

POINTS TO MAKE AT THE PLANNING MEETING (taken from the 'call in' letter)

We are pleased that attention is being given to the problem of flooding here, particularly given the damage caused by Storm Desmond in 2015, but we have serious misgivings about this current scheme.

We believe that these brutal engineering proposals are ill-considered and will permanently harm the beautiful riverside environment in our town despite the Environment Agency's assertions to the contrary

This scheme is Phase 1 of an inter-dependent 3 phase project the later phases of which involve upstream measures which have not yet been fully developed and for which Environmental Impact Assessments have not yet been prepared. Consultations with landowners have not been carried out and no planning applications have been made. But it seems self evident to us that these phases should be carried out first. The current scheme is out of sequence.

Proposals are being rushed through to meet an arbitrary deadline related to European funding

The Environment Agency has allowed the impression to be created locally that the current Phase 1 proposals will protect against another Storm Desmond but this is not the case. In fact the current scheme will protect relatively few properties and will actually increase the risk to some others. The benefits of the scheme have been exaggerated.

We believe that the visual impact of the proposals has been seriously underestimated throughout the Conservation Area. In the application the Environment Agency have simply asserted that *'from a landscape and visual perspective...the main adverse effects are limited to localized areas of the river corridor but not to the extent that it would result in an unacceptable effect on landscape character or from a visual amenity perspective'*. We do not agree with this assertion but believe that the true impact on the Conservation Area and the listed buildings in it will be – in plain English – devastating.

The supporting documentation in the application also leaves much to be desired. The visual impressions submitted are misleading and do not clearly illustrate the true impact of the walls or of the removal of the many mature trees. We believe that if the impact was accurately illustrated the public outcry would be even louder.

The professional design team of engineers that is leading this project unfortunately does not, in our view, have the necessary level of sensitivity to the handling of such a major design intervention in a Conservation Area. The many mistakes, inaccuracies and omissions that have been identified in the application make this plain. Significant work of this kind requires an intuitive understanding of the nature of the heritage assets that will be affected – a particular skill that is not currently being displayed by the team. For example, the construction details included in the application are no more than basic engineering diagrams.

Despite this, some improvements to parts of the scheme have been made during the progress of the application in particular in response to earlier comments by Historic England. However, there has simply not been sufficient time for such consultations to be properly concluded for the scheme as a whole because of the funding deadline. These consultations must be allowed to proceed to a conclusion.

We have made a number of positive suggestions to help to improve the scheme but this is not the place to elaborate on these. In broad terms they involve taking an altogether gentler and more sensitive approach to the design in the Conservation Area – an approach that could also perhaps retain many of the mature trees.

The heart of Kendal and its much visited, beautiful riverside environment is in serious danger of destruction by an ill thought out flood prevention scheme that is being rushed through to meet an arbitrary funding deadline. It is time to think again.