

Leicester Integrated Flood Risk Management Strategy

SEA Environmental Report Non-Technical Summary

August 2017



Non-Technical Summary

1.1. Background

Flooding is a natural process, one that can have major impacts upon people, their communities, the economy (both national and local) and the environment. The Environment Agency and local authorities have responsibilities to manage flood risk. The risk of flooding is influenced by a variety of natural and human processes. By taking a wide view of flood risk across a large area, and by integrating the management of river systems (large and small) with how land is managed (urban and rural), we can reduce the risk of flooding.

Flood risk in Leicester is extremely complex due to the number of sources of flooding and the challenging hydrology of the urban catchments. The consequences of these complex flooding mechanisms and interactions are that thousands of properties in Leicester are at risk of flooding.

The Environment Agency and Leicester City Council are working in partnership to produce an Integrated Flood Risk Management Strategy (the Strategy). The Strategy sets out our plan for the sustainable management of flood risk across the city of Leicester, to people, property and the environment. By looking at the issue of flood risk management in a strategic, comprehensive and holistic way, we are able to take account of the associated impacts and the interests of other stakeholders.

The Strategy sets out our proposals for managing flood risk in Leicester. As part of the development of the Strategy, we have undertaken a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). This is a process for helping to ensure that we take account of the potential environmental effects of the flood risk management options in making our decisions for the Strategy and to identify measures to help address them.

1.2. Strategic Environmental Assessment

A (SEA) is undertaken to identify the significant effects that plans, programmes and strategies may have on the environment. The process of SEA places stronger emphasis on the consideration of environmental issues in the decision-making processes and planning.

The 'environment' includes water and soil, landscape, climate, biodiversity, the historic environment, population and material assets. The Environmental Report is a written output of the SEA process, and documents the environmental impacts of the proposed flood risk management activities and describes the likely effects of the options and the ways that we will mitigate these effects. It also identifies opportunities for us to improve the environment during our flood risk management activities.

The application of the SEA process to flood management plans and programmes is not legally required in every case, however adopting the SEA approach is strongly encouraged by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) to enable a strategic approach to managing flood risk.

In September 2016 we issued for consultation a Scoping Report as part of the SEA process. The purpose of the consultation was to seek views on the proposed scope of the SEA so that the assessment focuses on the relevant environmental issues and potential impacts at an appropriate level of detail. During the scoping phase, the environmental baseline for



Leicester and surrounding areas was determined along with key objectives and criteria for assessing the potential effects of the Strategy.

The Scoping Report was subject to statutory consultation with a number of stakeholders including Natural England and Historic England. Comments and recommendations on the Scoping Report have been acknowledged and addressed in this Environment Report. Further consultation on the Environmental Report will be undertaken alongside the Strategy.

1.3. The Strategy Area

The Strategy covers the whole of the City of Leicester and is sub-divided into five 'Strategic Areas' which are:

- 1. River Soar Strategic Area (from Aylestone to Birstall);
- 2. Willow Brook Strategic Area (includes Evington Brook);
- 3. Braunstone Brook Strategic Area (Includes ordinary watercourses and tributaries to the west of the Soar corridor);
- 4. Saffron Brook Strategic Area; and,
- 5. Melton Brook Strategic Area.

Early on in the Strategy limited flood risk was identified within the Melton Brook Strategic Area and this area was therefore not taken forward for further assessment.

A high level schematic of the Strategic Areas is shown in Figure 1. In recognition of the interactions the River Soar overlaps the Willow Brook, Braunstone Brook, Saffron Brook and Melton Brook Strategic Areas.

The Strategic Areas

Willow Brook: The Evington Brook rises from springs east of Leicester City, flowing westward through the city centre and joining The Bushby Brook, where the two brooks become The Willow Brook. All these sections of urban stream are heavily modified and culverted which can cause potential flow restriction related issues.

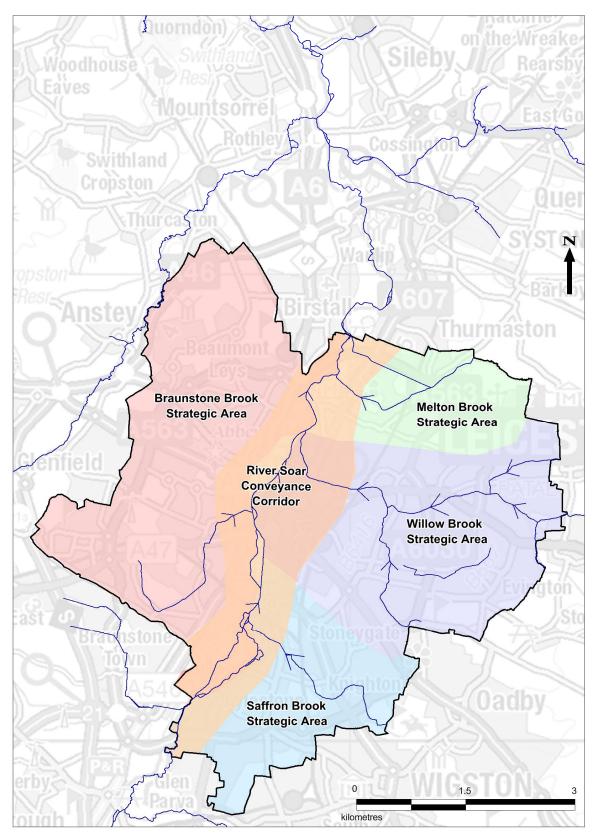
Braunstone Brook: The Braunstone Brook rises in the vicinity of Kirby Fields industrial estate and flows eastwards through Braunstone Park to meet the River Soar. Some sections have been modified which could cause potential flow restriction issues.

River Soar: The River Soar is a tributary of the River Trent and flows in a northerly direction through Leicester. The Grand Union Canal also passes through the city centre and is interlinked with the navigable reaches of the River Soar.

Saffron Brook: The Saffron Brook flows north-westwards and drains the south-eastern areas of Leicester City before flowing into the River Soar. Channel modifications have taken place which can cause flow restriction related issues.

Melton Brook: The Melton Brook was assessed and found to have limited impact on flood risk in Leicester therefore it is recommended that the existing maintenance activities are continued.





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Figure 1: Strategic Areas



1.4. Option Assessed

The following high level options have been assessed as part of the SEA:

Do Nothing: This would be a 'walk away' option. It would mean that all of the work we currently do now, such as flood warning, channel and defence maintenance would stop.

Do the Minimum: This would mean that we would continue to maintain the existing channels, walls, embankments and storage areas and maintain the existing flood warning service.

Do Something More: Under this approach we would change what we do now to manage flood risk. We would introduce new measures to reduce flood risk and provide other benefits such as recreational space or improving the environment. Flood warning service improvements would also be provided.

The scenarios 'Do the Minimum' and 'Do Something More' are being considered as alternatives to the 'Do Nothing'

The 'Do the minimum' can also be referred to as the existing scenario in Leicester. This includes carrying out the existing levels of maintenance on existing flood risk management assets and channels and drainage systems.

The 'Do something more' scenario is made up of a number of measures (options) that collectively aim to reduce risk of flooding from both fluvial (river flooding) and surface water flooding (excess rainfall). The measures were identified using a hierarchy that focused on aiming to implement measures that are sustainable and provide additional environmental and social benefit. The measures included within the 'Do Something More' scenario are:

- Catchment wide options: Natural Flood Management (NFM); Strategic and regional Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS);
- Upstream Flood Storage: Increasing the amount of water that can be stored in the upper and middle catchment;
- Flow improvements: Making space for water;
- Raised defences: Walls and embankments, in the middle and lower catchments; and
- Resilience: Flood warning, local flood action groups, property level resilience.

Figure 2 provides further explanation on each category of measures.



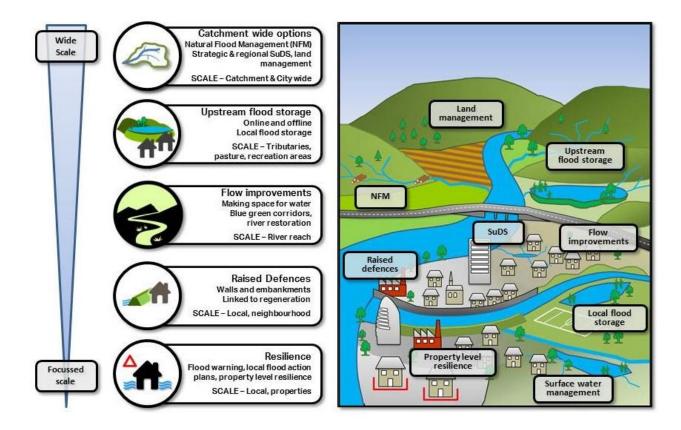


Figure 2 Inter-relationship of measures within the catchment

1.5. Longlist to Shortlist

We began our assessment process of a long list of over 60 possible flood risk management measures. This long list of measures was reviewed in terms of engineering, economics and environmental risk. From this high level review and ongoing consultation a short list of measures was developed. The short list is a list of measures for each Strategic Area that could, on their own or in combination, provide benefits in terms of flood risk. These measures were then assessed in terms of their potential environmental effect. The short list of measures included within the 'Do Something More' option are set out in Table 5 and on Figures 3,4,5 and 6.

1.6. The Environmental Baseline

The baseline is the current state of the key environmental receptors included in the assessment. Table 1 provides the baseline key features for each receptor. During the scoping process it was agreed that some environmental issues could be 'scoped out' for the purposes of the SEA of the Strategy as the Strategy is unlikely to result in significant effects on these aspects of the environment:

 Air Quality (air pollution and dust): Particulate matter and dust would be a short term consideration of any construction works associated with the Strategy, however any potential impacts would be localised and dealt with by scheme EIA and are therefore considered not significant for the scale of assessment undertaken; and



 Material Assets (geological resources): No active mineral sites have been identified in the study area. The only statutory protected geological site in the Strategy area is the Gipsy Lane Pit Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), located in the north east of Leicester.

Table 1: Environmental Baseline: Key Features

SEA Receptor	Key Features		
Water and Soil	There is a significant risk of fluvial, pluvial and sewer flooding in Leicester. Flood risk is complex due to the number of sources of flooding and the challenging hydrology of the urban area. Flood risk is exacerbated by a number of constrictions in flow within the River Soar. Thousands of properties are at risk of flooding.		
	A number of problems arise associated with the existing watercourses, these include: constricted and straightened, concrete lined channels, over widening, weirs, obstructions, siltation and culverts.		
	The water quality of the City's watercourses is affected by sediments and nutrients from agricultural land higher up in the catchment and also by diffuse urban pollution.		
	A number of the watercourses flow through parkland and open green space.		
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna and Green Infrastructure	There are seven Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) in the city, with a five further LNRs proposed. There are also45 areas designated as Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) based on habitat quality and diversity which are considered important in a local context;		
	There is one nationally designated site in the strategy study area, the Gipsy Lane Clay Pit of Site Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which is designated for geological interest and is also of ecological value.		
	There is one non-statutory Regionally Important Geological Site (RIGS) - Shoulder of Mutton Hill at Western Park.		
	Leicester's Green Infrastructure Strategy 2015-2025 identifies the number and type of green spaces throughout the city and the multiple benefits that could potentially be achieved by creating or enhancing these areas.		
Population and Human Health	41% of Leicester's population live in the 20% most deprived areas in England and a further 34% live in the 20-40% most deprived areas.		
	Leicester has a significantly younger age profile than the East Midlands and England.		
	Leicester experiences significant health inequalities. Life expectancy for both women and men in the city is below the national average.		
	There are risks to health from flooding and the fear of flooding		
Cultural Heritage	There are a wide range of designated heritage assets located across the city, including: 24 conservation areas located in Leicester; 14 Grade I listed buildings; 36 Grade II* listed buildings; 352 Grade II listed buildings; 10 scheduled monuments; and 6 Registered Parks and Garden sites.		
	The 2016 Heritage at Risk Register identifies ten listed buildings or scheduled monuments as at risk in plan area.		



SEA Receptor	Key Features				
	Within the city of Leicester there are also significant numbers of non-designated assets which are locally important in their own right. Various heritage assets are at risk of flooding in the city.				
Landscape	There are five Landscape Character Areas across the city area, each of which have distinct characteristics and associated issues.				
	The Leicester Green Infrastructure Strategy outlines there are good green corridor links between the north and south within Leicester, although green corridors in other directions are more limited.				
	Although Leicester is moderately well supplied with radial routes including National Cycle Network Routes 6 and 63, it lacks good links between outer suburbs, schools, and employment sites including two major hospitals.				
Climate Adaptation	To reduce the impact of development on climate change, including taking 'action to reduce the scale and impact of future climate change, in particular the risk of damage to life and property from flooding, especially through the location and design of new development'.				
	Best practice energy efficiency and sustainable construction methods, including waste management, should be incorporated in all aspects of development, with use of locally sourced and recycled materials where possible, and designed to high energy and water efficiency standards;				
	Green Infra-structure identified as a way to promote climate change adaptation.				
Material Assets	There are a large range of assets that serve the community in Leicester and for the purpose of this SEA the key infrastructure has been grouped as follows some of which are at risk of flooding: Utility services (such as gas mains, water and sewerage pipework and electric); Key community assets (such as surgeries, places of worship, educational premises); and Key transport infrastructure (such as roads, railway and bus routes).				

1.7. Assessment Framework and Significance

During analysis of the baseline data significance criteria were developed for each of the SEA receptors. The significance criteria is based on an impact matrix that uses the magnitude of effect and the value of the receptor. The assessment criteria for each receptor is summarised in Table 2 and an example significance criteria shown in Table 3.



Table 2: Assessment Criteria

Table 2: Assessment Criteria				
Receptor	Criteria			
Water and Soil				
Contribute towards meeting WFD objectives for the catchment. Will the option/proposal help to	Reduce the pollution risk from diffuse urban pollution and from point sources such as contaminated land Help to re-naturalise modified waterbodies Reduce soil erosion and sediment/pollutant inputs from surface water runoff			
Use and manage soil resources in a sustainable manner. Will the option/proposal help to	Reduce the amount of material requiring disposal offsite			
Reduce the risk of flooding (fluvial and surface water) Will the option/proposal help to	 have the potential to help alleviate flooding in the catchment area now or in the future? Help to identify and tackle surface water hotspots 			
Biodiversity, Flora, Fauna and Green Infrastructure				
Protect, create and enhance biodiversity of the water environment in Leicester and support biodiversity in the city	 Avoid harm to and facilitate the improvement in condition of designated sites. Protect and enhance river and other habitats, 			
Will the option/proposal help to	 including the habitat of protected species Create and or expand wetland habitats and facilitate the naturalisation of water bodies 			
Create and enhance Leicester's Green	Protect and enhance, ecological linkages and prevent habitat fragmentation			
Infrastructure and its contribution to Ecosystem Services Support the creation and expansion of green/blue	Provide and/or improve the quality and management of greenspaces and formal/informal recreational facilities			
infrastructure networks of open space in Leicester Will the option/proposal help to	 Improve linkages within and between GI initiatives in the city, upper catchment and/or beyond the study area boundary 			
Population and Human Health				
Enhance the quality of life of a growing population and support a reduction of deprivation	Help facilitate economic development and regeneration			
in Leicester Will the option/proposal help to	 Encourage and promote social cohesion via improvements to the built environment and or providing a focus for community engagement? 			
Promote health and wellbeing among local residents Will the option/proposal help to	 Improve the availability and or accessibility to leisure, recreational, sporting and community facilities to encourage healthy lifestyles and reduce health inequalities 			
	 Reduce the risks to health from flooding and the fear of flooding 			
Climate Change				
Implement solutions to flood risk which promote climate change mitigation and adaptation in	Limit the carbon footprint of flood risk management measures			
Leicester Will the option/proposal help to	 Increase the resilience of wildlife to climate change and flooding contribute positively to adaptation to climate 			
Landscana	change?			
Landscape				
Protect, maintain and enhance landscape &	 Protect, maintain or enhance landscape and townscape characteristics in relation to sensitive 			



Receptor	Criteria		
townscape quality Will the option/proposal help to	landscapes and townscape and recreational areas including greenspace, parks, recreation areas and G networks.		
	 Minimise visual impacts to local receptors whilst improving visual access to the water environment and enhancing its positive contribution to landscape/townscape character 		
	 Increase tree cover such as through planting of riparian woodlands, street trees, extending existing woodlands, 		
Cultural Heritage			
Protect and enhance the historic environment Will the option/proposal help to	Protect and enhance designated heritage assets including their setting		
	Protect and enhance none designated heritage assets		
	Reduce the flood risk to heritage assets		
Material Assets			
Reduce the flood risk to key material assets and essential infrastructure within Leicester. Will the option/proposal help to	 Protect key assets essential for emergency response, power and communication, as well as key transport links within the City of Leicester 		
	Protect social/community assets for example schools, healthcare facilities and residential care homes		

Table 3: Significance Criteria

		Value of Receptor / Importance of Objective			
		High	Medium	Low	
		(international / national value)	(e.g. regional value)	(local or no value)	
	Medium Negative	Major adverse	Moderate adverse	Minor adverse	
	Undesirable consequences	()	()	(-)	
	Low Negative	Moderate adverse	Minor adverse	Minor adverse	
	Minor negative impact / and or small scale	()	(-)	(-)	
	Negligible	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	
Magnitude of Effect	No impact or discernible impact	(0)	(0)	(0)	
Lifect	Low positive	Moderate beneficial	Minor beneficial	Minor beneficial	
	Minor positive impact and / or small area	(+ +)	(+)	(+)	
	Medium positive		Moderate beneficial	Minor beneficial	
	Favourable consequences	(+++)	(++)	(+)	



The short list of measures summaries in Table 5 and Figures 3, 4 5, and 6, have been assessed using the assessment framework highlighted in Table 2. Each SEA receptor includes several objectives (12 in all) with each objective supported by more detailed assessment criteria (28 in all) against which the measures could be assessed.

Each measure within the 'Do Something more' option was assessed and ranked according to the significance criteria to identify whether the measure resulted in a beneficial, neutral or detrimental impact. This was undertaken first prior to mitigation and then further assessed once appropriate mitigation measures had been considered, this further assessment provided an indication of the potential residual effects of implementing the Strategy

1.8. Assessment Results

Overarching Measures

The assessment identifies that the Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS), Natural Flood Management (NFM) and Surface Water Storage measures comprised within the Strategy are not shown to have adverse impacts upon environmental receptors. In some instances, these measures have neutral impacts upon receptors, neither affecting them adversely or beneficially. However, typically, such measures have beneficial impacts, particularly NFM which is shown to have minor and major beneficial impacts across the Strategic Areas, particularly in relation to Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna; Climatic Factors; Landscape and Material Assets.

Surface Water Storage is also likely to delivery minor beneficial impacts yet typically will have neutral impacts on Water and Soil and Cultural Heritage.

SuDS are shown to have minor beneficial impacts on Water and Soil; Climatic Factors and Material Assets.

Flood Storage Measures

Flood Storage Measures in each Strategic Area have similar effects prior to mitigation, they are assessed as having Minor to Moderate Adverse impacts upon a wide number of receptors for example they have a Minor to Moderate Adverse impact upon landscape and recreation receptors, this is due to the sensitivity of the parkland and the recreational receptors associated with it. Flood storage measures generally have a Minor Adverse impact upon heritage features due to the heritage assets both designated and non-designated associated with parkland. Where there is extensive ground lowering to create flood storage there may well be material being moved off site and so the impact has been identified as Minor Adverse.

Flood storage has Minor to Moderate Benefits to population and human health and material assets due to the reduction in flooding.

Raised Defences

In most cases raised defences in each Strategic Area have similar effects prior to mitigation. For example the raised defences (WB7) proposed in the Willow Brook Strategic Area cause a Minor to Moderate Adverse impact upon landscape, biodiversity, elements of the Water Framework Directive, and climate change. Raised defences were also identified as having Minor Adverse impacts on cultural heritage this is reflected with raised defences in the other Strategic Areas. However there are some differences with the River Soar where the raised defences tend to be in existing areas of hard standing and/or with restricted biodiversity which may be slightly less sensitive. Raised defences have Minor to Moderate Benefits to population and human health and material assets due to the reduction in flooding.



Mitigation measures were then applied to the short listed measures with the 'Do Something More' option and the potential residual impacts identified for each of the SEA receptors. Mitigation can cover a variety of actions/activities, but generally includes:

- Early liaison with groups and individuals associated with the particular location;
- Detailed analysis of the location to understand in more detail potential risks and opportunities;
- Detailed surveys and impact assessments; and
- Design changes to ensure that the best possible solutions are put in place to ensure that potential impacts are mitigated and opportunities for environmental improvements can be integrated as part of the detailed design.

Following the application of mitigation to the measures, The 'Do Something More' option has been identified as the environmentally preferred approach for all of the strategic areas (Braunstone Brook, Willow Brook, Saffron Brook and the River Soar). Within this option a suite of measures have been identified which are environmentally preferred, Table 4 lists these measures.

Table 4 the preferred suite of measures

Strategic Area	Do Something Measure
Willow Brook	WB2, WB4, WB6, WB5
Braunstone Brook	BB2, BB3,BB4,BB5
Saffron Brook	SB2,SB4,SB5,SB6,
River Soar	SR3

1.9. Inter Relationships and Cumulative Impacts

The assessment of individual effects is an important aspect of the SEA process as it identifies potential issues relating to the implementation of the Strategy. However, it is also important to assess how the individual effects interact with one another to ascertain what the inter-relationships are between the effects and whether there are any cumulative effects relating to the implementation of the Strategy.

Following on from the Assessment, the Inter-relationships between receptors and the Strategy objectives were reviewed in relation to the Water Framework Directive and to Ecosystems Services. Cumulative In-Combination Impacts that were identified included:

- Trees and vegetation;
- Parks and Recreation Grounds:
- Protected Species; Watercourses;
- · Impacts upon other developments; and
- The timing and location of works.

Proposals to mitigate these effects have also been identified and included in the SEA.

1.10. Opportunities

Across the city of Leicester there are opportunities to help improve the environment via the use of the river corridors.



The assessment of the short listed measures within the 'Do Something More' option included the identification of possible enhancement opportunities for consideration in the future implementation of the Strategy and the detailed design of future flood risk management schemes. Depending on the type of measure, these include:

- The creation of wildflower meadows and grassland areas;
- The creation of permanent and ephemeral wetland areas;
- Improvement of access (footpaths and cycle routes);
- Improved local landscaping, for example creation of avenues of trees along key access routes; and
- Improved signage and interpretation.

For those areas where a number of interventions are envisaged, opportunities could be realised by adopting a visionary landscape masterplan approach to help ensure the interaction of green space and green infrastructure, new mixed-use developments and the urban environment. For each site where flood risk measures have been proposed for example in the various parks there will be site specific opportunities to undertake enhancement works, these proposals will be developed further during the next stages of the process and is likely to include further site specific environmental impact assessment.

1.11. Monitoring

Monitoring is a fundamental part of the SEA process that helps to:

- Compare the actual impacts of the Strategy with the predicted impacts;
- · Ensure that mitigation is effective;
- Ensure that no unforeseen impacts occur and that existing arrangements for monitoring are not duplicated; and
- Address gaps in data, or uncertainty highlighted by the assessment, to provide a updated and more comprehensive baseline.

Examples of the types of monitoring proposed include:

- · The length of river enhanced whilst undertaking flood risk management work; and
- Hectares of water dependent habitat created or improved to help meet objectives of the Water Framework Directive.

1.12. Consultation

This Non-Technical Summary and the Environmental Report form part of the consultation process alongside the Public Consultation Summary. The Strategy will not be finalised until it has accounted for any issues raised through the consultation process. Following consultation a Statement of Environmental Particulars will be published which will indicate how the comments received have been taken into account during development of the Strategy.

The Environmental Report will also be consulted on alongside the Public Consultation Summary. The consultation will take place between 21st August and 12th November 2017.

The relevant documents are available for comment via the following website https://consultations.leicester.gov.uk/communications/flood-plan.



1.13. Next Steps

Following this consultation we will carefully consider all the comments received and then prepare and issue a final version of the Strategy. A Statement of Environmental Particulars will be published which will indicate how comments received have been taken into account during the development of the Strategy.

The Strategy will be submitted for formal Environment Agency and Leicester City Council approval. This submission for approval is planned for late 2017. After this, projects and funds will be identified and prioritised working with key partners and stakeholders.



Table 5: Short Listed Option

Willow Brook	Short listed Option	Braunstone Brook	Short listed Option	Saffron Brook	Short listed Option	River Soar	Short listed Option
WB1	Natural Flood Management (NFM)	BB1	Natural Flood Management (NFM)	SB1	Natural Flood Management (NFM)	SR1	Natural Flood Management (NFM)
WB2	Evington Golf Club Flood Storage Area	BB2	Upper Braunstone Park Flood Storage Area	SB2	Knighton Park Flood Storage Area Upgrades	SR2	Flow Improvements related to previous schemes (not included in the assessment)
WB3	Caribbean Cricket Club Flood Storage Area	BB3	Increase Capacity of Existing Flood Storage Area in Central Braunstone Park	SB3	Knighton Raised Defences	SR3	Flood Storage Area Upstream of Soar Valley Way
WB4	Spinney Hill Park Flood Storage Area	BB4	Flood Storage Area in Lower Braunstone Park	SB4	Aylestone Recreation Ground Flood Storage Area and Raised Defences (South)	SR4	Raised Defence and Raised Road Ramp
WB5	Flow Improvements alongside Spinney Hill Park	BB5	Increase the Capacity of Existing Flood Storage Area at Fosse Road Recreation Ground	SB5	Aylestone Recreation Ground Flood Storage Area and Raised Defences (North)	SR5	Raised Land on West Side of the Grand Central Way
WB6	Humberstone Park Flood Storage Area	BB6	Raised Defences	SB6	St Mary's Allotments Flood Storage Area and Raised Defences	SR6	Raised Defence at Repton Street
WB7	Raised Defences	BB7	Western Park Flood Storage Area	SB7	Raised Defences, Boundary Road	SR7	Frog Island Raised Defence
WB8	Strategic SuDS and Partnership Working with Severn Trent Water	BB8	Strategic SuDS and Partnership Working with Severn Trent Water	SB8	Strategic SuDS and Partnership Working with Severn Trent Water	SR8	Raised Defence alongside Belgrave
						SR9	Corporation Road Landscaping Works/Raised Footpath
						SR10	Improving existing Raised Defences at Thurcaston Road
						SR11	Strategic SuDS and partnership working with Severn Trent Water



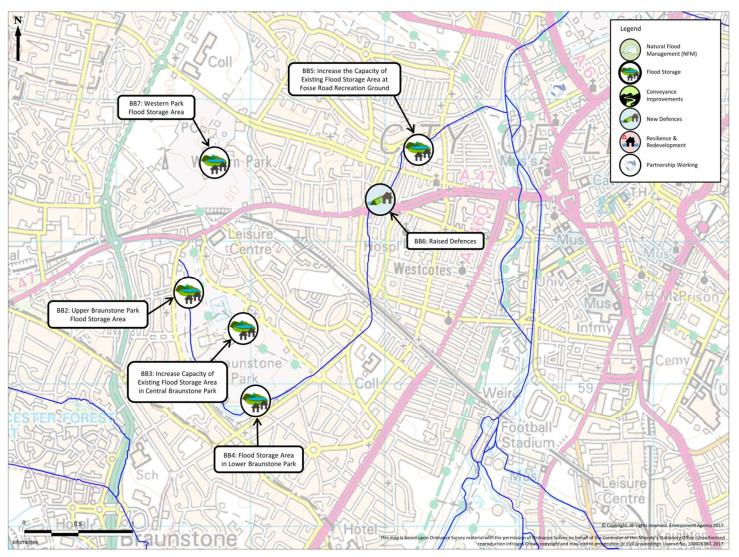


Figure 3 Braunstone Brook 'Do Something More' Measures



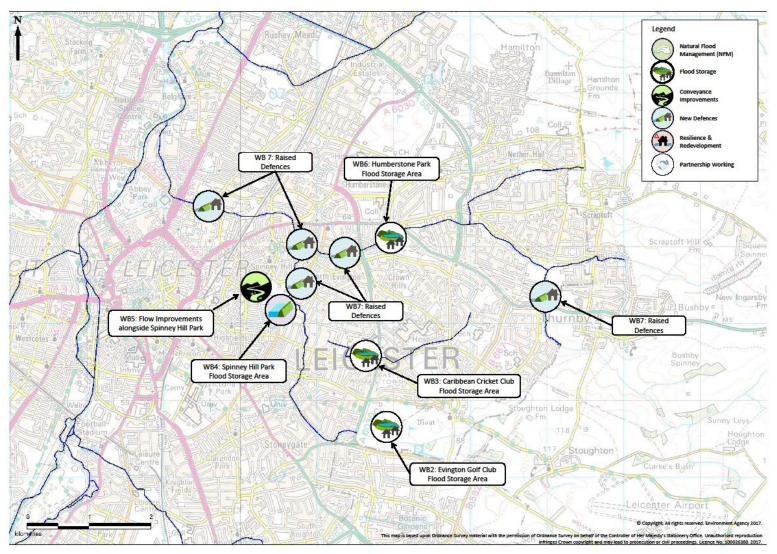


Figure 4 Willow Brook 'Do Something More' Measures



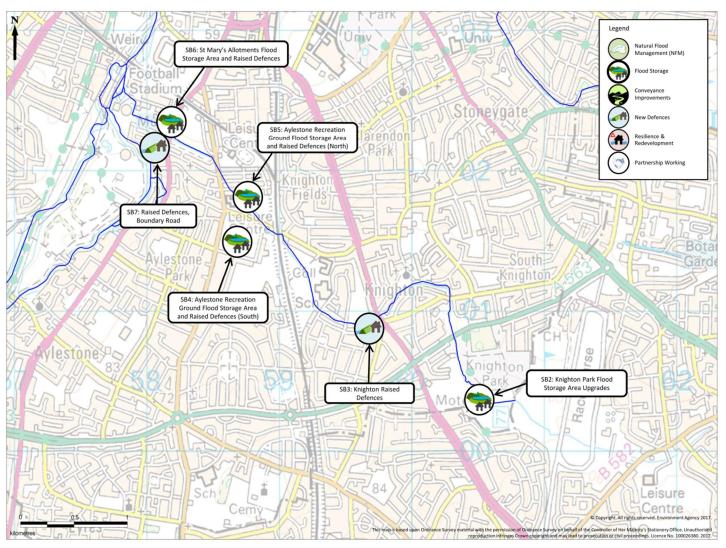


Figure 5 Saffron Brook 'Do Something More' Measures



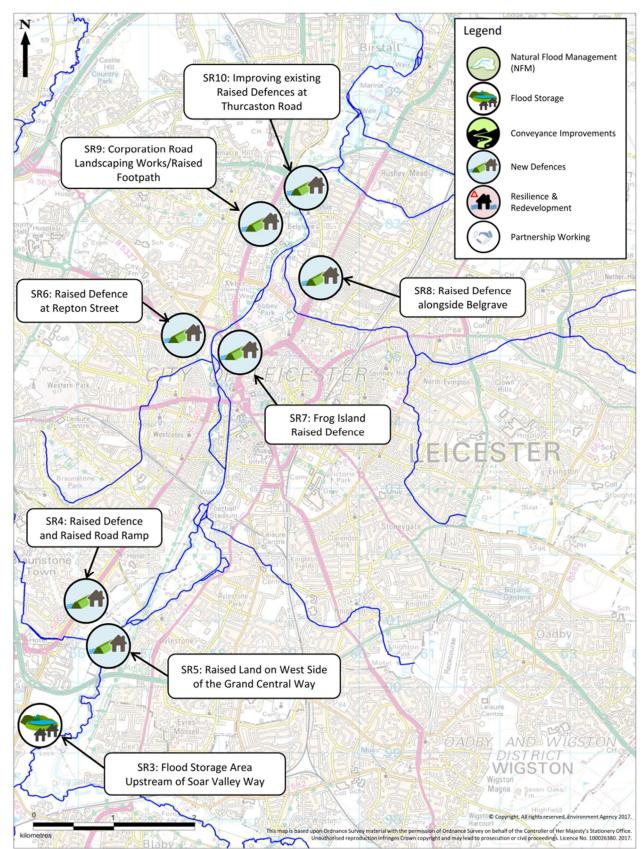


Figure 6: River Soar 'Do something More' Measures

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