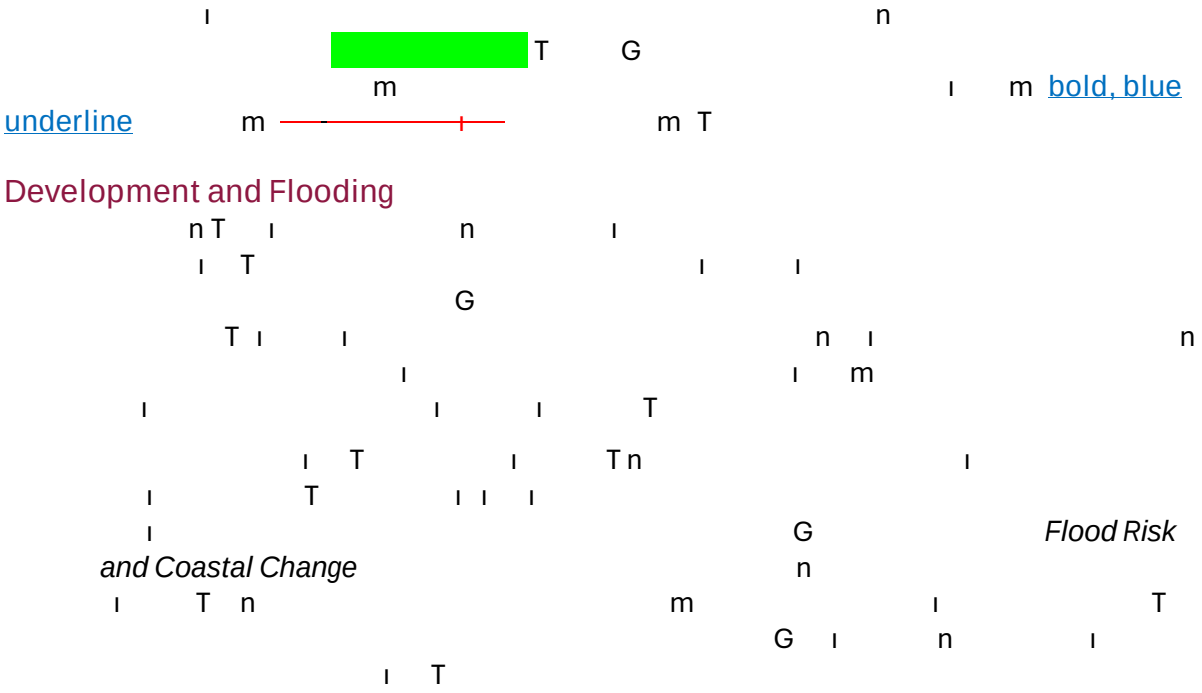
Crawley Borough Local Plan 2023-2024 Strategic Policy EP1: Development and Flood Risk Extract



Policy EP1: Development and Flood Risk

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Flooding is a natural process that can happen at any time in a wide variety of locations, potentially posing a risk to life, property and livelihoods. The risk of flooding posed to properties within Crawley arises from a number of sources including river flooding, localised runoff and sewer flooding.

Development has the potential to increase the likelihood of flood risk if it is not carefully planned and managed. There are areas which are particularly at risk from fluvial flooding as Crawley is crossed by a number of designated main river watercourses that form part of the River Mole catchment. Climate change, and the predicted alterations to weather patterns this will bring, place additional need to ensure development can be considered as safe for its lifetime. Therefore, to ensure that people and places are not exposed to unacceptable flood risk, it is essential that planning decisions are informed by, and take due consideration of, the flood risk posed to (and by) development.

Flash flooding from surface water run-off is frequently an issue across the borough following heavy localised rainfall events. It is a specific issue in Crawley as the underlying clay soil and density of urban development reduces permeability and increases the levels and speed of surface water run-off. This can result in localised surface flooding, and can lead to rivers exceeding their storage capacity more quickly, often resulting in 'flash flooding'. It is the responsibility of the developer to make proper provision for surface water drainage to ground, water courses or surface water sewers. It must not be allowed to drain to the foul sewer, as this is the major contributor to sewer flooding.

The NPPF requires local planning authorities to take a pro-active approach to managing impacts associated with climate change, including flood risk. The risk of a flood event is a function of both the probability that the flood will occur and the consequence to the community as a direct result of the flood. To minimise risks to property, development should be avoided in areas which are at greatest risk of flooding, and directed to sequentially preferable areas of lowest risk. Where, having applied the sequential test, it is not possible for development to be located in areas of lower flood risk, then the NPPF exceptions test should be applied and satisfied. The Exception Test is not a tool to justify development in flood risk areas when the Sequential Test has already shown that there are reasonably available, lower risk sites, appropriate for the proposed development.

To guide the location of development, Planning Practice Guidance: Flood Risk and Coastal Change (DLUHC, 2022) identifies the different levels of flood risk, ranging from land at the greatest probability of flooding (Flood Zone 3b functional floodplain)-to Flood Zone 1, the low probability.

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- Flood Zone 2: *Medium probability: between a 1% and 0.1% chance of river flooding in any given year or 0.5% and 0.1% chance of sea flooding in any given year.*
- Flood Zone 3a: *High probability: greater or equal to a 1% chance of river flooding in any given year or greater than a 0.5% chance of sea flooding in any given year. Excludes Flood Zone 3b.*
- Flood Zone 3b: *Functional Floodplain: land where water has to flow or be stored in times of flood. The identification of functional floodplain set out in the SFRA takes account of local circumstances and has been agreed with the Environment Agency. Only water compatible and essential infrastructure are permitted in this zone and should be designed to remain operational in times of flood, resulting in no loss of floodplain or blocking of water flow routes. Flood Zone 3b is defined as land having a 3.3% or greater annual probability of flooding, with any existing flood risk management infrastructure operating effectively, or land that is designed to flood (such as a flood attenuation scheme). The 2023 SFRA applies a precautionary approach, as agreed with the Environment Agency, using the 2% AEP output to derive Flood Zone 3b.*

The SFRA mapping is based on the 2020 update of the Environment Agency River Mole modelling, though does inevitably represent a point in time. To ensure that the most up-to-date information is considered, applicants should refer, in addition to the SFRA, to the most recent Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning, and should consult with Environment Agency and Lead Local Flood Authority to understand if more recent data is available.

The NPPF seeks to avoid, so far as possible, development in current and future medium and high flood risk areas considering all sources of flooding including areas at risk of surface water flooding. Where it is not possible to locate development in low risk areas, the sequential test should compare reasonably available sites with medium risk areas. Only where there are no reasonably available sites in low or medium risk areas should high-risk areas be considered. As a 'more vulnerable' use, residential development should be steered to areas of low risk in the first instance, before areas of medium flood risk are considered, subject to demonstrating compliance with the sequential test and the acceptability of development through a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment. The Flood Risk Assessment will need to demonstrate how flood risk will be managed now and over the development's lifetime, taking climate change into account and with regard to the vulnerability of its users. Residential development on land falling within Flood Zone 3a will only be acceptable where it can be demonstrated through a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment, that firstly the requirements of the sequential test are met, and secondly that the exception test is satisfied.

All housing sites identified in Local Plan Policy H2 are considered to be appropriate locations in terms of flood risk. This assessment follows early engagement on the Local Plan with the Environment Agency and West Sussex County Council (WSCC). Of the sites allocated by the Local Plan for residential development, Land adjacent Desmond Anderson, Tilgate is partly affected by Flood Zones 3b/a and Flood Zone 2. Land West of Balcombe Road/Street Hill, Pound Hill South and Worth, identified as a housing, biodiversity and heritage site, is subject to a small area of Flood Zones 2 and 3. The principle of residential development at each of these sites is accepted, subject to applicants demonstrating, through a Flood Risk Assessment, that the proposed development has been carefully planned and is acceptable in terms of flood risk.

West Sussex County Council (WSCC) is the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), meaning it is a statutory consultee on planning applications where flood risk is a consideration. In its capacity as LLFA, WSCC published West Sussex Lead Local Flood Authority Policy

for the Management of Surface Water (November 2018), which sets out the requirements for drainage strategies and surface water management provisions