

Arun Valley Vision Group

Initial Position Statement by Arundel Town Council

In view of the very real risk of tidal, fluvial and surface water flooding in Arundel, there is a need for the “hard” defences along the banks of the River Arun in LTRAS Strategy Unit No. 5 to be sustained.

The main threat of flooding comes from the tide overflowing the river banks to the north and south of the town. If nothing is done to improve the flood defences and assuming that the existing defences are not breached, within 10 to 20 years a total of 168 properties will be at risk, rising to 457 properties within 50 to 100 years. Also, there are 66 houses on the river frontage between the bridges on the west that are at long-term risk of subsidence, erosion or collapse.

There is therefore a need to ensure that the risks to these 523 properties are reduced as time passes, and that any action that is taken up and/or downstream of Arundel in the interests of conservation and land-use does not exacerbate the situation.

The solution to Arundel’s flood risks as recommended by the EA is to maintain and improve the existing defences, as well as to build some new defence embankments. There is however no need to raise the defences through the town between the bridges.

The time scales for the EA’s proposals as set out in the LTRAS are:

To improve the east bank defences between the bridges, and to repair the low spots in the earth embankments to the north and south of the town within the first 5 years.

To build some new embankments south of town in 20 years time.

To build another new embankment east of town, to raise the defences south of the town, and to replace the west bank wall between the bridges in 50 years time.

These welcome proposals nevertheless have some associated problems.

The first is that there is a hydraulic connection between the section of river in and around Arundel and the sections of river to the north and south of the town, and there are risks to Arundel relating to both. For instance, if the flood defence banks to the south of the town deteriorate, then there will be a greater risk to Arundel from the incoming high tides.

Also, if the flood defence banks to the north of the town are not maintained, especially in LTRAS Strategy Unit No. 4, then there will be a greater tidal prism which will increase the flood risk to Arundel due to the scouring action of the faster flow of the river on the outgoing tides.

The second problem relates to Arundel’s size and geography. This means that there are insufficient houses at risk of flooding to justify the Government fully funding any necessary

flood defences. However, despite this, the LTRAS recommendations in the Arundel area add up to a total cash cost of £73m, and they were made without taking any account whatsoever of the availability of money. And, even if that money could be found, and even if the various schemes were to gain EA approval, Treasury rules mean that Central Government would only pay about one third of the total cost.

Therefore some £48m of the money needed to protect Arundel from future flooding must come from local sources under the Partnership Funding rules from the likes of WSCC and ADC, as well as possibly from ATC and any affected householders themselves. This is however a potentially “mission impossible” scenario, and that this makes it doubly important that no actions are taken elsewhere on the lower River Arun which will impact negatively on the flood risk to the town.

In conclusion, Arundel is at risk of flooding, and this risk is expected to increase as time passes, as the current defences deteriorate, as the sea level rises, and as the climate changes.

The EA has recommended that improved and new “hard” defences should be built in and around Arundel over the next 50 years, and stressed that they need to be maintained between now and 100 years hence – all at an estimated, but totally un-funded, cost of £73m.

Thus, as part of the Arun Vision project, Arundel Town Council will be emphasising the pressing need to ensure that a sensible and affordable balance is found between the needs of conservation, land-management and the protection of people and properties against flood risk as time passes.

Compromises will undoubtedly be necessary, ATC therefore hopes that all the partners in the Vision Project will be able to appreciate each other’s interests and – jointly - find sensible, agreed and funded solutions to Arundel’s flood defence-related problems. The alternative could be a major flood disaster in Arundel in due course.

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