

Flood risk assessments: Climate change allowances

Application of the allowances and local considerations

East Anglia; Essex, Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire

1) The climate change allowances

The [National Planning Practice Guidance](#) refers planners, developers and advisors to the Environment Agency guidance on considering climate change in Flood Risk Assessments (FRAs). This guidance was updated in February 2016 and is available on [Gov.uk](#). The guidance can be used for planning applications, local plans, neighbourhood plans and other projects. It provides climate change allowances for peak river flow, peak rainfall, sea level rise, wind speed and wave height. The guidance provides a range of allowances to assess fluvial flooding, rather than a single national allowance. It advises on what allowances to use for assessment based on vulnerability classification, flood zone and development lifetime.

2) Assessment of climate change impacts on fluvial flooding

Table A below indicates the level of technical assessment of climate change impacts on fluvial flooding appropriate for new developments depending on their scale and location. This should be used as a **guide only**. Ultimately, the agreed approach should be based on expert local knowledge of flood risk conditions, local sensitivities and other influences. **For these reasons we recommend that applicants and / or their consultants should contact the Environment Agency at the pre-planning application stage to confirm the assessment approach, on a case by case basis.**

Table A defines three possible approaches to account for flood risk impacts due to climate change, in new development proposals:

- **Basic:** Developer can add an allowance to the 'design flood' (i.e. 1% annual probability) peak levels to account for potential climate change impacts. The allowance should be derived and agreed locally by Environment Agency teams.
- **Intermediate:** Developer can use existing modelled flood and flow data to construct a stage-discharge rating curve, which can be used to interpolate a flood level based on the required peak flow allowance to apply to the 'design flood' flow.
- **Detailed:** Perform detailed hydraulic modelling, through either re-running Environment Agency hydraulic models (if available) or construction of a new model by the developer.

Table A – Indicative guide to assessment approach

VULNERABILITY CLASSIFICATION	FLOOD ZONE	DEVELOPMENT TYPE		
		MINOR	SMALL-MAJOR	LARGE-MAJOR
ESSENTIAL INFRASTRUCTURE	Zone 2	Detailed		
	Zone 3a	Detailed		
	Zone 3b	Detailed		
HIGHLY VULNERABLE	Zone 2	Intermediate/ Basic	Intermediate/ Basic	Detailed
	Zone 3a	Not appropriate development		
	Zone 3b	Not appropriate development		
MORE VULNERABLE	Zone 2	Basic	Basic	Intermediate/ Basic
	Zone 3a	Intermediate/ Basic	Detailed	Detailed
	Zone 3b	Not appropriate development		
LESS VULNERABLE	Zone 2	Basic	Basic	Intermediate/ Basic
	Zone 3a	Basic	Basic	Detailed
	Zone 3b	Not appropriate development		
WATER COMPATIBLE	Zone 2	None		
	Zone 3a	Intermediate/ Basic		
	Zone 3b	Detailed		

Note: Where the table states 'not appropriate development', this is in line with national planning policy. If in exceptional circumstances such development types are proposed in these locations, we would expect a detailed modelling approach to be used.

NOTES:

- Minor: 1-9 dwellings/ less than 0.5 ha | Office / light industrial under 1ha | General industrial under 1 ha | Retail under 1 ha | Gypsy/traveller site between 0 and 9 pitches
- Small-Major: 10 to 30 dwellings | Office / light industrial 1ha to 5ha | General industrial 1ha to 5ha | Retail over 1ha to 5ha | Gypsy/traveller site over 10 to 30 pitches
- Large-Major: 30+ dwellings | Office / light industrial 5ha+ | General industrial 5ha+ | Retail 5ha+ | Gypsy/traveller site over 30+ pitches | any other development that creates a non residential building or development over 1000 sq m.

The assessment approach should be agreed with the Environment Agency as part of pre-planning application discussions to avoid abortive work.

3) Specific local considerations

Where the Environment Agency and the applicant and / or their consultant has agreed that a 'basic' level of assessment is appropriate the figures in Table B below can be used as a precautionary allowance for potential climate change impacts on peak 'design' (i.e. 1% annual probability) fluvial flood level rather than undertaking detailed modelling.

Table B – Local precautionary allowances for potential climate change impacts

Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk

Hydraulic Model (Watercourse)	Central	Higher Central	Upper
Blackwater & Brain - Blackwater between TL7520925623 and TL7820324314 Brain between TL7373323312 and TL7683821321	500mm	600mm	900mm
Chelmer - between TL6872107082 and TL7161609422 and TL7436306592	350mm	450mm	750mm
Colne (Model Extent)	450mm	600mm	950mm
Gipping – Downstream of Needham Market	400mm	500mm	850mm
Gipping – Needham Market and upstream including Somersham W/C	200mm	250mm	400mm
Norwich Downstream of TG2332009072	450mm	600mm	950mm
Norwich Upstream of TG2332009072	600mm	800mm	1200mm
Wensum (Model Extent)	400mm	500mm	800mm
Yare (Model Extent)	200mm	250mm	450mm
Broads (2008 Model Extent) Bure and Ant (2012 Model Extent)	Please use the current 1 in 1000 (0.1%) annual probability including climate change allowance		
Other main rivers, tributaries and ordinary watercourses	<p>For other main rivers, tributaries and ordinary watercourses that are not stated above, basic allowances have not been calculated. In this instance you can either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If flow data is available you can request this data from us and can conduct an intermediate assessment yourself • Or alternatively, you can choose to undertake a Detailed Assessment and “perform detailed hydraulic modelling, through either re-running our hydraulic models (if available) or constructing a new model 		

Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire

Watercourse / Model	Central	Higher Central	Upper End
Alconbury Brook	600mm	700mm	900mm
River Kym			
Lower Ouse (Model Extent)	700mm	800mm	1100mm
Mid Ouse (Cold Brayfield to Bromham – between SP9156852223 and TL0132950919)	700mm	800mm	1100mm
Mid Ouse (East of Bedford to Roxton – between TL0791848903 and TL1618854543)	700mm	850mm	1200mm
River Hiz and River Purwell	400mm	450mm	550mm
River Ivel	500mm	600mm	750mm
Pix Brook	450mm	500mm	600mm
Potton Brook	500mm	600mm	700mm
River Cam and tributaries (excluding the Cam Lodes and the Slade System)	600mm	700mm	950mm
Great Barford (ordinary watercourses)	500mm	550mm	650mm
Bromham (ordinary watercourse)	550mm	650mm	850mm

NOTES:

Urban areas excluded from the 'basic' approach: St Ives, Holywell, Godmanchester, Swavesey, Over, Bedford, Newport Pagnell, Buckingham and Leighton Buzzard. More detailed assessment of climate change allowances will need to be undertaken in these locations.

Use of these allowances will only be accepted after discussion with the Environment Agency.

4) Fluvial food risk mitigation

For planning consultations where we are a statutory consultee and our [Flood risk standing](#) advice **does not** apply we use the following benchmarks to inform flood risk mitigation for different vulnerability classifications. **These are a guide only. We strongly recommend you contact us at the pre-planning application stage to confirm this on a case by case basis.** For planning consultations where we are not a statutory consultee or our [Flood risk Standing advice](#) applies we recommend local planning authorities and developers use these benchmarks but we do not expect to be consulted.

- For development classed as '**Essential Infrastructure**' our benchmark for flood risk mitigation is for it to be designed to the '**upper end**' climate change allowance for the epoch that most closely represents the lifetime of the development, including decommissioning.
- For **highly vulnerable** or **more vulnerable developments** in flood zone 2, the '**central**' climate change allowance is our minimum benchmark for flood risk mitigation, and in flood zone 3 the '**higher central**' climate change allowance is our minimum benchmark for flood risk mitigation. In sensitive locations it may be necessary to use the **higher central** (in flood zone 2) and the **upper end** allowance (in flood zone 3).
- For **water compatible** or **less vulnerable** development (e.g. commercial), the '**central**' climate change allowance for the epoch that most closely represents the lifetime of the development is our minimum benchmark for flood risk mitigation. In sensitive locations it may be necessary to use the **higher central** (particularly in flood zone 3) to inform built in resilience.

For a visual representation of the above, please see Tables 1 and 2 overleaf.

5) Development in Tidal Areas

There is no change to the way we respond to sites affected solely by tidal flood risk as the sea level allowances are unchanged.

6) Our Service

Non-chargeable service

We will give a free opinion on:

- What climate change allowance to apply to a particular development type
- Which technical approach is suitable in the FRA

Chargeable service:

- Review of climate change impacts using intermediate and detailed technical approaches (i.e. modelling review)
- Assessment and review of proposals for managed adaptation.

Table 1 peak river flow allowances by river basin district (use 1961 to 1990 baseline)					
River basin district	Allowance category	Total potential change anticipated for '2020s' (2015 to 39)	Total potential change anticipated for '2050s' (2040 to 2069)	Total potential change anticipated for '2080s' (2070 to 2115)	
Anglian	Upper end	25%	35%	65%	
	Higher central	15%	20%	35%	
	Central	10%	15%	25%	
Thames	Upper end	25%	35%	70%	
	Higher central	15%	25%	35%	
	Central	10%	15%	25%	
Table 2: Using peak river flow allowances for flood risk assessments					
Flood Zone	Essential Infrastructure	Highly Vulnerable	More Vulnerable	Less Vulnerable	Water Compatible
2	higher central and upper end allowances	higher central and upper end allowances	central and higher central allowances	central allowance	none of the allowances
3a	upper end allowance	X	higher central and upper end	central and higher central	central allowance
3b	upper end allowance	X	X	X	central allowance
<p>X – Development should not be permitted If (exceptionally) development is considered appropriate when not in accordance with flood zone vulnerability categories, then it would be appropriate to use the upper end allowance.</p>					

There may be circumstances where local evidence supports the use of other data or allowances. Where you think this is the case we may want to check this data and how you propose to use it.

Appendix 1 – Further information on the Intermediate approach.

- 1) The methodology the chart is based on does not produce an accurate stage-discharge rating and is a simplified methodology for producing flood levels that can be applied in low risk small-scale development situations;
- 2) The method should not be applied where there is existing detailed modelled climate change outputs that use the new allowances. In such circumstances, the 'with climate change' modelled scenarios should be applied.

An example stage-discharge relationship is shown below.

