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Date: 4 February 2013

Dear Mrs Fletcher

Flooding and drainage issues in Fulford, York

I refer to your letter dated 24 January. The amount of rainfall experienced during the period from April to December last year was exceptional, an average of approximately 91mm a month compared with the long term average of 51mm. You will understand that this will inevitably increase the frequency of flood risk, and this was indeed the case. The areas that are subject to flooding are well documented in the Environment Agency's flood zone mapping and the extent of flooding experienced correlated with this information on each occasion. With this knowledge it is possible for the Council to take necessary action to manage the situation which in Fulford is closing the A19 and providing appropriate assistance to the residents of the Fordlands Road area. This is currently unavoidable when the river reaches these levels, but, as you are aware, had the Germany Beck development been built this would not have been a problem .

An additional problem experienced both at Fulford, and widely across the country, has been the increased effects of surface water flooding not associated with the river system which causes flooding due to run off to low spots. This is further aggravated throughout the Council's area by clay land that does not drain well and a particular instance of this has been noticeable by the runoff from fields onto the A19, and is also, as you have pointed out a problem at the Cemetery. Regrettably there is nothing that can be done to alleviate such waterlogging, which is a characteristic of the type of ground.

With regard to the Cherrywood/Fordlands Crescent and West Moor estate some of the area is, unfortunately, in the high flood risk zone 3. The flood risk mapping clearly shows that river flooding can occur through Tunnel drain and that this will affect property. I am aware that the area did not suffer flooding in the September event but did in November, a lower river level flood. From subsequent analysis there were two problems affecting Fordlands Crescent which may or may not have been related. The first problem to show was probably surface water flooding at the roundabout, which became noticeable and, according to residents, was higher than in September. Tunnel Drain passes under here, draining a quite large area south east of the A64/A19 and the housing area to the south of Fordlands Crescent. This culvert is protected from backflow from Germany Beck by a flap valve.

It is likely that the flap valve was leaking, which can typically be caused by trapped debris, causing the river level to be reflected at the roundabout which is a low point. The local rainfall which occurred over the very saturated catchment may have increased the level in the partially closed drain, raising the level of water at the roundabout. Why such a level was not reached in September is unclear, as the river level was higher, but there was no local rainfall. It is possible that the flap valve had sealed more effectively on that occasion preventing backflow from the river. I understand that the foul sewer also backed up and was possibly blocked, and YWS took appropriate action and are investigating further.

With regard to the Germany Beck development I am not sure why you say it is clear that the proposed new junction will not be effective in solving the problems on the A19. The current flooding of the road occurs as the rising river backs up and the level is reflected in directly in Germany Beck. This flows under the bridge until such a level is reached when it flows over the road as well. The same will happen when the road is raised but flow will only be under the road, and the A19 will remain clear. The proposals have been reviewed by the Council, the EA and the Ouse and Derwent IDB and all are in agreement that the proposals address flood risk satisfactorily. Not only will the problems of the A19 be resolved but this access road to the new development will also provide a link to Fordlands road which will maintain access to 300 households during flood events, which must surely be welcomed. Funding of this work, as you will be aware, is the responsibility of the developer and the Council will ensure that the design meets it the necessary requirements, including the appropriate design level for the road.

Details of foul and surface water drainage details will be submitted to the Council as is the usual procedure to enable planning conditions relating to these to be discharged. The Council, EA and IDB are in agreement with the design principles for these elements of the development. YWS are currently in discussion with the applicant about the drainage on site and the Council will be consulting with EA, IDB and YWS on the receipt of details to comply with the requirements of the conditions.

Finally, with regard to the issue of insurance you will be aware that the housing will be located in the low risk flood zone 1, with possibly a small amount in flood zone 2. Residential development in both of these zones is permissible in the National Planning Policy Framework, as they were under PPS 25. No housing is proposed in the high risk zone 3, and consequently there is no reason for these properties to be uninsurable.

Yours sincerely

Flood Risk Manager