on main rivers under Section 165 of the Water Resources Act 1991 (WRA).

The EA encourage third party asset owners to maintain their property in appropriate condition and may take enforcement action on a prioritised basis where it is appropriate. They may also consider undertaking maintenance or repair of third party assets only where it can be justified in order to safeguard the public interest and where other options are not appropriate.

Further remit of the EA includes;

- preparing preliminary flood risk assessments and flood risk management plans for flooding from main rivers, reservoirs and the sea (Flood Risk Regulations 2009)

- warning and informing (Ministerial Direction to the National Rivers Authority, 1996)

- regulating activities that may affect the risk of flooding from main rivers (Environmental Permitting Regulations (England and Wales) Regulations 2016)

- Carrying out surveys and mapping (Flood Risk Regulations 2009, Water Resources Act 1991)

- reporting to the minister on flood and coastal erosion risk and how the national and local strategies are being applied by all of the authorities involved (FWMA, 2010)

- acting as a statutory consultee for planning authorities providing advice on planning applications, local plans and environmental assessments regarding flood risk from main rivers and the sea (Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015)

Land Owners and Developers

Land owners are responsible for the drainage of their land and controlling any movement of sediment from their land. Legally, owners of lower-level ground have to accept natural land drainage from adjacent land at a higher level. The exception to this is where the owner of the higher level land has carried out “improvements” such that the runoff from the land cannot be considered “natural”.

Agricultural practices by land owners can be considered as “improvements” to the land, so that cultivation of crops or other land uses can take place. Mitigation works are required on improved land to account for the change in natural land drainage and changes to surface water runoff this can create.

Land owners and developers are responsible for working with the Local Planning Authority to ensure that their development is completed in accordance with the planning permission and all conditions that have been imposed.

Advice for developers is available on the Oxfordshire Flood Toolkit.
www.oxfordshirefloodtoolkit.com/planning/developers/

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation	Lead Stakeholders	Consulting stakeholders
Installing property flood resilient measures property level protection such as flood guards, flood walls, tanking, sump and pump systems, air-brick telescopic covers, non-return valves etc. Guidance on PFR measures can be viewed through Ciria document (C790F) and a link to this document is provided below: https://www.ciria.org/ItemDetail?iProductCode=C790F&Category=FREEPUBS	Property owners	OCC (Flood Risk Management Team)
Clear a relief channel	Landowner	South Oxfordshire District Council (Drainage Team), OCC (Flood Risk Management Team)
Remove a disused bridge over the relief channel	Landowner	OCC (Flood Risk Management Team), South Oxfordshire District Council (Drainage Team)
Consider relocating utilities running through the Hakka's Brook box culvert beneath Blewbury Road	Utility Provider	South Oxfordshire District Council (Planning and Drainage Teams), OCC (Flood Risk Management Team)
Ensure highway gullies and pipe links are clear and able to flow.	OCC Highways	OCC (Flood Risk Management Team)

Set up a local flood group	East Hagbourne Parish Council	OCC (Resilience Team), OCC (Flood Risk Management Team), South Oxfordshire District Council (Drainage Team)
The Water Authority to survey their foul water sewers to check for any obstructions and hydraulic deficiencies	Thames Water	Landowners
Inspect the Hakka's Brook (main river) along its length downstream of Blewbury Road and write to landowners making them aware of their riparian responsibilities	Landowners	EA (Environment Agency) / LLFA

6.0 DISCLAIMER

The findings of the report are based on a subjective assessment of the information available by those undertaking the investigation and therefore may not include all relevant information. As such it should not be considered as a definitive assessment of all factors that may have triggered or contributed to the flood event.

Any recommendations outlined in this Section 19 Flood Investigation Report will be for the relevant responsible body or persons to assess in terms of resource implications, priority and cost/benefit analysis of the proposal. Moving forward, these may be included in the action plan linked to this location or a wider area or an organization's future work program as appropriate.

The opinions, conclusions and any recommendations in this report are based on information provided to and obtained by Oxfordshire County Council.

The opinions, conclusions and any recommendations in this report are based on conditions encountered and information reviewed at the time of preparation and Oxfordshire County Council expressly disclaims responsibility for any error in, or omission from, this report arising from or in connection with those opinions, conclusions and any recommendations.

The implications for producing Flood Investigation Reports and any consequences of blight have been considered. The process of gaining insurance for a property and/or purchasing/selling a property and any flooding issues identified are considered a separate and legally binding process placed upon property owners and this is independent of and does not relate to the information in this report highlighting flooding to properties at a street level.

Oxfordshire County Council do not accept any liability for the use of this report or its contents by any third party.

7.0 USEFUL CONTACTS

Oxfordshire County Council (Flood Risk Management Team)

Email: floodmanagement@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Website: **Oxfordshire County Council – Flood Toolkit (oxfordshirefloodtoolkit.com)**

Oxfordshire County Council Highways:

Tel: 0345 310 1111

Website: www.fixmystreet.oxfordshire.gov.uk

Thames Water

Emergency Tel: 0800 316 9800 (select option 1)

Website: www.thameswater.co.uk/help-and-advice/bursts-and-leaks/report-a-leak-or burst-pipe

South Oxfordshire District Council

General Tel: 01235 422422

Email: engineering.services@southandvale.gov.uk

Environment Agency

General Tel: 03708 506 506

Email: enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk