

Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group	
Meeting Date	30 th June 2026
Report Title	Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) and Swale Borough Council SFRA Level 2 Scoping Exercise (2026)
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
SMT Lead	Joanne Johnson, Head of Place
Lead Officer	Anna Stonor, Principal Planner, Planning Policy
Classification	Open
Recommendations	To note the Swale Borough Council Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) and Swale Borough Council SFRA Level 2 Scoping Exercise and to provide any comments on the document

1. Introduction

1.1. The purpose of this report is to present the Swale Borough Council Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) and the Swale Borough Council SFRA Level 2 Scoping Exercise.

1.2. The main purposes of the SFRA are to:

- provide evidence for the emerging Local Plan, including supporting the selection of site allocations; and
- to provide information and guidance to be used in the preparation of Flood Risk Assessments in support of site-specific planning applications.

It must be compliant with updates to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

2. Background

2.1. The NPPF explains (1) that strategic policies should be informed by strategic flood risk assessments and thereby manage flood risk from all sources, considering cumulative impacts and taking account of advice from the Environment Agency and other relevant flood risk management authorities, such as lead local flood authorities and internal drainage boards, and (2) that plans should apply a sequential, risk-based approach to the location of development. The SFRA provides the basis for applying the sequential test.

2.2. SFRAs are generally prepared in two phases:

- Level 1: required as part of the evidence base for the Local Plan under the NPPF. The assessment should be sufficiently detailed to allow application of the sequential test.
- Level 2: where land outside of Flood Zones 2 and 3¹ cannot appropriately accommodate all the necessary development creating the need to apply the NPPF's Exception Test. In these circumstances the assessment should consider the detailed nature of the flood characteristics within a Flood Zone and assessment of other sources of flooding. Since land outside of Flood Zones 2 and 3 cannot appropriately accommodate all the necessary development in Swale a Level 2 SFRA is required for the Swale Local Plan.

2.3. The Level 1 SFRA (Appendix I) covers the following topics:

- Policy and strategy for flood risk management
- Roles and responsibilities for Risk Management Authorities
- Sequential and Exception Tests
- Sources of Information
- Climate change
- Understanding flood risk in the area
- Fluvial and coastal defences
- Flood risk requirements for developers
- Principles for site design and master planning
- Surface water management and Sustainable Urban Drainage (SuDs)
- Special areas for consideration (Faversham Creek, Iwade and Minster)
- Flood warning and emergency planning
- Strategic flood risk solutions
- Assessment of flood risk in potential development areas
- Cumulative impacts
- Recommendations

2.4. As well as the main body of the report a suite of mapping has been produced as part of the SFRA. These are reproduced in PDF as appendices to this report. The relevant parts of the GIS versions of this mapping will be included on the Council's interactive web mapping and the Local Plan Proposals Map.

2.5. As part of the Level 1 SFRA, 636 HEELA sites were screened against a suite of available flood risk data to provide a summary of risk to each site. The screening was undertaken using GIS software that computes a range of flood risk metrics based on flood and receptor datasets. Further to this, and further mapping updates

¹ Flood zones classify land according to the likelihood of flooding from rivers or the sea. The classification is based on statistical probability rather than historic flood events. Flood Zone 1 represents land with the lowest probability of flooding from rivers or the sea - land with less than a 0.1% annual probability of flooding from these sources. Flood Zone 2 represents land with a medium probability of flooding - land with between 0.1% and 1% annual probability of river flooding, or between 0.1% and 0.5% annual probability of sea flooding. Flood Zone 3 represents land with the highest probability of flooding from rivers or the sea - land with 1% annual probability of river flooding or greater, or 0.5% annual probability of sea flooding or greater.

which took place through the SFRA, the final exercise of the Level 1 SFRA was a scoping exercise on the 72 sites identified by Members at Full Council on 1st April 2026 to potentially take forward within the Local Plan.

- 2.6. These 72 sites were assessed and guidance given as to whether a Level 2 SFRA should be undertaken. The results of this are presented in the Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Scoping Exercise (Appendix II), May 2026.
- 2.7. This exercise demonstrates that 14 sites are 'most preferable' in terms of flooding (0% of the allocation at flood risk), 33 are 'less preferable' (up to 20% of the site is at risk of either surface, fluvial or tidal flood risk) and 25 are 'least preferable' (over 20% of the site at risk from surface water, fluvial or tidal flood risk). Ten sites sit within the proposed Coastal Change Management Area.
- 2.8. Of the 25 'least preferable' sites, 2 were removed from the list as they are not being progressed as part of the Local Plan (due to further, more detailed site work showing them as no longer able to be allocated.) A Level 2 SFRA will be carried out for the remaining 23 sites. This will be ready in time for submission of the Local Plan. An initial high-level report will be made available on the Local Plan website ahead of the forthcoming Regulation 19 Consultation. Consultant advice to date is that all sites are developable, with mitigation. (Please see the section titled 'Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level 2' and recommendation 5 in the following report titled 'Local Plan Review – Regulation 19 Consultation Launch'.)
- 2.9. As well as the report and mapping, a number of important appendices have also been produced, in particular:
 - a. Appendix J (of Appendix I to this report), Coastal Change Management Area (CCMA) – this sets out the methodology for defining the CCMA in Swale (see policy C6 of the Regulation 19 Local Plan);
 - b. Appendix L (of Appendix I to this report), Sequential Test Dataset Guidance Document – this sets out the datasets required for the preparation and assessment of the sequential test across the borough; and
 - c. Appendix N (of Appendix I to this report), MEAS Contribution Zone – this sets out the areas where financial contributions will be sought for flood defence infrastructure to contribute to the Medway Estuary and Swale Coastal Risk Management Strategy (see policy C7 of the Regulation 19 Local Plan). The impacts of this proposed policy have been included in the Whole Plan Viability Assessment.
- 2.10. With regard to the CCMA around Warden (Appendix J of the SFRA), it should be noted, that this is significantly larger than in the adopted Local Plan and now includes large areas of Warden itself. This is because the Shoreline Management Plan's (SMP) mapping was updated in January 2025 using data from the

Environment Agency's National Coastal Erosion Risk Map (NCERM)². To view the new outlines for Warden, please see the SMP: <https://environment.data.gov.uk/shoreline-planning/unit/SMP10/4A05>

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 To note the Swale Borough Council Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) and Swale Borough Council SFRA Level 2 Scoping Exercise (2026) and to provide any comments on the document and its findings.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 The matters in this report concern informing members on the development of the Local Plan evidence base.
- 4.2 Members could choose not to note the SFRA. However, choosing this option should be rejected as the evidence will provide a robust and updated position for policy drafting and the Local Plan Examination in Public.

5. Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 The following parties have been consulted during the preparation of this Level 1 SFRA: Swale Borough Council (planning policy and engineering teams); Kent County Council (the Lead Local Flood Authority); Southern Water; Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board; Marine Management Organisation; Neighbouring authorities (Ashford Borough Council, Canterbury City Council, Maidstone Borough Council, Medway Council) and most significantly the Environment Agency who have been extensively involved in the preparation of the SFRA.
- 5.2 The Regulation 19 Local Plan will be subject to a period of formal consultation at which point comments will be invited on the Plan, its policies and the supporting evidence base.

² The NCERM describes itself as showing 'the best available national information on coastal erosion risk and will be used by coastal risk management authorities and the Environment Agency to inform coastal management investment and local planning decisions'. It continues, 'the map does not show the area of land that will definitely be lost to erosion. The absolute extent of future erosion could lie anywhere within the risk zone, or in extreme cases beyond it.... The rate of erosion can be highly variable. It may be relatively consistent over time or could involve periods of faster or sudden erosion. Due to the complexity of predicting the location, timing and extent of erosion events, it is possible for the projections shown on the map to be exceeded.'

6. Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	The proposals in the report align with the following Corporate Plan action: • A Local Plan with local needs and capacity at its heart
Financial, Resource and Property	The Local Plan work program is fully funded across a combination of base budget, committed reserves and a contribution from the Government's Local Plans Delivery Fund.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	No implications identified at this stage
Crime and Disorder	No implications identified at this stage.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	This evidence will help to minimise and mitigate impacts on from flooding within the Local Plan.
Health and Wellbeing	No implications identified at this stage.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	No implications identified at this stage.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	No implications identified at this stage.
Equality and Diversity	No implications identified at this stage.
Privacy and Data Protection	No implications identified at this stage.
Local Government Reorganisation	The current Local Plan timetable expects the Local Plan to be submitted for its Examination in Public and to be adopted before local government reorganisation is expected to be complete.

7. Appendices

Appendix I: Swale Borough Council Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, and Appendices (A-N)

Appendix II: Swale Borough Council Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, Level 2 Scoping Exercise and Appendix A