

**ALCONBURY FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME
(Report by Head of Environment & Transport)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The village of Alconbury has a history of flooding and most recently 68 properties were flooded in 1998. Flooding of the roads in the village occurs during a 1 in 2 year return period flood event. The 1998 flood event had a 1 in 33 year return period. DEFRA suggests that villages should be protected against flood events with a return period of between 1 in 50 and 1 in 200 years.
- 1.2 The Environment Agency have now published a 'Preferred Option Consultation' in respect of the Alconbury Flood Alleviation Scheme. The Council is invited to submit its comments on the proposal by February 2005.
- 1.3 The Environment Agency consult stakeholders at this stage of the project so that potential adverse environmental impacts of the proposed works can be identified and avoided or mitigated. It is also an opportunity to identify enhancements that may be included in the project.
- 1.4 The scheme is only considering Alconbury at this time and is not including measure to improve flood protection in Alconbury Weston. The Environment Agency cannot justify a project in Alconbury Weston as all proposals fail to reach the cost-benefit threshold required to attract government grant.

2. CONSULTATION PROCESS

- 2.1 The potential effects of the flood alleviation scheme will be considered in an Environmental Impact Statement, with the findings published in an Environmental Statement. This will be submitted to the Council, as the Local Planning Authority, in support of the planning application for the scheme that ultimately will be submitted by the Environment Agency.
- 2.2 A scoping report was prepared and issued in June 2004. This invited comments from statutory and selected non-statutory consultees regarding six possible options for managing flood risk in the village of Alconbury.
- 2.3 This consultation seeks stakeholder opinion on the preferred option presented in the scoping report. A public exhibition was held in the village in December 2004 at which the proposals were presented to all interested parties.
- 2.4 Pre-application discussions are ongoing with the Council's Planning Department. A planning application will be made by the Environment Agency once design of the scheme is complete. The decision of the DC Panel will depend on the balance achieved between the extent of

the engineering works, and hence the level of flood protection provided, and the visual impact of the scheme on the village centre, a conservation area and the impact on heritage assets such as the bridge an Ancient Monument. It will be for the Council, acting as the local planning authority, to decide if the advantages of the scheme outweigh any disadvantages.

3. PROPOSED SCHEME

3.1 The best technical and economically viable option for reducing flood risk within Alconbury is to improve the channel of Alconbury Brook and to construct new flood defences in the village. The Environment Agency report that this option has support from all of the consultees from the earlier Scoping Report. Comments received on the preferred option at that time have been taken into account and incorporated within the current scheme proposals.

3.2 The scheme comprises substantial improvements to the length of river between the A1(M) flyover to upstream of the heritage bridge in the village centre. The detail of the proposals is:

A1(M) flyover to the ford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction of a flood wall along High Street side of brook. • Road ramp across High Street. • Earth bank on west side of brook. • Channel re-profiling and revetment laid to prevent erosion.
The downstream ford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove ford, as it is an obstruction.
Footbridge upstream of ford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove existing bridge and replace with clear span bridge.
Ford to heritage road bridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Channel re-profiling and provide a two stage channel (low and high flows). • Construction of earth flood banks along each side of brook – bank to be routed between trees where possible.
Footbridge just downstream of heritage road bridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove footbridge and central pier and replace with acceptable clear span bridge.
Four arch 11 th Century heritage road bridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New flood walling to tie into existing upstream and downstream bridge parapets. • No changes to the appearance or fabric of the bridge.
Upstream of the heritage road bridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upstream channel re-aligned and ford removed to maximise discharge through the bridge. • New flood banks alongside Mill Road and continuing along Great North Road. • Road ramp on Great North Road. • New flood wall alongside High St and continuing into higher ground through gardens of private property.

3.3 The potential environmental impacts of the scheme are listed in the consultation document, as are the beneficial impacts which will be

realised upon the scheme completion. A copy of the consultation document 'Alconbury Flood alleviation Scheme – Preferred option consultation' is available in the Members' Room.

4. PROPOSED PROGRAMME

4.1 The Environment Agency's proposed programme is:

Environmental Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal Report .	March 2005
Detailed design	Summer 2005
Environmental Statement	Autumn 2005
Planning Application	Autumn 2005
Construction of works	Commencing Winter 2005/Spring 2006

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The Environment Agency take the view that the extensive flooding of properties in the village of over many years, and especially in 1998, will allow them to secure DEFRA support for the preferred option.

5.2 The preferred option on which the Environment Agency now is consulting will provide flood defences in the form of earth banks and flood walls through the village centre and represents a satisfactory engineering solution to protecting properties in the village.

5.3 A planning application will be submitted to the Council in Autumn 2005 for determination by the Council as local planning authority. In that regard the Cabinet must be aware that its response to the consultation will in no way constrain the eventual determination of the application by the Development Control Panel. The Environment Agency will be advised accordingly in any written response made to the current consultation.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:

- a) note that the Environment Agency are unable to advance a flood alleviation scheme for Alconbury Weston;
- b) support, in principle, the preferred option for the alleviation of flooding in Alconbury as detailed in the Environment Agency's consultation document;
- c) note that the proposal will be considered by the Council as the local planning authority later in the year; and
- d) authorise the Head of Environment and Transport to convey their views to the Environment Agency.

Background papers

Alconbury Flood Alleviation Scheme, Preferred option consultation – Environment Agency (December 2004)

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