

Trafford Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

Strategic Environmental Assessment Adoption Statement

September 2014

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Under the provisions of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 ('the Act'), unitary authorities and county councils have been given new responsibilities in relation to the management of flood risk in their area. In particular, the Act established Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council as a Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) with the requirement to produce, maintain, apply and monitor a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) for local flood risk in their area. Local flood risk is that which arises from surface runoff, groundwater and ordinary watercourses (those which are not main rivers).
- 1.2 Trafford Council, as a LLFA, has produced a LFRMS. This strategy:
- Identifies the flood risk management authorities in the Borough and the functions that may be exercised by those bodies;
 - Provides an assessment of local flood risk;
 - Identifies the objectives for managing local flood risk, the measures proposed to achieve those objectives, the costs and benefits of those measures and how they are expected to be implemented;
 - Outlines how the Strategy contributes towards the achievement of wider environmental objectives; and
 - Outlines how and when the Strategy will be reviewed.
- 1.3 The measures proposed in the LFRMS to manage local flood risk include:
- Enhancing the understanding of flood risk from ordinary watercourses, including the Bridgewater Canal;
 - Improving awareness of flood risk amongst local communities, and improving their resilience to flooding;
 - Implementation of 'soft' flood management measures, such as green infrastructure improvements;
 - Development of closer links between local flood risk management and the planning process;
 - Better recording and investigation of flooding incidents; and
 - Better management of the Council's own assets.
- 1.4 A draft version of the LFRMS was prepared by the Council and consulted upon between 17th February 2014 and 31st March 2014. The final version of the strategy, which takes into account responses received to the consultation on the draft LFRMS and subsequent discussions with key stakeholders, has now been produced and will be adopted by the Council in autumn 2014.
- 1.5 In order to ensure that new plans and strategies take into account environmental considerations, the European Directive 2001/42/EC "on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment", requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of certain plans and strategies to be undertaken. The outcome of this assessment is required to be documented in an Environmental Report and made available

for consultation alongside the draft plan or strategy. This requirement for certain plans and strategies to be subject to SEA is transposed into United Kingdom law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the 'SEA Regulations').

- 1.6 This requirement to undertake a SEA applies to a range of plans and strategies prepared by public bodies, including the Trafford LFRMS which meets the relevant criteria in that it has the potential to have significant effects on the environment and is *“prepared by an authority for adoption, through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government, and is required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions”* (Article 2(b)). The LFRMS has therefore been subject to SEA throughout its production and an Environmental Report was published alongside the draft LFRMS for public consultation in February 2014.
- 1.7 Upon adoption of the LFRMS, the SEA regulations require the preparation of a statement which sets out:
- How environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan;
 - How the environmental report has been taken into account;
 - How opinions expressed in response to consultations have been taken into account;
 - The reasons for choosing the plan as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives considered; and
 - The measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan.
- 1.8 This SEA adoption statement considers each of these matters in turn.

2. How environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan

- 2.1 An essential part of the process of producing the LFRMS has been to undertake a SEA to ensure that environmental considerations have been taken into account during the preparation of the strategy.
- 2.2 The SEA commenced during the pre-production and evidence gathering stage. As part of this process, the Council produced an SEA Scoping Report in summer 2013. This report sought to define the scope of the SEA with regard to the LFRMS, and identified the important features of the baseline that should inform the appraisal of the strategy. The Scoping Report considers each of the environmental factors listed in the SEA Directive and includes issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors. It should however be noted that the SEA topic 'air' was scoped out of the assessment due to the fact that the type of measures to be included in the LFRMS were considered to be unlikely to have a significant impact on air quality.
- 2.3 The SEA Scoping Report also set out the proposed methodology for the SEA, giving an indication of its level of detail and scope. Consultation on the SEA Scoping Report took place between June and July 2013.
- 2.4 Stage B in the SEA process involves the main body of appraisal work. With respect to the LFRMS this initially involved the review of a series of options and potential projects by Trafford Council's internal steering group. This resulted in a number of potential projects being eliminated from the strategy, primarily due to concerns that it would not be feasible to implement these measures. These discounted projects are not considered to constitute reasonable alternatives for the purpose of SEA Regulations due to projects being either unrealistic or undeliverable. As such, the discounted projects have not been assessed in this report.
- 2.5 As part of Stage B of the SEA process, the remaining projects within the draft LFRMS were appraised against the SEA objectives set out in the Scoping Report and the findings of this assessment were taken into account by Trafford Council when finalising the draft version of the strategy for consultation. The objectives of the LFRMS were also tested against the SEA objectives, consideration was given to the need to incorporate measures to mitigate any adverse impacts associated with the implementation of the LFRMS and a framework for monitoring the environmental effects of the strategy was developed.
- 2.6 Stages C and D of the SEA process relate to the preparation of an Environmental Report and the publication of this report, alongside the draft LFRMS, to provide the public, statutory consultees and other stakeholders with an opportunity to express opinions on the findings of the SEA and to use it as a reference point whilst commenting on the LFRMS. This consultation took place between 17th February 2014 and 31st March 2014. The Environmental Report demonstrates that sustainability considerations have been incorporated into the development of the LFRMS.

3. How the environmental report has been taken into account

3.1 The findings of the SEA have informed the preparation of the LFRMS and have been integrated into its preparation.

SEA Scoping Report

3.2 Trafford Council produced an SEA Scoping Report for the LFRMS in summer 2013. This report sought to define the scope of the SEA with regard to the LFRMS, and identified the important features of the baseline that informed the appraisal of the strategy. In particular, the Scoping Report:

- Identified and reviewed other relevant plans, programmes and strategies that may affect and influence the LFRMS;
- Set out relevant social, environmental and economic baseline information on Trafford and identified the key environmental issues or problems of relevance to the LFRMS; and
- Established an SEA Framework consisting of objectives against which the LFRMS would be appraised.

3.3 The Scoping Report also set out the proposed methodology for the SEA, giving an indication of its level of detail and scope.

Draft LFRMS

3.4 The Environmental Report was published alongside the draft LFRMS for public consultation in February 2014.

3.5 Within the Environmental Report, each of the proposed projects in the strategy is appraised against the twelve SEA objectives identified by the Scoping Report. In order to ensure that reasonable alternatives were considered, the Environmental Report also includes an appraisal of the option of not including the project within the strategy.

3.6 The appraisal considered the nature of the impact of these projects on the SEA objectives. In accordance with Annex 1 of SEA Regulations, this appraisal also considered the timescale of impact, split by short term (0-5 years), medium term (5-10 years), and long-term (10 or more years). In addition, it predicted the certainty of impact (in terms of high, medium and low); the scale of impact (which ranged from local to national); and the permanence of the impact. The appraisal also sought to identify key secondary, cumulative and/or synergistic impacts; and suggested options for mitigation.

3.7 The Environmental Report has informed the decision about the inclusion of schemes in the LFRMS. It concluded that the LFRMS has the potential to deliver a wide range of environmental benefits and, in particular, highlighted that each of the proposed projects has the potential to have a major positive effect on the objectives that relate to minimising the probability and consequences of flooding and minimising the probability and consequences

of climate change; and some positive impact on the objective of protecting and enhancing the health and well-being of the population. The SEA also indicated that none of the projects are likely to have a negative impact on any of the SEA objectives and helped inform the final strategy by demonstrating that implementing the proposed projects would have a more positive impact on the SEA objectives than the alternative option of not including the project within the strategy.

- 3.8 The SEA has also highlighted that it will be important to consider the impact of flood resilience measures on townscapes and cultural heritage when implementing the project which seeks to improve the resilience of local communities to flooding. This is due to the fact that although the project could reduce the impacts of flooding on heritage assets and townscapes, the implementation of certain flood resilience measures could potentially detract from townscapes and the setting of heritage assets.

4. How opinions expressed and results of public consultation have been taken into account

4.1 Article 6(2) of the SEA Directive states that authorities with relevant environmental responsibilities must be given an early and effective opportunity to express their opinion on the draft plan and the accompanying Environmental Report. In compliance with these requirements, and to ensure that the SEA is comprehensive and addresses all relevant issues and objectives, consultation on the SEA Scoping Report took place between June and July 2013. Comments were invited from the consultation bodies required by the SEA Regulations – the Environment Agency, English Heritage and Natural England¹ - and from a number of other stakeholders.

4.2 Comments were received on the draft Scoping Report from each of the consultation bodies and from one other consultee (The Canal and River Trust). The main comments on the SA Scoping Report were the need to:

- Review additional relevant plans, policies and programmes to identify their implications for the LFRMS;
- Acknowledge that Ramsar sites have the same level of protection as SPAs or SACs;
- Update references to Regulation 48(1) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &C) (Amendment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2006;
- Quantify the designated cultural assets and acknowledge that types of cultural assets are particularly at risk from flooding and flood risk management; and
- Amend the review of key environmental issues to ensure that the canal network is referred to in the Infrastructure and Material Assets section of the report and to acknowledge that strategies concerned with rewetting of peatlands can impact on the preservation conditions of cultural heritage evidence contained within them.

4.3 The SA Scoping report was updated to address these comments. The SA Scoping Report is available to view at www.trafford.gov.uk.

Draft LFRMS Environmental Report

4.4 The results of the SEA of the draft LFRMS were made available for consultation alongside the draft strategy between 17th February 2014 and 31st March 2014. This consultation generated responses from 11 organisations. Comments were received on the Environmental Report from English Heritage and Natural England. A summary of the comments received on the Environmental Report and how the comments have been taken into account is provided in the table below.

¹ The SEA Regulations require the Environment Agency, English Heritage, English Nature and the Countryside Agency to be consulted on the scope of sustainability appraisals. However, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act merged the Countryside Agency and English Nature to form a new agency - Natural England.

Organisation	Summary of Comment	Response
Natural England	We note and welcome that the comments we made on the SEA scoping report have been considered and incorporated into the SEA Environmental Report.	Comments noted. No amendments to the LFRMS or Environmental Report are required.
Natural England	The forestry policy referenced in Table 2.2 of the SEA was replaced by a refreshed Government Forestry Policy in January 2013.	The Plans, Programmes and Strategies review has been updated to take into account this refreshed Government policy.
Natural England	Table 2.2 should also include reference to the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.	The Plans, Programmes and Strategies review has been updated to include this legislation.
Natural England	We welcome that the SEA recognises that measures to reduce flood risk can create new habitats but also have the potential to negatively impact on some aspects of biodiversity and the importance of the high quality agricultural land that is to be found within the Borough.	Comments noted. No amendments to the LFRMS or Environmental Report are required.
English Heritage	English Heritage has produced a document which you might find helpful in providing guidance on the effective assessment of the historic environment in SEAs. SEA Reports should be tailored to the type, purpose and level of plan under consideration and should include a clear and robust understanding of: the significance of the heritage assets within and adjacent to the plan area; how the sustainability objectives impact on the significance of heritage assets; how the proposed policies and alternatives impact on the significance of the heritage assets; what steps can be taken to avoid or minimise any adverse impacts on the significance of heritage assets; and what steps can be taken to optimise any benefits to the significance of heritage assets.	Comments noted. No amendments to the LFRMS or Environmental Report are required.
English Heritage	English Heritage strongly advises that the conservation staff of the local authority is closely involved throughout the preparation of the SEA of the management strategy.	Comments noted. No amendments to the LFRMS or Environmental Report are required.

5. The reasons for choosing the plan as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives considered

- 5.1 The SEA Directive requires the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing a plan to be identified, described and evaluated. Section 12(2) of the SEA Regulations also stipulates that there should be a similar evaluation of all *reasonable* alternatives to the plan.
- 5.2 Given that the Section 9 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 requires Trafford Council to produce a strategy for managing Local Flood Risk, the option of not producing a strategy was considered to be an unrealistic option. Consequently, this was not considered to be a 'reasonable alternative' and was not assessed as part of the SEA process.
- 5.3 In preparing the LFRMS, a range of alternative approaches to managing local flood risk have however been considered. In particular, a series of options and potential projects were considered by Trafford Council's internal steering group. This resulted in a number of potential projects being eliminated from the strategy, primarily due to concerns that it would not be feasible to implement these measures. These discounted projects are not considered to constitute reasonable alternatives for the purpose of SEA Regulations due to projects being either unrealistic or undeliverable. As such, the discounted projects have not been assessed in the SEA process.
- 5.4 Each of the remaining projects contained within the strategy was appraised against the twelve SEA objectives set out in the Scoping Report. In order to ensure that reasonable alternatives were also considered, an appraisal of the option of not including the project within the strategy was undertaken.
- 5.5 The SEA highlighted that the project concerned with undertaking a risk assessment of Trafford's open and culverted watercourses could have a positive impact on a range of objectives. In particular, it concluded that this project could enable more informed decision-making in relation to new development and could highlight the need for improved inspection and maintenance of particular watercourses. As such, the appraisal concluded that this project could have a major positive impact on the objectives of minimising the probability and consequences of flooding and minimising the consequences of climate change. The appraisal also considered that the implementation of this project could have a positive effect on the objectives that relate to the health and well-being of the population; the sustainable growth of the City Region; enhancing the quality of water resources; and protecting economic and social infrastructure. By contrast, the appraisal indicated that not undertaking this study could have a negative impact on each of these objectives.
- 5.6 In relation to the proposed Bridgewater Canal study, the appraisal concluded that the implementation of this project could have a positive impact on a wide range of objectives and would not have a negative or uncertain impact on any of the objectives. Conversely, not undertaking this project would mean that there is less certainty over the level of flood risk associated with the Bridgewater Canal and, as a result, the appraisal concluded that this option would have the potential to have a negative impact on the objectives that relate to

the probability and consequences of flooding; the consequences of climate change; the health and well-being of the population; cultural heritage; the sustainable growth of the City Region; and protecting economic and social infrastructure.

- 5.7 The SEA has also provided additional justification for the inclusion in the LFRMS of the projects that relate to working with AGMA on warning and informing local communities on flood risk and improving their resilience to flooding; implementing the AGMA investigations policy; and the audit of surface water management in the Council's estate. While the appraisal of these projects concluded that they could each have a positive impact on a range of SEA objectives, it also indicated that not including these projects in the LFRMS could have a negative impact on the objectives that relate to the probability and consequences of flooding; the consequences of climate change; the health and well-being of the population; and protecting economic and social infrastructure.
- 5.8 The decision to include the projects that relate to green infrastructure opportunity areas and embedding local flood risk management measures in the Local Plan is also supported by the findings of the SEA process. Specifically, the appraisal indicated that the implementation of these projects is unlikely to have a negative effect on any of the SEA objectives and has the potential to have a positive impact on certain objectives, although it did acknowledge that the level of certainty over the impact on each of these objectives is only low. The SEA did however conclude that the alternative option of choosing not to include these projects in the LFRMS would be unlikely to have a significant impact (either positive or negative) on any of the objectives.

6. The measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan

- 6.1 There is a statutory requirement under the SEA Directive to monitor the significant environmental impacts of implementing the LFRMS. Specifically, the SEA Directive stipulates that *“member states shall monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of plans and programmes...in order, inter alia, to identify at an early stage unforeseen adverse effects, and to be able to undertake appropriate remedial action”* (Article 10.1). In addition to helping to identify unforeseen environmental problems, monitoring also provides important feedback on the success of the strategy and progress towards achieving its objectives. It can also be used to compile baseline information for future revisions of the strategy, and provide information for the SEA of other plans or strategies.
- 6.2 Responsibility for monitoring the LFRMS lies with the Council. This monitoring of the implementation of the measures identified for managing local flood risk in Trafford will be undertaken on an annual basis and will be led by the Council’s internal Flood and Water Management Steering Group. A report documenting the outcomes of this monitoring will be published as necessary.
- 6.3 In order to satisfy the requirements of the SEA Directive, monitoring relating to the significant environmental effects of the LFRMS must also be undertaken. A series of suggested indicators for monitoring the effects of the strategy against each of the SEA objectives have been identified for this purpose and are presented in Section 5 of the LFRMS Environmental Report. To achieve efficiencies and to ensure a consistent approach to monitoring, a number of the proposed indicators are based on those that are monitored to assess the sustainability effects of implementing other plans and strategies prepared by the Council (in particular the Local Plan: Core Strategy) as these objectives are considered to be relevant to the LFRMS. The monitoring will also utilise existing links with key partners such as the Environment Agency and existing survey information will be used wherever possible in order to avoid duplication of effort.