

# Questions on notice

## Full Council meeting 12 July 2023

Question to Councillor Peter Strachan, Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration from Councillor Robin Stuchbury in relation to Buckinghamshire's sewage infrastructure for new developments

I would like to thank the Leader for writing to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in respect of the Council's Concerns regarding the Environment Agency and Foul Water Connections and their impact on new developments and planning applications. I note that water companies have a legal obligation to provide developers with the right to connect to the public sewer regardless of capacity, and note that developers through their own output should not put the existing sewage and drainage infrastructure at risk due to inadequate provision. What opportunities are there moving forward to ensure that the emerging Buckinghamshire Local Plan includes conditions to ensure that with respect to future planning applications, developers are mindful of sewage discharge and drainage and produce detailed requirements in conjunction with the sewerage undertaker at the outline planning application stage?

### Response

Thank you for your question.

Our adopted local plans already include requirements in relation to wastewater discharge and drainage. The main policies of relevance are listed below; there are also further requirements on specific site allocations.

#### [Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan](#)

- I4 Flooding
- I5 Water Resources and Wastewater Infrastructure

#### [Chiltern Core Strategy](#)

- CS4 Ensuring that development is sustainable
- CS31 Infrastructure

#### [Chiltern Local Plan](#)

- GC10 Protection from Flooding in the areas as defined on the Proposals Map and throughout the District
- GC11 Water Abstraction throughout the District

#### [South Bucks Core Strategy](#)

- CP13 Environmental and Resource Management

## [Wycombe District Local Plan](#)

- DM38 Water Quality and Supply
- DM39 Managing Flood Risk and Sustainable Drainage Systems

### **Local Plan for Buckinghamshire**

We are now preparing the Local Plan for Buckinghamshire having regard to government planning policy in the most recent National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This requires local plans to apply a sequential, risk-based approach to the location of development – taking into account all sources of flood risk and the current and future impacts of climate change – so as to avoid, where possible, flood risk to people and property. This includes consideration of flood risk from sewers and drainage issues.

We already work with the water companies, the Internal Drainage Board and the Environment Agency on the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level 1 and Water Cycle Study (Part 1 scoping study, with a more detailed part 2 later on in the plan process).

The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level 1 considers all sources of flooding including fluvial, surface water, groundwater, sewers and reservoirs within Buckinghamshire, now and in the future, taking climate change into account. It informs the flood management policies for the plan and the Sequential Test for site allocations, as well as development management decisions.

The Water Cycle Study provides the evidence base required to demonstrate how water and wastewater services will be developed to meet the Local Planning Authority's growth plans without causing detriment to the environment. It also helps provide evidence for tighter Building Regulations standards for new homes (in terms of per capita water demand). The process is also helping to strengthen relationships between planners, the water and wastewater companies, the Internal Drainage Board and the Environment Agency.

We anticipate the completion of the Level 1 / Part 1 studies in the autumn.

As work on the Local Plan for Buckinghamshire progresses, we shall continue to engage with these stakeholders to ensure robust policies in the plan, both at a strategic level and for site allocations where appropriate.

We will also need to consider the role of development management policies which may apply to most developments (bar some exceptions), although this is an area of uncertainty given the proposals for National Development Management Policies (NDMPs) in the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill. Whether or not we can have locally specific requirements, and locally specific conditions applying to outline planning applications, will depend on decisions on the scope of NDMPs.

Finally, we will continue to engage with the water companies through the review of their own Water Resource Management Plans and Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans.

## Question to Councillor Gareth Williams, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment from Councillor Robin Stuchbury in relation to flooding in Tingewick and the wider Buckingham area

I note that a section 19 flood investigation report was drafted in April 2022 for Tingewick, and you will be aware that since 2020 and the original flooding within the village, there have been two further instances of flooding which impacted residents, whilst Gawcott and Buckingham have also recently been affected by flooding (both also had section 19 flood investigation reports published).

The section 19 report details the technicalities involved and makes several recommendations in differing areas. Noting that some of these recommendations require swift action to be taken, what are the local authority's intentions in respect of addressing the recommendations outlined within the report and what is the timeframe of action given that these incidents now appear to be becoming a common occurrence and not a 50–100-year flooding event?

### Response

We are of course very familiar with the recent flooding incidents in Tingewick, Gawcott and Buckingham over recent weeks. It is right to say that climate change is leading to an increasing likelihood of such intense rainfall occurrences though it will remain as difficult to predict their precise locations.

The section 19 report referenced made recommendations to different bodies and so I will break this down by where these were directed.

The following was allocated to the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) part of Buckinghamshire Council to:

- Appraise the feasibility of culvert improvement options, upstream attenuation and NFM

This action is currently in progress and as discussed with local Buckinghamshire Council members and Tingewick Parish Council, the entire project development process from initial feasibility, through to Business Case, design and finally construction is complex and may take several years. We appreciate this will be frustrating for impacted residents, but the process is set by Defra in central government, and we cannot alter it ourselves.

The Strategic Flood Management Team has been working on the initial feasibility phase of this process over the last year. This has involved appraising the feasibility of a range of large-scale flood alleviation measures. We have engaged with local members and the Parish Council to ask for their input during this process.

Initial findings from the first phase appear encouraging, but there is lots of work still to be done over the coming years. We are soon to commence working on the next phase of the process: the Business Case. This is to provide additional evidence required by Defra, which will take at least a year to develop. This will identify how much funding from Defra we will be eligible for.

We will continue to liaise with local members and the Parish Council as the Business Case progresses.

It is important to recognise that as the numbers of properties in Tingewick are relatively low compared to many other schemes nationally, we may find it challenging to secure sufficient funding from Defra to cover the whole cost of a scheme. Significant additional funding may need to be found from other sources such as Highways or Anglian Water, which may also be difficult.

**The below recommendations were Buckinghamshire Highways, previously TfB:**

- Alterations to kerb levels
- Consider increasing the frequency of gully cleansing
- Consider increasing / improving highway drainage as opportunities arise

**Highways Response:**

Capital drainage funding is currently available for Buckinghamshire Highways to carry out a limited degree of improvements along Main Street, Tingewick. One option is to raise a small proportion of the existing kerbing, including those associated with disused accesses. Where funding permits, Buckinghamshire Highways is also continually considering improvements to the existing drainage system along Main Street and the surrounding areas of carriageway.

**The report also made recommendations to the Community, Tingewick Parish Council and relevant property owners as follows:**

- **Form a Flood Action Group** (Tingewick Parish Council / Community)
- **Create a community flood action plan and formalise any existing arrangements** (Community / Tingewick Parish Council)
- **Prepare a “flood preparedness” information pack for current and future residents** (Community / Tingewick Parish Council)
- **Investigate opportunities for installing PFR** (Property owners or community scheme)

To our knowledge, the above recommendations to the Community / Tingewick Parish Council / Property owners have not been actioned. However, the Parish Council have set up an informal flood group that respond when flooding occurs.

The council’s flood management (LLFA function) is working with the Council’s Resilience Team to try to secure a dedicated resource to work directly with flood affected communities such as Tingewick to empower communities and help them establish their own Flood Action Plans and develop their own Flood Action Groups. This would help the communities build long-term resilience to flooding and facilitate the communities with issues they have identified.