

In March 2016 we received fresh data from an Environment Agency (EA) survey of ground levels along the Dale Close/Trinity Street frontage of the Castle Mill Stream. Comparison of the results of this survey with earlier EA modelled flood levels showed part of the riverbank and footpath to be lower than the modelled flood levels, suggesting that peak (1 in 100 hundred years) flooding could overtop the riverbank and footpath. This indicated that some properties along the Castle Mill Stream could be more vulnerable than we had thought.

However, we noted that most of the actual building levels of the properties along the Castle Mill Stream are higher than the level of the footpath and that this would mean that the current EA Flood Map which shows that in a 1 in 100 flood event water would enter the boundaries of some properties is incorrect. When we discussed this with the EA it was suggested that this aspect of the Flood Map could be challenged with the effect that, if successful, the Flood Map would not show flood water entering property boundaries.

Because this could be helpful to SENDRA members when discussing insurance premiums with house insurers and for general re-assurance including on property values, we decided to consider a Map Challenge once we had obtained data supporting our belief that that in a 1 in 100 flood event water would not enter the curtilage of the properties. Historical evidence is that this area has never flooded since construction.

#### **SENDRA OPTICAL SURVEY - FLOOR THRESHOLD LEVELS**

To obtain the supporting data, in September 2016 we carried out an optical survey of the threshold levels of a sample of properties (with the kind permission of the owners). We surveyed the following properties: (i) Dale Close 6 / 8 / 15 / 18 / 19 / 22 / 24 / 29 / 30 / 31; (ii) Trinity Street 26 / 28 / 32 / 34 / 44 / 50 (48 was surveyed by the owner); and (iii) Sadler Walk 3 / 12 / 18.

#### **FINDINGS**

1. Relative to the EA threshold survey we are all more resilient by about 21cm (8.25 inch).

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

1. Although data from our survey suggests that we are not as vulnerable as the current EA Flood Map suggests, we do not at present feel that a Map Challenge is necessary.
2. Acting in an informal and advisory capacity, we suggest that we would like to review this in 12 months' time because:
  - a) The Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme/Western Conveyance Channel should be under construction and it is designed to minimise the effects of peak flows. [www.youtube.com/user/EnvironmentAgencyTV](http://www.youtube.com/user/EnvironmentAgencyTV) search 'OXFORD'
  - b) It is now confirmed that new EA flood maps, based on revised modelling, should be available in 2017 and these will show that the curtilages of properties along the Castle Mill Stream are not at risk (this is also supported by e-mail advice provided to a Dale Close resident by EA).
  - c) Some residents have recently been informed by EA Floodline Warnings Direct that, "Our latest review shows that your area is at low risk of flooding" and they have been removed from the flood warning service. Whilst this appears to be good news, the EA website shows some discrepancy. Despite being removed from the warnings register, properties are still listed as "being at risk or near an area at risk". We are investigating this via our new contact at the EA. Meanwhile, we are uncertain if everyone in SENDRA received such a letter and would welcome feedback.

We are most grateful to Brian Durham (South Oxford Flood Action Group), who, acting as our advisor, gave up a considerable amount of his own time to assist us. Ian Green, Philip Wootton and Oliver Green were also a valuable part of the survey team. (See photo on Website)

#### **References used:**

- *Wilcon Design Plans for Phase 11- April 1983*
- *Flood Map EA - Westgate*
- *Modelled Floodplain Flood Levels EA March 2016 – (2014 Eynsham to Sandford) Now based on Abingdon not Wolvercote*
- *Footpath & bank levels Castle Mill Stream - EA February 2016*
- *Spot heights along Castle Mill Stream - EA 20 July 2004 (Westgate)*
- *Oxford Property Threshold Study 08272 - EA 2005*
- *SENDRA Optical Survey September 2016*

## SENDRA AGM REPORT NOVEMBER 2016 (CONTINUED)

INSURANCE - On insurance (and property prices), our advice continues to be the following-

- a) Shop around. You should not be paying a high premium for the buildings insurance. Ask your neighbours
- b) Do not accept an increase in premium on renewal without question
- c) Insist that no house on the estate has ever flooded.
- d) Some of the cheapest quotes seem to be available on-line
- e) You can reassure potential buyers that they are safe from flooding, and offer them to take over your existing policy

### DRAINS/GROUNDWATER/SEWAGE- THAMES WATER

Members were concerned about potential flooding from blocked drains, surface water and backing up of sewage. No one knew where the drains, sewers etc. actually were so SENDRA obtained a search from Thames Water.

#### **ASSET LOCATION SEARCH 10.05.2016 - ALS/ALS Standard/2016\_3301781**

*Maps showing location of:-*

*Waste Water/Sewers*

*Clean Water/Water mains*

*Manhole covers and invert levels*

The Wilcon Design Working Drawing (April 1983), which we obtained from Barbara Raw, also shows clearly the layout of Foul Water Sewers (FWS) and Surface Water Sewers (SWS), manhole covers etc.

### HOW RESIDENTS SHOULD REACT to OVERFLOWING DRAINS/BLOCKED OUTFLOW CULVERTS (Castle Mill Stream)

**\*\*\* see OXFORD CITY COUNCIL FLOOD UPDATE LEAFLET AUTUMN 2016\*\*\***

**Blocked Sewers/Drains/Shared gullies** - Thames Water - 24 hour hotline NEW number 0800 316 9800

Thames Water handles the 'dirty' water & sewage.

**Groundwater/Blocked street drains/Pipe grills or Gullies/Clearing debris from ditches** - Oxford City Council Highways & Drainage Team 0845 310 1111 – Clean/Surface water

There may be some crossover, so Thames Water does not mind being contacted in the first instance.

**Pooling of water and high levels of ground water in street drains.** We should monitor this. If there is flash flooding we should take "timed" photographs, and get in touch with Thames Water. If we have evidence that this might be an on-going problem, the gullies might need to be sucked out.

Brian Durham, is reassuring about the proposed management of the Westgate drainage & sewers, which should not impact on our estate.

*I have been greatly assisted in preparing this report by Ian Green, Brian Durham & Ian Norriss (EA). I would like to thank them and also the SENDRA members who allowed us access to their homes. Please continue to contact me if you have any queries. [knight.cam@outlook.com](mailto:knight.cam@outlook.com) or mobile) 07939528894*

CHRISTINE KNIGHT NOVEMBER 2016