

<b>Committee(s)</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Planning and Transportation Committee [for decision] Policy and Resources Committee [for decision]	16/11/21 18/11/21
Subject: <b>Riverside Strategy for adoption</b>	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	1,11,12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	n/a
What is the source of Funding?	n/a
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	n/a
Report of: Juliemma McLoughlin / Gordon Roy Executive Director Environment / District Surveyor and Environmental Resilience Director	For Decision
Report author: Tim Munday & Janet Laban Environmental Resilience Team	

### **Summary**

This report seeks Member approval for adoption of the City of London Riverside Strategy 2021. This follows redrafting of the strategy to take account of responses to the public consultation (July/Aug 2021). Several non-material changes have been made to the draft strategy to strengthen the approach to biodiversity and accessibility and to promote the need for best practice engineering solutions when flood defences are raised.

This City Riverside Strategy provides a roadmap to guide the City of London Corporation as Local Authority and Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) for the Square Mile. Our aim is to ensure that the City remains at low risk of flooding throughout this century and beyond, taking account of the predicted changes in sea level rise because of climate change. The options set out in this strategy align with the Climate Action Strategy's goal that the Square Mile's buildings, public spaces and infrastructure are resilient to climate change. The strategy will be reviewed at least every 10 years in the light of new evidence and may change in the future.

### **Recommendation(s)**

- i) Members of Planning and Transportation Committee are asked to:

- Recommend for onwards approval to the Policy and Resource Committee, the text of the draft Riverside Strategy for adoption, subject to the incorporation of any changes proposed by this Committee.
- ii) Members of the Policy and Resources Committee are asked to:
- Approve the text of the draft Riverside Strategy for adoption.

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. The Environment Agency led Thames Estuary 2100 Plan (TE2100) identifies actions that will need to be taken during this century to protect the land adjacent to the tidal Thames from fluvial flood risk. This area, including parts of the City, is protected from severe tidal flooding by the Thames Barrier and the other estuary defences. However, climate change impacts such as sea level rise and the prevalence of more extreme weather events mean that additional local and estuary-wide protection will be needed later this century.
2. Within the City the TE2100 plan identifies the need to raise flood defences to 5.85m AOD (above ordinance datum) by 2065 and 6.35m AOD by 2100. For the City's riverside this means raising parts of the flood defence by up to 1m although some sections are already at the required level for 2100. (see Riverside Strategy appendix 1 *Where are we now*). Through the TE2100 ten -year review it is looking increasingly likely that these dates will be brought forward since sea level rise is accelerating faster than anticipated.
3. This defence raising will have an impact on riverfront structures and walkways, on views of the river from the riverside walk and from nearby buildings. These impacts will need to be managed in a way that integrates the raised defences with the wider riverside environs. It also presents opportunities to enhance the user experience of the riverside, improve opportunities for biodiversity and highlight the historic importance of the City's riverside. Planning now will enable the most cost-effective options to be implemented in a pro- active way, thus maximizing the potential opportunities associated with programmed works.
4. The Environmental Resilience team in the Environment Department has developed this riverside strategy to interpret the TE2100 plan at a local level. The development of this riverside strategy fulfils part of the statutory Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) 2021-27 as approved by Planning & Transportation (P&T) committee on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2021. The strategy also aligns with the Climate Action Strategy's goals that the City Corporation and its assets and the Square Mile's buildings, public spaces and infrastructure are resilient to climate change.
5. The draft Riverside Strategy was approved for public consultation at the P&T Committee on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2021. Responses from this consultation have been considered in drafting the final Riverside Strategy for adoption, which will provide a roadmap to guide the City of London Corporation as Local Authority and Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) for the Square Mile. Our aim is to ensure that the City remains at low risk of flooding throughout this century and beyond, taking account of the predicted changes in sea level rise as a result of climate change.

The options set out in this strategy will be reviewed at least every 10 years in the light of new evidence and may change in the future

## **Current Position**

6. The public consultation took place from 5<sup>th</sup> July to 16<sup>th</sup> August 2021 and was advertised through the website, the press, social media channels and through letters sent to riverside building owners. A 'StoryMap' introduction to the strategy was developed for the public consultation, this received over 1500 views on the City Corporation's website during the consultation period. Officers also presented the consultation at several industry groups and events.
7. There were seventy-one responses from eleven organisations and eight individuals. This included many of the statutory bodies with an interest in the Thames including the Environment Agency (EA), Port of London Authority (PLA), Marine Management (MMO), Thames Water, Transport for London and Historic England. Responses were also received from the planning divisions of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham.
8. Most respondents expressed support for the proposed strategy. Several felt that further clarification was needed in relation to the biodiversity strategy point, the opportunity works brought to improving river use facilities and highlighting the need for step free access to apply beyond the riverside walkway.
9. In summary the following changes were made in response to the public consultation:
  - Historic flooding – new paragraph 3.3 has been added on the history of the flood defence to complement the general background of the riverside.
  - Increased Lead Time - Figure 2 and SP5 – change of lead time from five to ten years. This change was advised the Environment Agency.
  - Accessibility to riverside facilities – SP7, SP8, SP12 – To highlight that accessibility applies to jetties, piers, stairs, and other features as well as the riverside walk.
  - Maintaining Thames Path access during construction – SP7 (5.21) where practicable
  - Access to River egress points – SP9 – clarifying that the egress points (ladders stairs etc.) need to be both retained and extended up so that they remain usable.
  - Biodiversity– SP10 – the policy has been amended to highlight the range of aquatic and land-based opportunities, the importance of habitats and biodiversity net gain.
  - Riparian facilities and impact of raising – SP12 – The need to maintain a functional interface with riparian facilities such as wharves, piers and future infrastructure has been added.
  - Surface water flooding – SP14 – The need to take account of surface water drainage arrangements when designing raised flood defences is highlighted in the text.
  - Lighting – SP15 – Highlighted that lighting will need to account for impacts to ecology and navigation.
10. The consultation draft included appendix 2 which illustrated possible options for flood defence raising. This has been removed from the adoption version but

remains available within the Arcadis report City of London Riverside Survey (Oct 2020). Inclusion within the strategy gives the impression that we have identified predetermined solutions, whereas the strategy aims to encourage best practice engineering solutions at the time of raising.

11. The draft strategy has been amended to take account of consultation responses and the revised Riverside Strategy for adoption is included at appendix A

### **Options**

12. The main alternative option to adopting the City's Riverside Strategy would be to challenge the TE2100 Plan through their public consultation in early 2022. The City Corporation's Local Plan 2015, draft City Plan 2036 and Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2021-27 all support the TE2100 Plan. Both the adopted 2015 Local Plan and the draft City Plan refer to the need for flood defence raising and require new development along the City's riverside to be designed to enable future flood defence raising, noting the responsibility of riparian owners for the maintenance and enhancement of flood defences.
13. The preferred option is to adopt and begin implementation of the City's Riverside Strategy sharing our learning from this with other riparian LLFAs providing protection for the whole Thames Estuary to 2100 and beyond. As LLFA we believe that the TE2100 Plan provides the best option for protection of the whole Thames Estuary. A more appropriate response to the TE2100 review public consultation would be to challenge the funding mechanism for implementation and explore other options for funding.

### **Proposals**

14. That Members approve the adoption of the text of draft Riverside Strategy. Following agreement, the Environmental Resilience Team will develop a final document with photos and illustrations to accompany the text. The Riverside Strategy will provide the basis for the adaptation of the City's Riverside to address the climate change impacts of sea level rise.

### **Key Data**

15. Appendix 1 *Where are we now* to the Riverside Strategy provides maps and data relating to the City's riverside.

### **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

16. **Strategic implications** – this strategy aligns with the following Corporate Plan objectives:
  - (1) People are safe and feel safe
  - (11) We have clean air, land and water and a thriving and sustainable natural environment
  - (12) Our spaces are secure, resilient and well maintained
17. The Riverside Strategy fulfils statutory duties agreed through the City's Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2021-27 and goals set out in the Climate Action Strategy 2020-

27. It also aligns with the Local Plan 2015 and draft City Plan 2036 which supports the Thames Estuary 2100 Plan for addressing flood risk from the tidal Thames
18. **Financial implications** Alongside other riparian owners the City Corporation and Bridge House Estates as riparian owners will need to address flood defence raising for the sections that they own. This strategy provides a cost-effective approach which enables this to be integrated into development and maintenance wherever possible enhancing the amenity and biodiversity value of the adjacent riverside.
  19. **Resource implications** Implementation of this strategy in the early years will be integrated into planned works and therefore will not incur any additional resources
  20. **Legal implications** The City Corporation as Lead Local Flood Authority has a statutory duty to develop a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) for its area. The City Corporation's LFRMS was adopted in January 2021 and commits to the preparation of a Riverside Strategy which will drive forward the requirements of the Thames Estuary 2100 Plan. The adoption and implementation of this riverside strategy will assist in fulfilling this commitment. The Riverside Strategy also aligns with policy in the statutory Local Plan and emerging City Plan 2036.
  21. **Risk Implications** Climate projections predict sea level rise that will affect the tidal Thames. Without a forward-looking strategy to deal with this the Square Mile and surrounding riparian boroughs will be susceptible to tidal flooding. This risk will be managed most cost effectively through a strategic approach which avoids structural and reputational damage from flooding and pre-empts the need for urgent measures as sea level rise accelerates.
  22. **Equalities implications** An Equalities Test of Relevance and Strategic Environmental Assessment was undertaken on the draft strategy and are available on request. Post consultation clarifications have been considered in this context and found to have only a positive impact.
  23. **Climate implications** This Strategy looks to address one of the main impacts of a changing climate on the City: sea level rise. The City Corporation's Climate Action Strategy includes goals for the City Corporation, its assets and the Square Mile to be resilient to climate change. This Strategy provides a key approach to implement this resilience whilst realising a range of co-benefits for the City's riverside. This pioneering approach will provide a blueprint for other riparian authorities reducing climate threats from sea level rise across the Thames Estuary
  24. **Security implications** – none.

## Conclusion

25. The City of London Riverside Strategy 2021 provides a forward-looking approach to adaptation of the City's riverside for the changes that are expected from climate change. This approach enables resilience to be integrated into planned works whilst enhancing the riverside environment for people and biodiversity. Members are asked to approve this strategy for adoption, implementation, and dissemination to other riparian authorities, to help prevent flooding along the Thames Estuary.

## Appendices

- Appendix A – Draft Riverside Strategy for Adoption including appendix 1  
*Where are we now*

## **Background Papers**

Planning & Transportation Committee Report: Riverside Strategy for public Consultation 29/06/2021

Planning & Transportation Committee Report: local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2021-27 16/02/2021

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## Appendix A: Draft City of London Riverside Strategy for Adoption