Water Quality and Flood Risk

It is important to apply this policy in the context of the Council's Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and Surface Water Management Plan to ensure that all links are made to the aims and objectives of these plans. This will help ensure that the areas identified as at risk of flooding, either fluvial or surface water, are fully considered where applications in such areas are received.

Policy EM4: Flood Risk Management

1. 1. All major developments must be assessed in respect of the level of flood risk from all sources. If development in areas at risk of flooding is the only option following the application of the sequential test, it will only be permitted where all of the following criteria are met:
    a. the type of development is appropriate to the level of flood risk associated with its location with reference to Coventry's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) flood zone maps and advice on appropriate uses within these zones from the Environment Agency and/or Lead Local Flood Authority;
    b. it is provided with the appropriate minimum standard of flood defence and resilience to aid recovery (including suitable warning and evacuation procedures) which can be maintained for the lifetime of the development;
    c. it does not impede flood flows, does not increase the flood risk on site or elsewhere or result in a loss of floodplain storage capacity;
    d. in the case of dwellings, it is evident that as a minimum, safe, dry pedestrian access would be available to land not at high risk;
    e. in the case of essential infrastructure, access must be guaranteed and must be capable of remaining operational during all flooding events.

2. All opportunities to reduce flood risk in the surrounding area must be taken, including creating additional flood storage. In this instance reference should be made to the Councils IDP or Regulation 123 list. In order to achieve this:
    a. the functional floodplain (Flood Zone 3b) should be protected from development and reinstated in brownfield areas wherever possible;
    b. single storey buildings, basements and buildings on stilts will not be acceptable in Flood Zone 3;
    c. all opportunities to undertake river restoration and enhancement including de-culverting, removing unnecessary structures and reinstating a natural, sinuous watercourse will be encouraged;
    d. unless shown to be acceptable through exceptional circumstances, development should be set back at least 8m (from the top of bank or toe of a flood defence) of Main Rivers and 5m from Ordinary watercourses for maintenance access. This includes existing culverted watercourses.
    e. finished floor levels must be set a minimum of 600mm above the 1% AEP (1 in 100 year) plus climate change flood level.

Where a development benefits from an existing or proposed flood defence scheme, the development should contribute towards the capital and/or maintenance of these defences over its lifetime.

1. For sites in Flood Zone 3a, development should not impede flow routes, reduce floodplain storage or consume flood storage in a 'flood cell' within a defended area. If the development does result in a loss of storage, compensatory floodplain storage should be provided on a 'level for level' and 'volume for volume' basis.

2. For sites in Flood Zone 3a, all types of new development behind flood defences should be avoided, where possible, due to the residual risks of breach and overtopping. Development should ensure that it would not prevent the water bodies' ability to reach good status or its potential to do so as set in the Severn River Basin Management Plans and should support, where possible, to improving the status class.

3. A sequential, risk-based approach to the location of suitable development will be undertaken by the Council based on the Environment Agency's latest flood maps, SFRA flood zones and Vulnerability Classification to steer new development to areas with the lowest probability of flooding avoiding, where possible, flood risk to people and property and managing any residual risk.

4. The Exception Test (for use when there are large areas in Flood Zones 2 and 3, where the Sequential Test alone cannot deliver acceptable sites, but where some continuing development is necessary) will apply where development will provide wider sustainability benefits that outweigh flood risk, fully informed by an appropriately scaled Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) which indicates that development will be safe for its lifetime taking account of the vulnerability of its users, without increasing flood risk elsewhere, and, where possible reducing flood risk overall.

5. Land that is required for current and future flood management will be safeguarded from development. Where development lies adjacent to or benefits from an existing or future flood defence scheme they may be expected to contribute towards the cost of delivery and/or maintenance of that scheme in accordance with Policy IM1.

6. A Flood Risk Assessment is required, appropriate to the scale and nature of the development proposed, where the development is:
    a. within a river floodplain, as defined by the Coventry SFRA indicative flood zone maps;
    b. within 20 metres of any watercourse;
    c. adjacent to, or including, any flood bank or other flood control structure;
    d. within an area where there may be surface water issues and drainage problems;

In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, the overall aim of this policy is to direct development away from areas of high flood risk and avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of fluvial and pluvial flooding. Where development cannot take place in areas of low flood risk, a sequential test should be applied in which it is acknowledged that extensive areas of built development fall into the high-risk areas and that the re-use of previously developed land may be needed to avoid economic stagnation. Where in the wider overall interest, development is supported as an exception to this policy with high risk areas, applicants will need to demonstrate that they strictly comply with all criteria of the policy.

The Environment Agency has produced flood zone maps for local and other watercourses, as well as surface water. The maps are based upon the approximate extent of flooding and are indicative only, being based on the best information available at the time. These maps should be used as a basis for consultation and not for decision making. The most up to date indicative flood zone maps are available from the Environment Agency. Additional information may be obtained by contacting the Council's Flood Risk Management and Drainage team, in addition to the maps that accompany the 2015 SFRA.

SFRA maps show both fluvial flood zones and areas subject to surface water flooding in the city. The flood zone maps show the level of risk and appropriate uses within them. The fluvial flood zones are, Zone 1, being the low probability zone where all land uses are considered acceptable; fluvial Zone 2 which carries medium risk and essential infrastructure and where water compatible uses which are less vulnerable are appropriate; fluvial Zone 3 which is the flood plain and only suitable for water compatible and less vulnerable uses. The surface water flooding indicates the areas of the city that are subject to predicted pluvial flood risk within formerly defined fluvial flooding Zone 1. The Council has undertaken a level one and level two Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2015), which has provided the evidence to directly inform the allocation of land for new development over the plan period. This has also provided a basis for a strategic policy to set a framework for more site-specific Flood Risk Assessments (FRA's) by:

1. choosing sites outside flood risk zones as far as practicable;
2. controlling development within flood risk areas and the types of development which may be considered;
3. assessing opportunities to facilitate the relocation of development;
4. incorporating measures to address flood risk from all new developments, such as sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDs), as set out in policy EM5.