

## APPLICATION A

**Proposal:** Upper Darent Flood Alleviation Project

**Applicant:** Environment Agency

**Ward(s):** Westerham & Crockham Hill  
Brasted, Chevening & Sundridge

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the £29,000.00 funding applied for, as set out in the report, for scheme “Upper Darent Flood Alleviation Project” be approved on the following grounds:

- Strong economic, social and environmental benefits to the community;
- Partnership working with other organisations;
- Majority of project cost secured through different match-funding sources.

### Introduction

- 1 The Environment Agency is the statutory body with responsibilities for regulating major industry and waste, the treatment of contaminated land, water quality and resources, fisheries, inland river, estuary and harbour investigations, and conservation and ecology.
- 2 The Environment Agency is also responsible for managing the risk of flooding from main rivers, reservoirs, estuaries and the sea. They do not lead on managing the risk of flooding from surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses. These responsibilities are for the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA).
- 3 The application for CIL funding was received by Officers on 30.11.2017.

### Description of Proposal

- 4 The proposal is for a flood alleviation scheme for the Upper Darent river. The proposed scheme is located along the A25 corridor between Westerham and Sundridge. The proposal looks to make a number of improvements and works to reduce the risk of flooding to existing property along the A25 corridor. The works will also mitigate the risk of flooding on the highway as well.

- 5 Works proposed include the following improvements:
- New channels and watercourses;
  - Improved drainage;
  - Enhanced flood embankments; and
  - Natural flood management measures at a number of locations
- 6 The project is identified as part of the North Kent River Catchment Flood Plan and Kent Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. It is anticipated that the project would be completed by during the financial year 2021/2022.

### **Funding**

- 7 The Environment Agency estimates that the total cost of the Upper Darent Flood Alleviation project is £330,000.00.
- 8 The Environment Agency has identified a number of additional funding sources and grants to support their application to the Board:
- Flood Defence Grant in Aid from Defra: £145,000.00
  - Interreg Climate Resilient Community based Catchment Planning & Management Project (Triple C Project): £106,000.00
  - Kent County Council: £50,000.00 (of which £35,000.00 has been already spent/committed)
- 9 To meet the funding gap for the full cost of the project, the Environment Agency has applied to the Board for £29,000.00 of CIL funding.

### **Representations and Support**

- 10 The application states a number of organisations that the Environment Agency are working in partnership to deliver the scheme:
- KCC Highways
  - KCC as the Lead Local Flood Authority
  - Medway Valley Countryside Partnership
  - South East Rivers Trust
- 11 The application is supported by the following local representatives and organisations:
- Cllr. Diana Esler (SDC Member for Westerham & Crockham Hill)
  - Westerham Town Council

## Lead Officers Appraisal of Bid

### Principal Criteria met

- Strong economic, social and environmental benefits to the community;
- Partnership working with other organisations;
- Majority of project cost secured through match-funding

### Strong economic, social and environmental benefits to the community

- 12 Firstly, the application sets out a number of community benefits to the area, including social, economic and environmental gains. The applicant has demonstrated that the scheme will have significant impacts, not just in the local project area but also provide benefits for the wider area.
- 13 There are strong environmental benefits which are associated to the application. The application describes a number of works that have already been completed at Sundridge to connect the River Darent with the floodplains, allowing the natural floodplains in the local area to be used and reduce the risk of flooding to residential property and the A25. Improvements to the channel will also allow the flow of water to return to a natural state and conserve the environment.
- 14 There are also significant economic benefits to the scheme. The A25 corridor is an important vehicular route for residents and employers alike who need access to the strategic highways network. The proposal described by the Environment Agency states that the A25 is subject to numerous floods during the winter periods, resulting in traffic disruption and temporary road closures causing the unnecessary delays. These disruptions also have impacts on local businesses, as well as the effectiveness of the public transport network. Improvements to the Upper Darent could mitigate the impacts of flooding from an economic viewpoint.
- 15 Finally, from a social perspective, a number of properties in the proposal area are at high risk to flooding as well as the Sundridge Medical Centre and Village Hall. The community facilities are important assets to the village and the surrounding communities, resulting in limited/reduced access for residents should the A25 corridor flood.
- 16 It is clear that a reduction of flooding in the area would improve the access to community facilities, improve surface access to surrounding towns and villages and enhance the natural environment and its resources. I am therefore of the conclusion that the project does offer a number of social, economic and environmental benefits for the project area and the wider community.

### Partnership working with other organisations

- 17 One of the key criteria for assessing the application is determining how the project will be delivered and whether any additional partners are included in the project delivery.
- 18 In the application, there is mention of strong partnership working, both at a local and regional level. As the national authority, the applicant demonstrates partnership working with the Lead Local Flood Authority (Kent County Council) as well as the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership.
- 19 The applicant states that a Collaborative Agreement has already been established previously with Kent County Council, following the completion of existing works at Sundridge. It has been acknowledged that the Agreement between the two organisations will continue to be in place during the course of the project.

### Majority of project cost secured through match-funding

- 20 The Council has determined that the purpose of CIL funding is to be a “top-up”, to be used in meeting any funding deficiencies or gaps in order to deliver the project. This funding should only be used for “capital” investment, as opposed to being used for “revenue” spend.
- 21 The application made clearly demonstrates that additional funding sources have been sought and secured for the project. This includes a mix of the Environment Agency’s own funding grants, as well as contributions from scheme partners as well as central Government grants (i.e. Defra support grants).
- 22 It should be noted that the applicant has not sought any additional CIL funding from the appropriate town/parish councils (i.e. Westerham, Brasted or Sundridge) to help fund the scheme.

### Other considerations

#### *Planning Permission*

- 23 As a statutory Government body, the Environment Agency has its own permissive powers to carry out works to watercourses under its jurisdiction. The Environment Agency recognises that there might be a requirement for planning permission to be sought in Westerham to carry out some material works. The applicant is currently working on options and design for these sections of the scheme.
- 24 The assessment criteria states that preference of CIL funding will be given to those which have permissions or consents in place before funding is given. It is acknowledged that this scheme does not have all its permissions in place, but this is countered by the permitted development rights that the applicant can administer.

- 25 On balance, I would consider that elements of the scheme could begin in earnest under the applicant's permitted development rights and should not delay the funding for the rest of the project. Where planning permission is required for parts of the scheme, information should be submitted at the earliest possible opportunity to the relevant local planning authority.

### **Conclusion**

- 26 It is clear that the proposed project has strong benefits to the local community, mitigates the impacts of future flooding and will improve traffic from disruption in the future, if the A25 should flood. The proposal is expected to be completed in the next four years. The majority of the scheme will be match-funded from other sources, minimising the funding gap.
- 27 Therefore, the recommendation made is that the Board consider fully funding the request made by the applicant for £29,000.00.

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Applicant's original bid pro-forma

### **Background Papers**

None