

Chelmsford Policy Board 13 March 2025

Feedback from the Waterways Working Group meeting on 29 January 2025 - Chelmsford Flood Resilience Partnership

1. Chelmsford City Council Policy Board set up the Waterways Working Group in 2019 to investigate and examine ways to improve:
 - participation and river use
 - the river environment
 - connectivity and access
2. This culminated in the production of a Plan for Improving the Rivers and Waterways in and around Chelmsford, agreed at Policy Board on 14 July 2022.
3. One of the priorities identified in this Plan was to develop a comprehensive approach to mitigate the risk of flooding in Chelmsford, exploring current and future flood prevention measures, including devices to retain water in the City Centre all year round and improving navigation and recreational use of rivers, whilst also considering the impact these may have on the river environment.
4. Concurrent to this a new approach to improve the flood resilience in Chelmsford was being developed in partnership with the Environment Agency. These aims have now been brought together with the intention that the Waterways Working Group act in the role of a steering group to 'oversee and support this wider project'.
5. The Waterways Working Group, representatives from the Environment Agency, officers and interested community representatives met on the 29 January 2025. The purpose of the meeting was to receive a briefing by EA representatives on the outcomes of the flood risk modelling that has been undertaken to date and the emerging proposals to improve flood resilience in Chelmsford. This will form the basis of an 'Outline Business Case' to be presented to the Environment Agency in due course.
6. The summary provided by the Environment Agency included:
 - a) The Flood Resilience Project for Chelmsford has been established to investigate flood risk and where feasible implement a technically, and economically viable, affordable, and sustainable option to reduce fluvial flood risk for the project area, (defined at Strategic Outline Stage). The project is a partnership between Chelmsford City Council and the

Environment Agency with a common objective to reduce flood risk in Chelmsford and create a better place for everyone.

- b) Chelmsford is located in the catchment of the River Chelmer (area 417 km²) and lies at the confluence of three rivers, the Wid, the Can and the Chelmer. The Can/Wid and Chelmer flow through the city centre, joining just west (upstream) of the Chelmsford Sluice Gate structure. There are large areas of functional floodplain downstream of the city centre, and to a lesser extent upstream. The Rivers Chelmer, Can and Wid have flooded on many occasions over the years with severe flooding occurring in 1947 and 1958.
 - c) The Chelmsford Flood Resilience project has been commissioned to consider alternatives to the previously proposed scheme to significantly reduce flood risk in Chelmsford (Project Appraisal Report, 2010). The only part of the previously proposed scheme completed was a flood defence embankment to protect Chelmer Village (cost £1.8M). The other parts, including an upstream flood storage and control dam at Margaretting on the River Wid, was prevented from being implemented due to landowner difficulties.
 - d) A Strategic Outline Case (SOC) for the project was completed in 2023 and the project is now at Outline Business Case (OBC) stage. The 'optioneering phase' is now underway.
 - e) The technical note and presentation at the Waterways Working Group meeting provided the long-list measures and options to reduce flood risk that are being considered for appraisal at the Outline Business Case stage. The options already assessed at SOC stage will be reconsidered at OBC stage, and further appraisal work is planned to determine if other measures can be packaged into options that together provide more effective resilience.
7. Chelmsford Policy Board is invited to note the discussions that have taken place at the recent Waterways Working Group.