

Appendix C – Overview of Flood Risk Management in Brent

1. Introduction

Brent Council updated its Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) in 2025. The Strategy sets out how Brent, in its role as Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), will work with partners to manage local flood risk over the coming years. The Strategy is built around five key objectives: improving understanding of flood risk, reducing flood risk to people, businesses and infrastructure, clarifying responsibilities, ensuring effective emergency planning and response, and promoting sustainable and integrated flood management.

As Lead Local Flood Authority, Brent Council is responsible for:

- Developing and maintaining the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy
- Investigating significant flood incidents where appropriate
- Maintaining a register of structures and features that may affect flood risk
- Regulating works affecting ordinary watercourses
- Working with partners to identify and deliver flood alleviation schemes
- Providing planning advice on Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)

The Local Flood Risk Management Strategy is available on the Council's website. <https://www.brent.gov.uk/the-council-and-democracy/strategies-priorities-and-policies/flood-risk-management-strategy>

2. Flood Hotspots, Vulnerable Communities and Impacts Flood Risk Across Brent

Brent is exposed to multiple sources of varying levels of flood risk, including surface water flooding, river flooding, ordinary watercourses, groundwater flooding, sewer flooding and, to a lesser extent, reservoir flooding. Surface water flooding is considered the most significant risk to residents due to the borough's highly urbanised environment and the increasing intensity of rainfall associated with climate change.

Most Vulnerable Areas

The principal river flood risk corridors within Brent are associated with the River Brent and Wealdstone Brook. The River Brent corridor affects areas including Tokyngton, Stonebridge and Alperton, whilst Wealdstone Brook affects parts of Kenton, Wealdstone and Wembley.

Brent contains approximately 118,500 properties. Around 1,390 properties are at risk from river flooding during a 1 in 100-year flood event, increasing to approximately 2,000 properties during a 1 in 1,000-year event.

The borough also contains 27 Critical Drainage Areas where surface water flooding is considered a significant concern. Surface water flood risk is often concentrated within highway corridors and can be exacerbated by intense rainfall, topography and drainage capacity constraints.

Historic Flooding

Historic flooding has occurred along Wealdstone Brook at Woodcock Park and along Wembley Brook, affecting nearby land and infrastructure. Flooding resulting from significant storm events was recorded in 2007, 2010, 2019, 2021 and 2022, impacting locations such as Brondesbury Park, Kilburn, Sudbury, Kingsbury, Kenton and Wembley. In most cases the impacts were concentrated on highways, open spaces and gardens, although some incidents required emergency intervention to prevent flooding of residential properties. These historic incidents have informed the identification of priority locations for future flood risk mitigation investment.

Priority Locations for Intervention

Woodcock Park and Wembley Brook have been identified as priority flood risk locations and are currently the focus of Environment Agency-funded flood alleviation studies. Opportunities to introduce flood mitigation measures both within the watercourses and upstream catchments are being explored.

Additional strategic priority areas include Stonebridge, Alperton and Tokyngton due to their location within the River Brent floodplain, inclusion within Environment Agency flood warning areas, and the presence of key transport routes, community infrastructure and residential populations.

Communities Potentially Disproportionately Affected

An Equality Impact Assessment undertaken as part of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy identified that some communities may be more vulnerable to the impacts of flooding than others. Older residents and people with disabilities may experience disproportionately greater impacts from flooding and may particularly benefit from measures that reduce flood risk.

Residents Least Able to Recover from Flooding

Recovery from flooding is influenced not only by exposure to flood risk but also by social and economic circumstances. Groups that may be less resilient to flooding include older residents, people with disabilities, low-income households, residents with existing health conditions, families with young children and residents facing language or communication barriers. These factors can affect a household's ability to prepare for, respond to and recover from a flooding incident.

3. Current and Planned Flood Risk Management Activity Highway Drainage Maintenance

The Highways Service delivers a cyclical gully cleansing programme across the borough to maintain the effectiveness of the highway drainage network. Cleansing frequencies range between six and eighteen months depending upon site conditions and historic levels of silt accumulation. In addition to planned

maintenance, reactive inspections and cleansing activities are undertaken in response to reports of flooding, blocked gullies and severe weather events.

Woodcock Park Flood Alleviation Scheme

The Woodcock Park Flood Alleviation Scheme is currently at feasibility and study stage. A flood alleviation study is being undertaken to investigate opportunities to reduce flood risk associated with Wealdstone Brook through Woodcock Park. The study is assessing a range of retrofit Sustainable Drainage System measures alongside hydraulic modelling and benefit-cost analysis. Grant funding of £80,000 has been secured from the Environment Agency to support this work.

Anticipated Benefits

- Reduction in downstream flood risk
- Increased flood storage capacity during storm events
- Improved climate resilience
- Enhanced biodiversity and environmental benefits

Wembley Brook Flood Alleviation Scheme

The Wembley Brook Flood Alleviation Scheme is currently at feasibility and study stage. A flood alleviation study is being undertaken to investigate upstream SuDS opportunities aimed at reducing peak flows and flood risk to adjacent properties. Grant funding of £50,000 has been secured through Environment Agency Levy Funding.

The study is currently under review and supported by additional investigations into existing infrastructure and future flood mitigation opportunities.

Anticipated Benefits

- Reduced flood risk to residential properties
- Improved resilience of the watercourse
- Improved management of surface water runoff
- Increased adaptation to future climate change impacts

4. Performance, Outcomes and Challenges

Progress Against the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy Action Plan

The Council has made progress against a number of the priorities identified within the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy Action Plan. Key achievements include advancement of the Woodcock Park and Wembley Brook Flood Alleviation Schemes, strengthened engagement with Risk Management Authorities and improvements in drainage maintenance performance.

Some actions are progressing more slowly than originally anticipated due to service capacity and resource constraints. Nevertheless, progress has continued in key priority areas including the development of the Woodcock Park and

Wembley Brook Flood Alleviation Schemes, improvements in drainage maintenance and strengthened partnership working with Risk Management Authorities.

Performance Improvements

Performance has improved significantly in several key areas when compared with previous years. A more proactive and structured approach to contract management and cyclical gully cleansing has resulted in reactive drainage maintenance requests reducing from approximately 50–70 cases per month to fewer than ten on average.

In 2025/26, Brent secured £85,000 of Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy funding to undertake drainage improvement works. This funding enabled repairs to approximately 140 defective gullies and contributed to improved network resilience.

Brent has continued to strengthen working relationships with key Risk Management Authorities, neighbouring councils and community organisations to support flood risk management activities, funding opportunities and scheme development. Further detail on partnership arrangements is provided later in this report.

Independent Reviews and Audits

Monthly audits are undertaken for both cyclical and reactive gully cleansing activities to ensure contractual standards are achieved and works are delivered in accordance with agreed requirements. The audit process provides quality assurance and supports effective contract management.

Areas Requiring Improvement

Whilst targeted investment has improved drainage assets in several locations, further investment remains necessary across the wider drainage network to enhance resilience and reduce future maintenance liabilities. In the absence of additional funding, improvement works will continue to be prioritised based upon assessed risk.

Capacity Constraints

Flood risk and drainage functions are currently delivered by a single Principal Flood and Drainage Engineer. Responsibilities include flood investigations, drainage maintenance programmes, resident and councillor enquiries, contractor management, funding applications, partnership engagement, project delivery and strategic flood risk responsibilities. Whilst statutory duties continue to be met, this creates limited resilience within the service and can restrict the pace at which strategic projects, investigations and improvement programmes are progressed. Periods of annual leave or staff absence can further increase these pressures and create temporary backlogs in service delivery.

Partnership and Delivery Risks

A key delivery risk relates to the successful progression of externally led flood mitigation initiatives where Brent may be a funding contributor rather than the delivery authority. Effective governance, monitoring and partnership arrangements are therefore important to ensure that anticipated benefits are realised and that projects are delivered in accordance with agreed objectives.

Infrastructure Limitations

Some drainage issues are attributable to capacity constraints within the wider public sewer network operated by Thames Water. Whilst Brent is responsible for highway drainage assets, the wider sewer network remains outside the Council's direct control. In some cases, persistent ponding may indicate limitations within downstream sewer infrastructure rather than defects within highway drainage systems.

Many parts of the sewer network were constructed during the Victorian era and were not designed for modern development patterns or the increasingly intense rainfall events associated with climate change. Consequently, climate change and continued urbanisation are likely to place increasing pressure on drainage infrastructure and may increase the frequency and severity of localised flooding incidents.

Remaining Risks

The principal risks affecting delivery of the flood risk management programme are:

- Limited specialist staffing capacity
- Funding constraints affecting delivery of drainage improvement works
- Dependence on third-party infrastructure owners and delivery partners
- Increasing flood risk associated with climate change and more intense rainfall events

5. Partnership Working, Governance and Accountability

Flood risk management is delivered through partnership working between Brent Council and a range of Risk Management Authorities, including the Environment Agency, Thames Water, Transport for London, utility companies, emergency services and private landowners.

Partnership Boards and Meetings

Brent has developed strong working relationships with key Risk Management Authorities, neighbouring Lead Local Flood Authorities, community groups and other stakeholders involved in flood risk management. These partnerships support information sharing, collaborative problem solving, project development and the identification of external funding opportunities.

Partnership Forums

The Council regularly participates in partnership forums including:

- Monthly meetings with the Environment Agency and Thames Water
- North West London Flood Partnership meetings
- Brent Catchment Partnership meetings
- Wealdstone Brook stakeholder meetings

Joint Programmes

Brent is currently considering a proposal to contribute up to £500,000 towards the London Borough of Harrow / Thames Water Byron Recreation Ground Flood Mitigation Project, subject to the Council's governance and approval processes. The project forms part of a wider catchment-based approach to reducing flood risk and improving water quality within the Wealdstone Brook catchment.

The scheme is located upstream of Woodcock Park and has the potential to provide flood risk reduction and environmental benefits to both Brent and Harrow. Should the proposal receive the necessary approvals, appropriate governance, monitoring and reporting arrangements would be established to provide assurance that the anticipated outcomes and benefits are delivered.

In addition to the Byron Recreation Ground proposal, Brent continues to work with the Environment Agency and other partners to develop and deliver flood alleviation projects across the borough where external funding opportunities are available.

How Disputes are Resolved

On occasion there can be differing views regarding asset ownership, responsibility or the underlying cause of drainage and flooding issues. In these circumstances Brent works closely with Thames Water, Affinity Water and other relevant organisations to investigate issues, clarify responsibilities and ensure appropriate remedial action is progressed.

Where concerns relate to the public sewer network or water supply infrastructure, Brent actively engages with the relevant water company, supported by evidence from inspections and investigations. Regular liaison meetings have improved communication, accountability and the timely resolution of issues affecting residents and highway users.

Examples of Successful Collaboration

The Woodcock Park Flood Alleviation Scheme has benefited from collaboration between Brent Council, the Environment Agency, Thames Water and the Friends of Woodcock Park. This partnership working has supported the development of the scheme and improved understanding of local flood risk issues.

Partnership working with Thames Water has also contributed to the resolution of a number of long-standing drainage and sewer-related issues affecting residents and

the highway network, including locations at Abbey Road/Central Way and Ealing Road. These examples demonstrate the value of coordinated working between organisations responsible for different elements of flood risk and drainage infrastructure.

6. Emergency Preparedness and Response

Brent has established arrangements for responding to flooding through its wider emergency planning framework. The Council maintains emergency response and recovery plans, including a Multi-Agency Flood Plan covering surface water, river and sewer flooding, as well as major reservoir and canal-related incidents.

As Lead Local Flood Authority, Brent is responsible for coordinating local flood risk management, undertaking qualifying flood investigations and maintaining flood-risk asset registers. During flood events, responsibilities are shared between Risk Management Authorities according to the source of flooding.

Resident communications form part of these arrangements through flood preparedness guidance, Environment Agency flood warnings and emergency communication channels where required. Following significant flooding incidents, Brent coordinates recovery activities with partner organisations and undertakes formal investigations where statutory criteria are met.

7. Conclusion

Brent faces increasing flood risk from climate change, urbanisation and pressures on ageing drainage and sewer infrastructure. Surface water flooding remains the most significant source of risk across the borough, with a number of locations identified as priorities for further investigation and intervention.

The Council continues to deliver its responsibilities as Lead Local Flood Authority through the implementation of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, improvements to drainage maintenance, the development of flood alleviation schemes and partnership working with key Risk Management Authorities.

Whilst challenges remain, including funding pressures, limited specialist capacity and increasing climate-related risks, ongoing investment and collaborative working will be important in improving resilience, reducing flood risk and supporting Brent's wider climate resilience objectives.