

## **Braunton Flood Improvements**

Report of the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

***Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.***

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that Cabinet:

- (a) approve the Braunton Flood Improvement scheme at an estimated cost of £540,000;**
- (b) increase the Place 2016/17 capital programme by £457,000 funded £150,000 from the Place revenue flood risk management budget, £220,000 from the Place revenue budget for flood prevention works, £30,000 from external contributions and £57,000 from external grants.**

### **1. Summary and Purpose of Report**

As reported in the April 2016 Cabinet Report, Braunton in North Devon is one of Devon County Council's highest priorities for reducing the risk of flooding to this frequently affected area. Due to government criteria for achieving national funding the level of Flood Defence Grant in Aid (FDGiA) is limited compared to the overall scheme costs and needs to be supported with local contributions to achieve the required partnership score and make the scheme affordable.

The estimated scheme cost is in the region of £540k including all feasibility, site investigations, design, supervision and construction costs. To date DCC has progressed and funded the costs up to and including the design stage and has a balance of £50k towards the c.£350k construction costs within the approved annual Flood Risk Management Action Plan. The FDGiA contribution has been calculated at £57k, subject to justification and approval, and a further £30k of Local Levy has also been secured. Also, the Parish Council have committed to take on future ownership and maintenance costs of a proposed pumping station. This leaves a shortfall of £220k for the construction of these essential improvements. This report therefore details the urgency of scheme delivery and the request to approve a funding allocation from the Place revenue budget for Flood Prevention Works.

There is sufficient budget available to accommodate this request and it will be a welcome and positive approach in tackling one of Devon's high risk communities.

### **2. Background**

Braunton in North Devon has suffered frequent flooding in recent years causing much damage and disruption to the community. This has generated a visit from HRH Prince of Wales and interest from Cabinet Office, including Oliver Letwin MP. Devon County Council's Flood Risk Management team have been developing a scheme of improvements to reduce the ongoing risk and with expectation from the residents rising that they will soon be delivered. The majority of properties to benefit from the improvements are classified as commercial, which under the government's Flood Defence Grant in Aid (FDGiA) does not

generate sufficient national funding to deliver the works, as it would if the properties were residential.

The most recent flood event in September 2016 highlighted the risk of surface water flooding and the interaction with the water level within the River Caen. The probability of such an event was under review, so the outcome of this incident has evidenced the significance of such an occurrence. As a result, the preferred solution is to provide a drainage system to operate under 'normal' conditions and have a facility to lift the surface water into the river when its level is high.

The main driver for this scheme is to reduce the risk of flooding to the properties in Caen Street which is the commercial heart of the village, but it should also be noted that the flooding of the highway causes much disruption not only to Braunton but also for the through traffic heading in and out of those communities situated to the west of Braunton. A road closure, which will be required during the construction phase, will require a diversion route of approximately 15 miles, highlighting the critical access route that Caen Street provides.

Standing water in the highway is an additional nuisance as traffic flow creates significant bow waves further increasing the risk of flooding to properties and/or damage to the vehicles. The option to deflect water away from the properties and attenuate on the highway is therefore not a viable solution in this area.

A good working relationship has developed between DCC's Flood Risk Management team, Braunton Parish Council and a number of resident representatives. One vital outcome of this is the commitment by the Parish Council to take on future operation and maintenance responsibility of the pumping station.

### **3. Scheme Proposals**

The main elements of the scheme are the provision of an improved gravity drainage system, to remove flows from the highway and discharge to the River Caen, and the installation of a small pumping station to lift the flood flows above the river level when the river level is high i.e. above the outlet of the gravity system. The latter has been proved to be essential following the recent event.

To provide just the gravity system will achieve a standard of protection (SoP) of 1 in 20 years, providing the river level is low and there is a free discharge from the system. Together with the pumping station the scheme aims to improve the SoP up to the 1 in 50 year scenario. This is considered to be a significant improvement in standard that would protect against similar recent events. However, it is recognised that this does not achieve the 1 in 100 year standard we generally aim to achieve with current designs. Any increase to this significant SoP, to benefit the individual properties further, will be the responsibility of each property owner, as required. Some have already provided their own Property Level Protection measures in the form of flood boards, etc.

Failure to deliver the pumping option will leave the community at risk from flash flooding, similar to that which was experienced in early September this year, as the rapid floodwater has no means of release. To deliver a scheme with a remaining risk of further flooding, due to the uncertainties in relation to the river levels present at the time of the event, is therefore considered to be unsatisfactory. The provision of a pumping station will therefore provide that additional line of defence and reduce the risk of standing water on the highway, in particular from the high frequency events.

It is anticipated that the gravity system to improve drainage of the highway will commence early January 2017 and the revised pumping option will follow on shortly after, aiming to be complete before the busy summer tourist period experienced in Braunton.

#### **4. Consultations/Representations/Technical Data**

Throughout the investigation and design process there has been a close relationship between Devon County Council's Flood Risk Management team, Braunton Parish Council and representatives from the community. It has been agreed that a public display/drop-in event will be organised late November/early December to provide an opportunity for members of the public to gain an understanding of the works being proposed, level of risk and raise any issues or concerns they may have.

#### **5. Financial Considerations**

The unallocated Place flood prevention budget, is currently £628k and it is proposed to allocate £220,000 towards the Braunton project.

See below a table of the proposed funding sources.

Prior years costs	£83,996
Place Flood Risk Management Revenue Budget	£150,000
Flood Defence Grant in Aid	£57,000
Local Levy	£30,000
Place revenue budget for Flood Prevention Works	£220,000
Total	£540,996

It has been agreed that the Parish Council will adopt and maintain the pumping station, at their expense, following completion of the scheme.

#### **6. Sustainability, Equality and Public Health Considerations**

All of the flood improvement schemes mentioned in this report will be developed in accordance with the Equality and Environmental Assessments produced in support of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. Each individual scheme will be assessed at the appropriate stage using the corporate, integrated assessment tool, with relevant equality and environmental impacts identified and acted on as necessary.

The works outlined in this report are all designed to improve the protection afforded to communities and individual properties currently at particular risk of flooding and, thereby, support health and wellbeing. More than just protecting the properties alone, it should be noted that flood water has the potential for transporting contaminants, such as sewage; so, reducing flood risk has clear health benefits.

#### **7. Legal Considerations**

All works will be carried out in accordance with the powers and duties assigned to DCC under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, the Land Drainage Act 1991 and any other relevant legislation. The lawful implications and consequences of the proposals and relevant actions will be taken into account through their development.

## **8. Risk Management Considerations**

It should be noted that flooding is already identified as a high risk in the corporate risk register and that these works are intended to address that. All works will be assessed to ensure that all necessary actions are carried out to safeguard the Council's position.

The scheme aims to improve the SoP up to the 1 in 50 year scenario. This is considered to be a significant improvement in standard over a lower cost scheme. However, it is recognised that this does not achieve the 1 in 100 year standard. To increase the SoP to this level would require a much larger scheme, a longer delivery period and a much higher cost. Consultation with the Parish will identify that any increase to this significant SoP, to benefit the individual properties further, will be the responsibility of each property owner.

## **9. Discussion**

The delivery of these essential flood improvements will provide a greater standard of protection and reduce the frequent risk of flooding in Braunton and will have a direct benefit to the 17 commercial properties and the highway of Caen Street.

Further consideration of natural flood risk management on a catchment wide basis will help to support and potentially increase the standard of protection being delivered and will also provide a degree of future proofing against the threat of climate change.

## **10. Options/Alternatives**

In view of the ongoing threat and frequency of flooding in recent years and the growing expectation for assistance, the option to do nothing has been discounted.

The proposed project detailed in this report has been prioritised based on the specific criteria set out in the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy for Devon. All of the schemes have undergone rigorous optioneering to develop the most advantageous and cost beneficial scheme that will maximise protection and resilience for the community.

## **11. Reason for Recommendation/Conclusion**

The frequency of flooding at Braunton has made this a high priority catchment for urgent attention. The level of national funding has been maximised and the opportunity for obtaining local partnership funding from others has been fully explored and achieved wherever possible. In order to deliver these essential improvements and reduce the risk of flooding to the heart of Braunton, including the key trade area and highway network, it is recommended that approval is given to utilise the available funds within the corporate flood management budget.

Dave Black  
Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

### **Electoral Divisions: All**

Cabinet Member for Highway Management and Flood Prevention: Councillor Stuart Hughes

*Chief Officer for Communities, Public Health, Environment & Prosperity: Dr Virginia Pearson*

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

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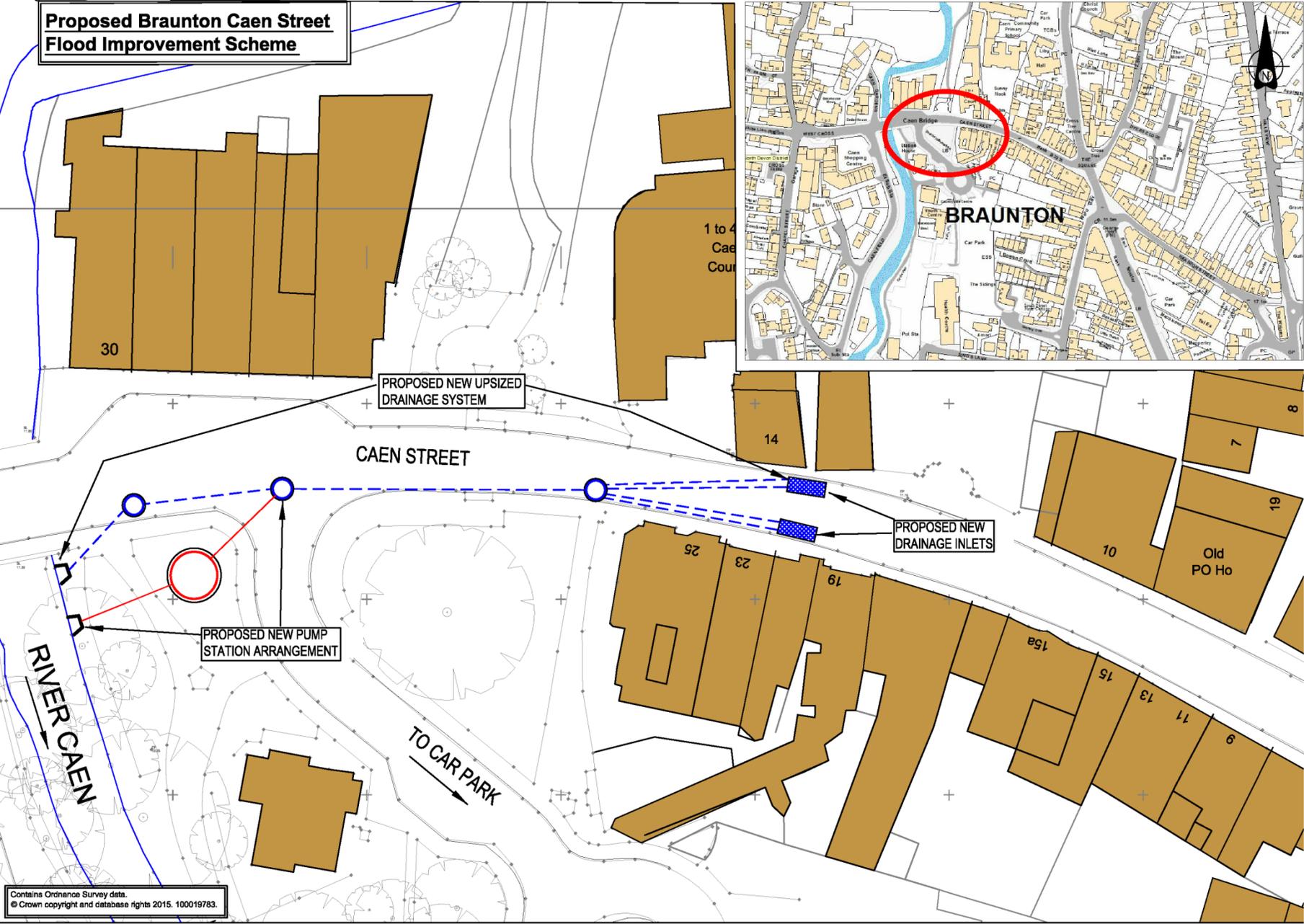
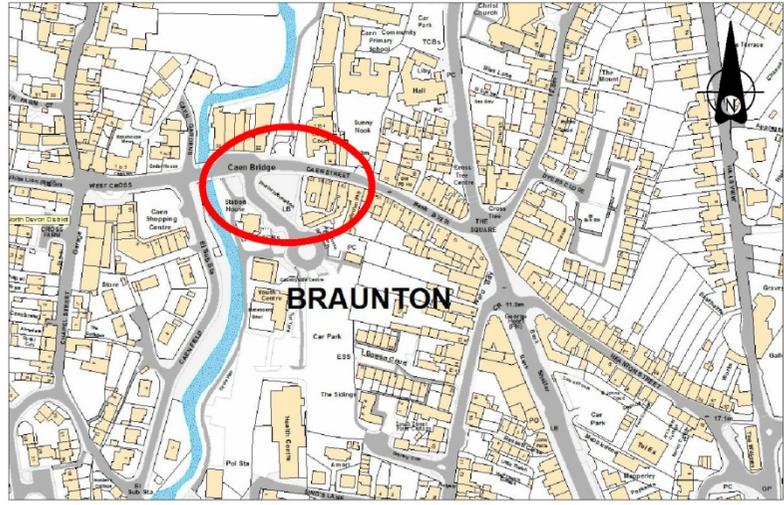
Tel No: (01392) 383000

Background Paper	Date	File Reference
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Nil

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**Proposed Braunton Caen Street  
Flood Improvement Scheme**



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