

Our Ref: IMM1000978

27 June 2014

Dear Stakeholder,

Notification of Changes to Perry Barr and Witton Flood Risk Management Scheme

I am writing to inform you of design changes to the Perry Barr and Witton flood risk management scheme and provide an opportunity for you to comment on our approach as we move forward.

2011 – Flood Risk Management Proposals

We previously consulted with you in 2011 based on the published Witton Scoping Consultation Document (SCD). This document outlined our proposed approach to flood risk management in 2011. Some of the key proposals at that stage were:-

- new flood walls, replacing the existing wall along Brookvale road up to 2.8m high;
- new flood walls on the opposite bank from Brookvale Road, through Atlas industrial estate up to 1.5m high;
- new flood walls along Tameside Drive up to 2m high;
- new flood walls along Holford Way up to 1.5m high; and
- new flood walls along Tame Road up to 1.5m high.

We had been developing this scheme through further design between 2011 – 2013 which had led to some smaller amendments to these proposals. However, more fundamental issues arose through a detailed ground investigation during 2013 and so we have re-evaluated the preferred option for the scheme. This has led to a change in approach with the use of increased flood storage being proposed at Forge Mill in order to reduce the amount of new flood walls required downstream through Perry Barr and Witton.

Reasons for Design Changes

During the design development for the flood walls our ground investigation results indicated that the cost of increasing the wall height would be considerably higher than estimated. This was because the ground conditions were softer and more porous than anticipated at a higher level and this would result in the need for major engineering works including piled foundations to reduce seepage. However in-situ pile tests indicated that the underlying rock was harder than expected and meant that piled foundations became impossible or expensive to install. These works were not feasible within the available budget. A re-evaluation exercise was undertaken and the only feasible option identified was to consider upstream storage at Forge Mill and possibly on the Perry Brook.

There are some significant environmental benefits of the proposed new approach. By increasing flood storage upstream, the volume of water flowing downstream is reduced. This means that the walls in Witton do not need to be as high as previously proposed. In addition, foundations do not need to be as deep and so existing foundations can be used for raising the walls.

2014 – Flood Risk Management Proposals

The scheme that is now being proposed can be summarised as follows:

- the scheme now consists of two phases (Phases 1 and 2)

Phase 1

- new flood walls at Brookvale Road up to 1.5m high from road level;
- flood gates on either end of Atlas Bridge;
- new flood walls at Tame Road up to 1m high;
- installation of erosion prevention measures at the toe of the left river bank along Tame Road;
- the removal of Walker Drive sewer;
- improvements to three existing weirs for environmental outcomes.

Phase 2

- increased upstream storage at Forge Mill. We have recently published a Preliminary Environmental Information (PEI) document for the new Phase 2 works.

The Phase 2 works are completely new compared with the information published previously. The Phase 1 works now consist of much less work through Perry Barr and Witton with works at Tameside Drive and Holford Way now no longer required and the height and length of walls at Tame Road, Brookvale Road and Atlas Industrial estate significantly less than that previously proposed.

We have reviewed the Scoping Consultation Document (SCD) prepared in 2011 in light of the design changes for Phase 1. In general, although of a more limited scope the works now proposed through Witton and Perry Barr are similar in nature to that previously proposed as they are still generally new flood walls in an urban environment.

Therefore, we consider that the SCD still covers the relevant issues and remains a suitable basis to inform the future Environmental Statement and Planning Application for the scheme. The design changes, principally in relation to the reduction in the size of the proposed flood walls, would result in a lower environmental impact. In particular, the visual impact from the walls will be much less than that which would have arisen from 2.5m high flood walls. Additionally, the level of tree and vegetation clearance is much less than would previously have been required reducing potential visual and ecological impacts.

Scope of Environmental Assessment

The following key issues were scoped into the environmental assessment for Perry Barr and Witton Scheme in 2011:-

- People and society: Flood risk, traffic and transport, land use, recreation;

- Flora and fauna: Habitats and protected species, fish and aquatic species, invasive species;
- Landscape: Landscape character and visual amenity, vegetation and tree cover
- Surface water: Water quality and ecological status;
- Archaeology and cultural heritage: Known and unknown archaeology, historic landscape and setting;
- Geology and Soil: Contaminated land and ordnance; and
- Materials and waste: Consumption of materials, generation of waste.

Following a scoping opinion from Birmingham City Council it was confirmed that the proposal was unlikely to raise significant issues relating to traffic and transport, air quality and recreation and so these did not need to be included within the Environmental Statement.

We are voluntarily providing an Environmental Statement to support a planning application to be made for the Phase 1 works (for those parts of the scheme which require planning permission). The Environmental Statement will consider both Phases of the proposed scheme. For the scope of the Phase 1 work we intend to follow the scope detailed above. The only exception is that previously noise was scoped into the assessment because of the piling work required for the foundations of the walls. This method will now not be used because the foundation requirements are much less. Therefore, noise effects are not expected and this will be scoped out of the assessment.

The original Scoping Consultation Document from 2011 is available on our website

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/perry-barr-and-witton-flood-risk-management-scheme>

Conclusion

I would be grateful if you could provide any comments on the above matters including specifically the scope of the environmental assessment.

I would happy to discuss the scheme further if you wish to contact me using the details below.

Yours sincerely,

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