

4, Slough Farm Road, Halstead, Essex, CO9 1XR

Statement to Halstead Town Council 15/04/19

The River Colne is 39 miles long, it rises near Stambourne Green, Birdbrook and Cornish Hall End. The catchment area north of Doe's corner to its source(s) is 4,400 hectares.

October 2001- Halstead received one month's rainfall in one day. Industrial, retail and residential dwellings were impacted. Transport links were interrupted.

April 2005-Work started on Flood Defence scheme of sluice gates and earth embankment. Part of the brief of the design was to minimise the impact on the surrounding environment (badger and otter passes installed) and rural landscape (Black Poplar trees planted). The river channel was improved for fish, aquatic plants and animals. The scheme was intended to help mitigate damage from similar events in the future. There is a river level monitoring station upstream at Poole Street and at the sluice gates. The scheme will store a huge volume of flood water.

June 2006-Officially opened.

2009-North Essex Catchment Flood Management Plan has a life of 50-100 years. Planning Departments are stakeholders.

September 2015-Environment Agency in early stages of development better flood defences at Townsford Mill, Halstead town centre. Tackling the issue of flooding has been identified as a priority by Essex County Council.

These are just some of the points of note in the life of the River Colne, the following whilst not date identified are also worthy of recognition.

1. The river bank on the bank behind Broton Industrial Estate has benefited from piling reinforcement; the bank on the opposite side has suffered erosion. *Δ FIA Flood Area*
2. Downstream of the Town Bridge Vermin are a regular sight, bank side foliage continues to grow unmanaged and unchecked. The river bed level continues to rise (whilst both river flow and level fall) through a build up of shingle and sediment either side of the Townsford Mill, or further downstream at Millbridge a reed bed has become a permanent feature. The ability of the River to host aquatic life due to oxygen levels. All these factors affect the River Colne water flow into, through and out of the town.
3. Both globally and locally rainfall patterns and weather anomalies have changed and increased since 2000.
4. Farming practices are changing with "no till" practices increasing.
5. Water extraction licences are under review; this will change what is grown on the land.
6. Finally, surface water flooding (which accounts for 60% of all flooding incidents nationally) is going to increase. As planning applications continue to be approved both downstream, and uphill of the Flood defence barrier in Halstead, water will travel unchecked, and to the lowest point quicker, as homes, garages roads and pavements cover permeable fields. The becks/streams to the West of Sloe Hill are a good example; properties in Sloe Hill, Pippins, Beridge Road, both sides of Stanley Road, Butler Road and Slough Farm Road will be increasingly vulnerable.

7. The involvement of the Environment Agency, Anglian Water and, Braintree District Council (including the Voids Officer) is needed.

As a regular attendee of Halsted Town Council meetings over quite a few years, I have witnessed the increasing despair of our Town Councillors, and anger and frustration of Town residents over planning matters. This state of affairs is going to continue well into 2020.

In my view, planning applications are not dissimilar to Limited Company annual accounts; they are a small glimpse (one day) of a longer (annual) picture. The terms of reference for planning applications are too narrow, and do not reflect the wider area around the application. Planning applications are not Islands surrounded by water, but land surrounded by land, property and people.

The Braintree District Council Planning Committee has only one Halstead representative Cllr S.Kirby, are we allowed to lobby both him and the other District Councillors on the Planning Committee directly? Can we correspond with the Planning Department directly outside of the formal application process as we discover further objections? We really need to make every planning application have a personal identity to those who will make the decisions on them; the easy way to do this is through photos/images backing the written word.

We must make the Braintree District Council Planning Committee and the salaried employees of the Planning Department feel as if they both represent the people of, and actually live in Halstead itself. Above all they must fulfil their responsibility to the best of their ability, and use all their skills to this end. Once all the consultees have commented, the onus is firmly on the Planning Department and the Planning Committee to evaluate and apply all aspects of planning law, to the letter.

I fully understand how difficult their job is, the absence of a local plan in place, the garden village situation and the potential for developers to "landbank" are all factors that make things harder. Include Freedom of Information for increased public access, and statutory obligations to reply, their workload must have increased.

In recent months I have asked questions via the Halstead Town Council, and received replies, on Planning Department staffing levels, and traffic concerns on Sloe Hill/Beridge Road. I am still awaiting a reply on alternatives to S106 payments, namely the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Yesterday I wrote to the Braintree District Council Planning Department regarding the situation over the postal notifications and street notices of application 19/00519/OUT. I have copied in the Town Clerk on the correspondence.

As a resident of Slough Farm Road, I will be commenting on planning application 19/00519/OUT whenever necessary. I will adhere to the protocol of our Local government system and include other statutory consultees where appropriate.

Ian Tinton

15/04/19