

## FLOODING CONSULTATION: RPWBRA RESPONSES – MAY 2025



Following the presentation from the Arcadis team at the recent AGM we have submitted photographs and videos of flooding events during the past five years, courtesy of **Rosemary Lever and Margaret Nally**, to Georgia Carswell of the Environment Agency. Ms Carswell is currently advising Thames Water. Since the consultation closed, **Mary-Jane Jeanes** has also drawn up additional concerns, and we will be submitting a further report.

### **FLOODING ISSUES**

***The RPWBRA has submitted the following to LBM, which is an updated version of Jerry Cuthbert's submission to Merton Futures in 2022.***

The RPWBRA was founded in 1928, and local flooding was a key reason for the Association's formation. In more recent times, the Environment Agency has designated that significant parts of our area lie on a flood plain. There is, therefore, an ever-present danger of flooding to property.

#### **Flooding Events during the past five years:**

- Monday, 24 August 2020
- Monday, 12 July 2021
- Sunday, 25 July 2021
- Thursday, 21 October 2021
- Tuesday, 4 January 2022

Of course, other areas in LBM have had similar experiences on these occasions, but in our area, the following have been flooded: Shannon Corner, Westway, Westway Close, Raynes Park Bridge and Coombe Lane in Raynes Park town centre.

LBM's own historic records show several flooding events occurring in Raynes Park, going right back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. However, with climate change and increased density of development, we observe that such events are becoming more frequent. Whilst the impact on Raynes Park town centre of the flood on 25 July 2021 was reported in the local press and media, there was less reporting of the other events, occurring in Westway and the adjoining streets.



#### **Westway Area**

During the flooding events, the surface water sewers overflowed into the street, as evidenced by water spurting up from the manhole covers. It is self-evident that the existing surface water sewers are of insufficient capacity to cope with the flows during these events. On these occasions, it caused flooding of the public highways, private gardens, and threatened homes.

In recent years, there has been a continued loss of permeable surfaces in our area, due to house extensions, the paving over of driveways and infill developments. This inevitably results in greater storm water runoff and greater discharges into the existing drainage infrastructure. This must make overflows more likely.



### The former LESSA Sports Field

Unfortunately, despite intense local concern, the Planning Applications Committee approved the application from Bellway to build on the LESSA sports field at Meadowview Road (22/P2351). One of the many concerns we have about this is Bellway's design for the surface water drainage.

Our members' recent experience with the existing development in Meadowview Road is that there is a heavy surface water run-off, which pours down the footpath/cycle-track into Westway. This exacerbates the flooding into the local road network, flooding into gardens and threatening homes. Whether the run-off from Meadowview Road is caused by inadequate design, poor construction or lack of maintenance is not clear. What is clear is that a major source of surface water pouring into Westway emanates from the LESSA site.

The underlying design philosophy for the surface water drainage of Bellway's application (22/P2351) is principally a larger version of that used for the existing development. We consider that this design is flawed and has already shown to be not fit-for-purpose. Our fear is that the failure of the existing drainage design to protect the residents' property in Westway will simply be made much worse. We also note that properties in Meadowview Road have problems with ground water within their gardens, which have resulted in post-completion modifications to the existing surface water drainage system.

### Flood Risk Management Authorities

LBM's partners in Flood Risk Management are Thames Water (TW) and the Environment Agency (EA). We have concerns with our recent experience with these two organisations.

Firstly, , Thames Water has an obvious conflict of interest because of the attractiveness of new developments adding to its future revenues, which may lead to it playing down the demonstrable inadequacies of its surface water infrastructure and the resulting increased flood risk.

Secondly, the EA classifies the Pyl Brook as a main river and as a potential source flooding in the Westway area. However, it seems that the EA is uncertain of the exact route of the culverted section between Kings College Playing Field and the level crossing at the West Barnes Lane/Burlington Road junction. The EA sent a speculative letter to residents regarding their possible riparian responsibilities, without verifying the exact course of the culvert. ***These conflicts of interest and lack of information need to be resolved.***



### Conclusion

The Westway area and Raynes Park town centre have an ever-present risk of flooding from storms, which, on occasions, fill the existing surface water sewers to capacity, such that they cannot cope and overflow into the streets.

With the effects of climate change, the loss of permeable areas and increasing density of development, this problem likely to become more common and more severe.



The RPWBRA expects the authorities responsible for flood protection to take decisive and effective action to reduce the flooding risk to property in our neighbourhood.

***Jerry Cuthbert***