



West Berkshire Council
Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) Level 2
North Thatcham Development Area

February 2009



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1 North Thatcham Development Area

1.1 Introduction

This Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) has been prepared to assist West Berkshire Council in its planning decisions for the North Thatcham Development Area. It supplements information and recommendations contained within the West Berkshire Level 1 SFRA.

This document is specific to North Thatcham and the findings and recommendations contained within cannot be applied to other areas covered by the Level 1 SFRA.

1.2 Overview of Flood Risk (PPS25)

The North Thatcham Development Area is situated entirely in an area which is at low risk of fluvial flooding; Flood Zone 1 Low Probability in accordance with PPS25. Consequently, there are no restrictions on the type of development which can take place.

However, development in North Thatcham is likely to be (without mitigation) both susceptible to flooding and increase the flooding from the following sources:

- surface water runoff (high risk)
- groundwater
- local drainage systems

Development could also increase the risk of sewer and fluvial flooding elsewhere.

1.3 Spatial Planning Recommendations

- 1) Consider commissioning a Surface Water Management Plan. The findings of this investigation indicate that the North Thatcham Development Area potentially has a number of problems relating to flooding from surface water. The PPS25 advocates the use of Surface Water Management Plans to help manage and reduce the risk of flooding related to surface water.
- 2) Development in locations identified as Critical Drainage Areas or overland flow paths (see Appendix B Figure 1) should be avoided in line with the recommendations in PPS25 Practice Guide.
- 3) Consult Thames Water regarding the capacity of the receiving wastewater infrastructure. If the infrastructure (sewers and wastewater treatment plants) does not have adequate capacity then there may be considerable impacts on the nature, location and phasing of the proposed development.

1.4 Development Control Recommendations

The following development control recommendations must be incorporated into all development within North Thatcham:

- 1) The site must be developed in a way reduces the impacts of extreme rainfall events (i.e. an event above the capacity of surface water drainage system) on people and property both in the development itself and in the surrounding area.¹

¹ See report 'Designing for exceedance in urban drainage - good practice'. (CIRIA Report C635)

- 2) Overland flow paths for surface water should not be altered unless it can be clearly demonstrated that the risk to both the proposed development and existing development elsewhere is not increased.
- 3) Implement SuDS to ensure that runoff from the site (post redevelopment) does not exceed Greenfield runoff rates (refer Section 6.6.3 of the Level 1 SFRA). Any SuDS design must take due account of groundwater, soil and geological conditions. The Buildings Regulations 2000 state that infiltration techniques should be used as the first option for SuDS where possible. Table 1.1 shows that across the North Thatcham Development Area the potential for infiltration techniques is likely to be low. This implies that attenuation techniques may be more suitable for this area.

Characteristic	Development Site Description	Suitability for Infiltration	Further Comments
Topography	Undulating.	Variable - Infiltration relies on gentle slopes, which will exist in a number of locations on site.	Infiltration into a slope may cause instability through saturation of the ground. Stormwater could also re-emerge downslope.
Soils	Slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils.	Generally poor - Infiltration relies on the passage of water through the soils.	
Groundwater	Unconfirmed, but potentially high in several locations.	Unknown – Infiltration devices require at least 1m of soil depth between the base of the device and the maximum expected groundwater level.	Groundwater to be determined at a site level. Can also vary at site level.
Geology	London Clay.	Poor – Highly impermeable.	Forms majority of North Thatcham solid geology.
	Barton, Bracklesham and Bagshot Beds.	Variable – Will require site based investigations to confirm suitability.	Sedimentary rocks consisting of sandstones, with some clays.

Table 1-1: Site Characteristics and Suitability for Infiltration²

- 4) The use of basements should be discouraged due to the risk of groundwater flooding. Where basement uses are permitted however, the basement must be of a waterproof construction to avoid seepage during high groundwater conditions. It must be demonstrated that any below ground construction does not adversely increase the risk of groundwater flooding to adjoining properties.
- 5) A minimum buffer zone must be provided for open watercourses. The minimum buffer width is 8 metres. Consultation with the Environment Agency is recommended at an early stage to confirm the minimum buffer width required.
- 6) Landscaping and buildings should not be orientated over overland flow paths (post development).
- 7) The surface water management system for the site should be designed to accommodate the 1 in 100 year plus climate change rainfall event. Exceedance flows as a result of more extreme rainfall events, should be designed to be discharged in a

² Table is partly based on information contained with Chapter 5 of 'The SuDS Manual' (CIRIA 2007)

controlled way, which reduces overall risk elsewhere if practicable (as advocated by PPS25).

- 8) Safe evacuation routes from site during flooding conditions should be assured. i.e. during exceedance events. See Appendix H in the West Berkshire Level 1 SFRA for further guidance.

1.5 Guidance for FRA Preparation

Guidance on the production of Flood Risk Assessments is contained within Section 6.6 of the Level 1 SFRA. Further supplementary guidance is provided below, in specific relation to the North Thatcham Development Area:

- 1) Pre development and post development runoff rates and volumes should be calculated. Refer to the Environment Agency and Defra document W5-074 'Preliminary Rainfall Management for Developments' version D (PRRMD v. D) for guidance.
- 2) The development will inevitably require attenuation of excess runoff, this will need to be detailed in the FRA with information such as location, full capacity volume and release volumes and rates. The attenuation facilities should also be suitable for climate change increases in volume and rate of precipitation.
- 3) Approved Document Part H of the Building Regulations 2000 establishes a hierarchy for surface water disposal, which encourages a Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) approach. Under Approved Document Part H the first option for surface water disposal should be the use of SuDS, which encourage infiltration e.g. soakaways or infiltration trenches. In all cases, it must be established that these options are feasible, can be adopted and properly maintained and would not lead to any other environmental problems. For example, using soakaways or other infiltration methods on contaminated land carries groundwater pollution risks and may not work in areas with a high water table. Where the intention is to dispose to soakaway, these should be shown to work through an appropriate assessment carried out under Building Research Establishment (BRE) Digest 365.
- 4) The drainage scheme proposed should provide a sustainable drainage strategy to include SuDS elements with attenuation, storage and treatment capacities incorporated as detailed in the CIRIA SuDS Manual (C697).
- 5) SuDS will be a material consideration in any planning application. The following document has been produced by West Berkshire Council which shows how SuDS fits into the overall planning policy; *Quality Design - West Berkshire, Supplementary Planning Document, Part 4, Sustainable Design Techniques (June 2006)*³
- 6) The risk from groundwater flooding should be carefully assessed and explicitly covered within the FRA. Measures to mitigate identified risk should also be included where necessary.

³ The document is available at <http://www.westberks.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=10503&p=0>

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⁶ Flooding in Thatcham, July 2007 – September 2008 A year in perspective, Final Report, Oct 2008, produced by Thatcham Town Council

Appendix A

Description of Flood Risks

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A1 Fluvial

Risk to Development Area

The North Thatcham Development Area is situated in Flood Zone 1 Low Probability and is therefore not identified as being at risk of fluvial flooding.

Potential Impacts of Development on Risk Elsewhere

Development, without suitable mitigation, can alter the local drainage regime substantially. Typically, following development, greenfield land which previously allowed water (from rainfall) to drain away into the subsoil or pond locally, is replaced by hard standing areas of impermeable material which act to channel water quickly away from the site.

Consequently, both the rate and volume of surface water discharged into local rivers and watercourses can be increased considerably.

If the rate and volume of runoff from the land does increase, the fluvial flood risk elsewhere may be exacerbated. In relation to this development, fluvial flood risk areas adjacent to the River Kennett could be affected.

Frequently, the rate and volume of runoff from one development alone may not be enough to increase the level of fluvial flood risk to a noticeable degree. However, the cumulative impacts of a number of development sites could discharge enough water to significantly increase fluvial flood risk in areas.

A2 Land (Surface Water Runoff)

Risk to Development Area

The Development Area is situated on area of land which slopes southwards towards residential areas of Thatcham (see Figure 2 in Appendix B). Large areas of sloping land are typically associated with the generation of surface water runoff which results localised flooding during heavy rainfall events. There are records from the 2007 floods of significant volumes of surface water affecting this area. According to a report produced by Thatcham Town Council⁶:

“On 20th July Thatcham’s drainage was overwhelmed by the volume of water coming into the town from the north part of its catchment”

The risk from natural surface water runoff is also influenced by the nature of the surrounding ground. i.e. soil type and geology. Impermeable ground conditions prevent the rainfall from being absorbed into the soil and the potential for surface water runoff increases.

A review of the local soil types⁷ and geology⁸ has revealed that the majority of soil north of Thatcham is classed as slowly permeable which is underlain by an impermeable London Clay geology. In heavy and/or prolonged rainfall events this soil is likely to become saturated, a situation that can lead to the generation of high volumes of surface water runoff during subsequent heavy rainfall.

The Thatcham Town Council report states that other activities may have also had an impact in this area:

“More intensive farming methods have resulted in bigger fields, fewer ditches and hedgerows on some land to N of Thatcham – this has reduced the capacity of land to absorb and hold back water”

From the data available it is considered likely that the North Thatcham Development Area that will be at high risk from surface water runoff. The level and severity of this risk will need to be clarified on a site by site basis through a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA). Vulnerable

⁷ Soilscape Maps, Cranfield University (<http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscales/>)

⁸ West Berkshire Council Level 1 SFRA (May 08)

developments should be avoided in high risk areas. Figures E7 and E8 in Appendix E of the West Berkshire Level 1 SFRA contains mapped information on topography, overland flow paths and geology.

Potential Impacts of Development on Risk Elsewhere

Proposed development within this area may increase the risk of surface water flooding affecting existing areas of development in Thatcham, areas which were seriously affected by surface water flooding in 2007 and are now classed as Critical Drainage Areas (CDAs).

As discussed above, the replacement of undeveloped greenfield land with areas of impermeable hard-standing material means that water can be prevented from passing into the subsoil.

On sloping land, this water will flow away from the site and can affect land adjacent. Furthermore, the construction of buildings/structures in the way of existing overland flow paths can re-direct the runoff into previously unaffected locations.

Therefore it can be concluded that the proposed development within this area could increase the risk of surface water flooding in other locations. Existing areas of development in Newbury could be placed at risk. Specific recommendations to identify and mitigate these potential risks have therefore been provided in Sections 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4.

If development is undertaken in line with current best practice, the surface water runoff risk to the North Thatcham Development Area can be minimised. Additionally, the risk of surface water flooding to existing development in CDAs may also be reduced as a result. Development containing an effective surface water drainage system based around SuDS concepts could help prevent uncontrolled runoff experienced during the summer 2007 floods.

A3 Groundwater

Risk to Development Area

A review of information contained within the Level 1 SFRA (May 2008) shows that the North Thatcham Development Area is not an area identified as a Groundwater Emergence Zone. However, there are recorded instances of groundwater flooding in areas in and around Thatcham from sources such as intermittent springs⁹.

A review of the 1:10,000 Ordnance Survey maps shows that there are 'issues' and 'sinks' close to the proposed development area. Furthermore, there are also a number of small drains/watercourses that have their headwaters in and around the area. Therefore, the risk of groundwater flooding in this area must be considered high.

Potential Impacts of Development on Risk Elsewhere

Below-ground structures can obstruct groundwater flows which can result in an increase in the risk posed to adjoining, or nearby properties. These impacts are typically determined by local factors and an understanding of the consequences to development in North Thatcham will need to be ascertained through a site based FRA (see Development Control recommendations).

A4 Sewer Flooding

Risk to Development Area

Information related to incidents of sewer flooding is kept in a register held by utilities companies, known as the DG5 Register. The information is deemed sensitive and details on the nature of individual sewer related flooding incidents are not given out.

Figure C1 in the West Berkshire Council Level 1 SFRA shows the incidences of flooding in the North Thatcham Development Area by post code. According to the figure there have been

⁹ Flooding in Thatcham', Page 58 (October 2008)

1 to 5 flooding within the immediate vicinity of the site. However, it is not known what the nature of these flood incidents was and whether the cause of the problems has been rectified.

Thatcham Town Council maintains that the numbers of sewer overflow incidents are underrepresented by Thames Water.¹⁰

Due to the lack of precise information it is not possible to make an informed appraisal of the risk posed by sewer flooding in this Development Area. Although as the area is undeveloped and is unlikely to contain significant amounts of wastewater infrastructure, the risk it is presumed that the risk of sewer flooding is low.

Potential Impacts of Development on Risk Elsewhere

The proposed North Thatcham Development Area could place the existing infrastructure under pressure. The volume of foul water flows generated from a large development area of this nature may represent a significant increase in the total volume of foul water flows. Consequently there could be locations in the receiving wastewater network that may not be able to handle the increase.

Thames Water should be contacted when outline details of the proposed developments are available, such as number and type of properties, and consequently site discharge rates. They will be able to give an early indication of any potential problems.

A5 Reservoirs, Canals and Other Artificial Drainage Systems

Risk to Development Area

There are no significant reservoirs or canals within the North Thatcham Development Area. There is however a number of small drains and drainage ditches. Thatcham Town Council has reported issues with several of these watercourses which surcharged during 2007 floods leading to overland flows. Obstructions in the channel may have been a factor but it is also probable that the capacity of these channels would be insufficient for extreme rainfall events.

Therefore, it can be determined that it is likely that during high intensity rainfall events there will be localised flooding issues associated with them. Therefore, this is a risk that will need to be considered on a site by site basis, through a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA).

Potential Impacts of Development on Risk Elsewhere

Without appropriate mitigation, the proposed North Thatcham Development Area could increase the response rate ('flashiness') and volume of water entering these small channels. Therefore, developed areas adjacent to these channels in downstream locations could be placed at greater risk, especially where the open drains and ditches enter culverts.

¹⁰ 'Flooding in Thatcham', Page 25 & Page 62 (October 2008)

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Appendix B

Development Area Map

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