

Flooding in Farnham – Winter 2013/14

This short report aims to draw together a picture of the nature of the flooding experienced in the wards of Farnham Town Council. Not every collection of water in extreme events can be avoided but risks with significant consequences can be proportionately mitigated. There are some ongoing issues of concern, which may be resolved with relatively inexpensive intervention or appropriate maintenance schedules but may also be exacerbated by further development pressures on the system. It is the intention that the contents of this report will facilitate and support ongoing discussions by councillors with the relevant authorities either directly or through existing groups such as Farnham River management committee, Thames Water resident's liaison meetings. The observations and issue raised here should also be considered and provide useful reference to the Planning consultative group and the Infrastructure planning groups of Farnham Town Council. I summarise below some of the key issues identified by this exercise:

DRAINS & GULLIES

The current maintenance schedule of some drains and gullies seems to be inadequate in parts of Farnham, illustrated by long-term ongoing problems. Correspondence with SCC highways suggests that funding is likely to be a problem in the future. In which case it would be helpful to understand the mechanism for prioritising issues and what these are driven by - impact? Persistence? Cost?

SEWAGE SYSTEMS

Flooding and drains capacity failure can be accompanied by sewage pollution (Upper hale, Badshot Lea). These are seemingly inadequately addressed and particularly the public health issue is seemingly ignored. It may be that the risk posed is negligible but is any public body assessing and monitoring it? Is this complicated by the involvement of multiple bodies and lack of overall ownership of the problem? Such events seem to illustrate that both drainage and sewerage infrastructure is at or near capacity for current levels in many places.

RIVER

Currently, engineered flood defences in place along the river 'seem' at this time to be adequate to deal with some localised flooding in its recent volumes. These are supported by the 'soft' flood defences/ alleviation provided by the flood plains to the west of the town. However, future developments along the river may interrupt the current flow and impact the volume and behaviour of water flows downstream. Environment Agency flood risk assessments for planning use the current flood risk at that time. These are modelled predictions at the national level with input data and assumptions which include a degree of uncertainty. Should a measure of uncertainty be then included with the outputs? It would be helpful to better understand these risk calculations.

Overall, I believe this experience provides further evidence to concerns about the drainage and flood water management capacity in Farnham, assuming either current levels or increased frequency or extent of recent events. I would like to thank Farnham Town Councillors, the Bourne Conservation Group, Farnham Rivers Group and Farnham RiverSearch wardens for their contributions and pictures which have enable this Farnham wide perspective of the issues. I also welcome further comment and contribution from any interested parties.

Cllr Jessica Parry – Farnham Town Council, nominated representative to Farnham RiverWatch and member of Farnham River management committee (includes surface water!) 06 FEB 2014

ANNEX1: Farnham flooding issues by ward

Weybourne & Badshot Lea

- At the Badshot Lea cross roads the junction was flooded and the Church Garden was up to 12 inches deep.
- Water poured out of Farm Lane and down Badshot Lea Road to the already flooded cross roads.
- Water poured from the Village Pond onto Badshot Lea Road and added to the water at the cross roads.
- Lower Weybourne Lane under the railway bridge adjacent to TS Swiftsure. The **road was closed** due to depth of water. Road is immediately adjacent to area being consider for 130 dwelling development.
- The gully in St Georges road drains into the ditch opposite but due to damaged pipe does not work. The water has now lain in the road since before Christmas and is only dispersed by cars racing through it and forcing it over the front a house and garden. This **problem has existed for many years**. Late on Boxing Day the Badshot Lea SPS failed and the same area of road was **polluted with raw sewage**. The manhole in the road outside the house is the lowest point on the system. Any failure of the pumping station that results in flooding of the system causes it to overflow into the road, local surface water drain (when it works), and the ditch Thames Water do respond to attend to the pumps, but nobody attends to the pollution issue.
- The usual flooded areas are on the road at junction Badshot Lea Road and the Trading Estate and the junction of Monkton Lane and Water Lane due to problems with **SCC gullies and drains**.

Upper Hale

- Mainly surface water in low lying roads and dips and where **drains may have issues**.
- Thames Water are dealing with flood issues in Grasmere Road/Trinity Fields Upper Hale which appears to be an issue related to **tree root damage to sewer**.
- Upper Hale tends to suffer generally in this weather as built on many underground streams which suddenly become active during certain heavy bouts of rain.
- **Farnham Park**. Drains and sewers unable to cope with volume of water inundated parts of park with **sewage and polluted the Nadder stream**. The WBC Farnham Park ranger reports each incident (over 4 year period, although has been happening far longer) of a sewage pipe inspection cover overflows in times of high rainfall (in times of very high rainfall the outflow is a fountain up to five feet high!) and discharges into the Nadder stream. Reporting is to the Environment Agency who then pass it on to Thames water to do a clear up of debris. Friends of Farnham Park, Farnham Rivers Group and Farnham River management committee have all made attempts to find details of what is being done about this. Currently awaiting details from incident reporting system – initial reports say 9 incidents since 2013 but significant under-reporting as indirect reports to known EA staff would often not result in incident reference number & entry in the database.
- Significant collections of standing water on A325

Castle

- Bishops water meadows and other recognised flood plains to the west of the town have been doing exactly what they should – essentially storing some of the floodwater, delaying the passage of the flood peak and keeping the flowing river level lower than it might otherwise be.

Wrecclesham & Rowledge

- The A31 at Coxbridge was closed due to flooding and the fields around this area were huge lakes thus affecting the housing estate built on Spooners yard land and the opposite estate. This development was strongly objected to by the ward councillor but the environment agency felt there was no problem - flooding once in a 100 years. This statement seems inconsistent with observations!!
- **A31 Road.** Flooded at Coxbridge Roundabout and towards Bentley

The Bourne

- **Bourne Grove.** The Bourne stream, very badly maintained at this point, burst its bank and flooded into private grounds. This included the surrounds of the Spotted Cow. Cars were inundated up to mirror level and there was damage to the children's play area. It is understood that two cars were written off.
- **Greenhill Road.** Large ponds developed in dips on Greenhill Road and Mavins Road. The poor drainage resulted in a torrent over-flowing southwards down the embankment. This caused a minor landslide which undermined the pavement and flowed over the public ROW and into private grounds
- **Frensham Vale.** Frensham Vale stream over-topped its bank and seriously flooded the road.

Shortheath & Boundstone

- Sandrock Hill Road GU10 4SU - Ongoing problem (12-15yrs) – seemingly inadequate drainage capacity and inadequate maintenance of heavily silted gullies.
- **Sandrock Hill.** The brick-built eastern parapet of the road bridge across The Bourne stream collapsed into the stream
- **Junction of Gardeners Hill Road and the Long Road.** Ponding alongside the electricity sub-station. This has happened before.

Moor Park

- Riverside - completely under a lake of water (and was before the rain)
- Compton Way by the bridge over the Wey became impassable.
- Monks Walk (Elstead Road by the abbey) became impassable.
- Lynch Road - as a result of the development built about 5 years ago
- Borelli Walk
- **Junction of Waverley Lane and Monks Walk.** The Thames Water pumping station disgorged sewage into The Bourne stream.
- There are many cases of water lying on roads due to run-off water. The drains are overflowing.
- **Shepherd and Flock Roundabout.** Flooded garden of house.

- **Farnham Recycling Station.** The stream from the old mill opposite flooded into the site. This always happens under heavy rain conditions and no measures seem to have been taken to prevent a reoccurrence. Residents were forced to drive through a foot of water to enter the dump for many days.
- **Waverley Lane.** Road flooded near entrance to Waverley Abbey. The house known as South Lodge inundated.
- **The Moor Park SSSI.** Inundated.
- **Compton Lane.** Flooded.
- **Flooding of storage warehouse** on the Business Park along Guildford Road

ANNEX 2: Selection of supporting photographs

Image 1 – Heavily silted drains in Sandrock Hill Road



Images 2 -5 – Water volume alleviation upstream of Farnham at Bishop's water meadows



Images 6-7 - High River Levels through Bishop's meadow



Image 8-9 - Flooding and standing water in Lower Weybourne Lane



Images 10 – 11 - Flooding at Riverside and future tennis court development in central Farnham



Image 12 – Sewage surcharge from manhole in Monkton Lane



Image 13 - High River levels below Hatch Mill



Image 14 – Flooding at Coxbridge by recent development



ANNEX 3: - Related reading

<http://blog.surreywildlifetrust.org/?p=739>

Surrey Wildlife Trust's RiverSearch co-coordinator Glen Skelton discusses **long term sustainable methods of managing flood risks in our towns and countryside and how they can bring multiple benefits to people and wildlife:**

http://gallery.mailchimp.com/49a562c0c3de3ff302b6a2593/files/RiverSearch_News_2.pdf?utm_source=RiverSearch&utm_campaign=fd94204d2f-RiverSearch_News1_22_2014&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_ddc44194cf-fd94204d2f-89678189

SWT RiverSearch discusses flooding with discussion of flood defenses in Farnham