

GUIDANCE DOCUMENT FOR FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENTS FOR MINOR DEVELOPMENTS

This guidance is intended to help applicants understand when a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) is required for **minor developments** and the risk levels associated with minor development in flood risk zones. The Local Authority have produced a [flood risk assessment proforma](#) to complete, when your development is considered “minor” and is within a flood risk zone (required at the point of validation of planning applications).

1. What is Minor Development?

For planning purposes, *minor development* includes:

- Householder Development
- Minor Non-Residential Extensions
- Extensions to industrial, commercial, leisure or similar premises not exceeding 250m² of additional floorspace.
- Works that do not increase the size of a building (subject to vulnerability classification)

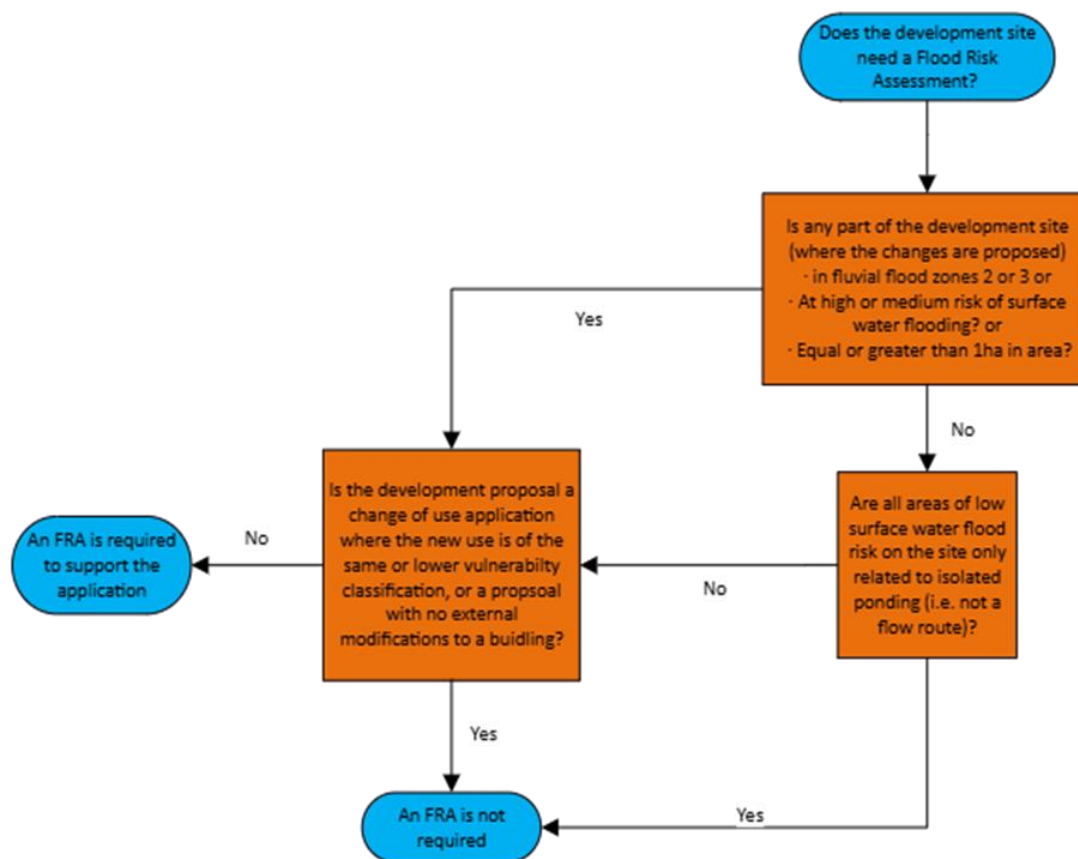
2. When and why is a flood risk assessment required?

National policy on flood risk is set out primarily in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and supported by the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) and Environment Agency guidance. Together, they establish a risk-based approach to ensure new development is directed away from areas of highest flood risk and that any development which must occur in such areas is made safe without increasing risk elsewhere.

In accordance with National Policy, Flood Risk Assessments are required for all development (including minor development and changes of use) proposed:

- in Flood Zones 2 or 3 or
- within Flood Zone 3b
- within Flood Zone 1 with a site area of 1 hectare or more
- within ‘Flood Zones plus Climate Change’, showing it is at increased risk of flooding from rivers or sea in future - see [flood map for planning](#)
- with Flood Zone 1 and the [flood map for planning](#) shows it is at risk of flooding from surface water (see further guidance below)
- within Flood Zone 1 where the LPA’s strategic flood risk assessment (SFRA) shows it will be at increased risk of flooding during its lifetime

The flow chart below has been produced for guidance purposes only. Note that where a site is in Flood Zone 1 and a low risk of surface water flooding, an assessment of the risk of the impacted flow route should be undertaken before determining whether a flood risk assessment is required.



To understand your flood risk check the Flood Map for Planning and the Long Term Flood Risk Map online.

3. Why do I need to assess surface water flood risk?

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was updated in December 2024, and this update brought a significant policy shift for surface water flood risk. The revised NPPF now requires an assessment of all sources of flooding, including surface water. This policy-level change clarifies that surface water flooding must be treated equally to other sources within national planning policy.

4. Do minor developments raise flood risk issues?

Minor developments generally do not raise significant flood risk concerns *unless* they:

- Adversely affect a watercourse, floodplain or flood defences
- Impede access to flood defence or flood-management infrastructure
- Have a cumulative impact that reduces local flood storage or alters flood flows

Even small extensions can influence flood risk on- or off-site, especially in flood-prone areas. Therefore applications for minor development involving extensions or additions must provide a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA). A simple, proportionate FRA is acceptable for most minor developments. A proforma has been produced which applicants can use as a template.

The Local Planning Authority consult the Lead Local Flood Authority on planning applications that have a risk of flooding (pluvial and fluvial), who review the submitted Flood Risk Assessment and submitted plans.

5. Assessing Flood Risk in Your Flood Risk Assessment (FRA)

Your FRA should assess:

- Assess sources of flooding, focusing on pluvial and fluvial sources
- Extent and depth of anticipated flooding (Note that the national flood maps provide depth of flooding above local ground level)
- Causes of flooding
- How climate change may increase risk over the lifetime of the development

The depths and likelihood of flooding should directly inform your mitigation strategy.

6. Mitigating Flood Risk

Principles for mitigation are:

- Designing out flood risk
- Keep floodwater out of buildings where possible, ideally by raising floor levels.
- Where exclusion cannot be fully achieved, use passive measures that defend against predicted flood depths.
- Consider flood depth and velocity when designing structural stability—traditional walls typically should not be expected to hold back more than 600mm of water.
- Incorporate flood-resilience techniques up to the predicted flood depth.
- Where risk varies across a site, use the highest recorded flood depth as the benchmark.
- If full mitigation cannot be achieved, provide a clear justification and explain what measures will ensure occupant safety in line with the Local Plan, NPPF and Planning Practice Guidance.

The Local Planning Authority strongly recommend seeking pre-application advice if standard measures cannot be met.

7. Mitigation recommendations from the Lead Local Flood Authority for Minor Development:

- Floor levels should be set no lower than the existing floor levels
- Explore opportunities to raise floor levels or incorporate passive measures to exclude water up to the likely flood level.
- If water exclusion is not feasible, incorporate resilience measures at least 300mm above the predicted flood depth.
- You must also show how the development will avoid surface-water flooding, such as by:
 - Diverting runoff safely around buildings
 - Raising floor levels above predicted surface water flood depths