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TIVERTON EASTERN URBAN EXTENSION DRAFT MASTERPLAN

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SUMMARY

A substantial number of properties adjacent to the lower reaches of the Ailsa Brook are potentially at risk of severe flooding, as the proposed Tiverton Eastern Urban development extends over land adjacent to the stream's catchment area. Specific precautions must be identified and incorporated into the appropriate development phases, to control surface water especially during high rainfall periods, often exacerbated by waterlogged land surfaces in winter. One essential precaution, which can be completed at a very modest cost, is to improve the flow capacity of the lower 800m portion of the Ailsa Brook as a precautionary/protective measure. This is not however an alternative to larger scale surface water control measures such as SuDS, adjacent to appropriate building phases of the overall development, and should be linked to control of the stream outflow from Tidcombe Fen, if this is feasible.

NARRATIVE

1. The authors of this document are resident immediately adjacent to the Ailsa Brook (in No 15, Blundell's Avenue), which flows alongside the southern boundary of the garden for approximately 80 m. A similar situation affects, to some extent, all the properties on the southern side of Blundell's Avenue, especially St. Andrew's Church/Church Hall, and house Nos. 5, 7, 9, 9A, 13 & 23, 25 & 27. Property Nos. 17, 19 and 21 are more elevated and have no stream boundary. The properties in Horsden Terrace, west of Blundell's Avenue and adjacent to Blundell's Road, also all have gardens (and in some cases outbuildings) immediately next to Ailsa Brook.

2. All the properties listed above are, to a greater or lesser degree, vulnerable to flooding arising from any substantial increase in the rate of flow of Ailsa Brook.
3. As far as is known, no significant flooding of property in Blundell's Avenue has been recorded for at least 30 years. In November/December 2012 the stream rose by several feet and the edge of the flood waters came within about 10m of house No. 15, and also flooded a garage behind Horsden Terrace to a depth of c. 150mm. In future it is possible that some of the fairly new properties built on the site of the old MDDC offices (west of Tidcombe Lane) could also be at risk from exceptional flood levels in the vicinity of Ailsa Brook close to the Tidcombe Lane Fen.
4. During dry (summer) periods the stream flow is greatly reduced to a depth of c. 60mm across a width of c. 2m.
5. For the past nearly 20 years, no significant maintenance work has been carried out on the stream bed or banks of Ailsa Brook close to any of the properties listed in this document, except for one section of c. 80m which was lined on the southern bank with old railway sleepers.
6. Beyond Horsden Terrace the stream is confined to an underground culvert where it crosses the large roundabout (junction of Blundell's Road/Heathcoat Way). This culvert has a limited capacity, although it has not been known to flood since the roundabout was constructed. It finally empties into the River Lowman just north of the Tiverton Hotel rear car park.
7. The flood risk map of the Blundell's Avenue area, published by the Environment Agency in December 2009, indicates a moderate Ailsa Brook flood risk adjacent to part of the southern side of Blundell's Avenue and to the west of Tidcombe Lane.
8. In recent years the Ailsa Brook has flooded to some extent beyond its normal channel with increasing frequency, culminating in the highest recorded levels in November/December 2012. On the southern bank it is bounded by the old railway raised embankment, which effectively protects the properties and their gardens on the northern side of Branscombe Road from flood water.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

1. Ensure that each development phase specifically requires the developer to identify storm/flood surface water control/retention works eg SuDS, to protect adjacent natural/existing drainage channels. The local authority should publicise and monitor agreed actions being implemented. Protection of the Ailsa Brook catchment area should be a clearly identified requirement in respect of development phases in the south and west of the overall scheme.
2. Incorporate into the overall Masterplan suitable and listed surface structures to permit controlling all storm/flood surface drainage water even during periods of extreme rainfall.
3. Consider methods of retaining flood water in the Tidcombe Fen catchment area (and possibly the isolated eastern section of the Ailsa Brook) during periods of extreme rainfall/snow.
4. Of particular importance is some means of controlling the rate of storm/surface water flow in the section of the Ailsa Brook between Tidcombe Fen and the Blundell's Road/Heathcoat Way roundabout/culvert. This is already critical and any increased flow rate is unacceptable without some remedial action being taken (see Para 5 below).
5. Make provision for the widening/deepening of the bed of Ailsa Brook (which contains numerous tree stumps etc.) and stabilising its banks where appropriate, between Tidcombe Lane and Blundell's Road. This section is only c 800m in length and readily accessible to mechanical equipment from the Railway Walk. This would be a vital precaution to protect adjacent property from serious flood damage, and a demonstration of practical action by the local authority to mitigate potential adverse effects of the overall urban development affecting long term residents.

Signed.....

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G. J. & M. A. Davies