

# Witney Flood Mitigation Group

Update to Members of WODC Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
September 2021



Witney Flood  
Mitigation Group



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WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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# WFMG's Outline Demands for the People of Witney



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- Remove bund between two footbridges on Langel Common and replace with continuous bridge – OCC [Quick Win](#)
- Place Electronic Gauges downstream of Witney Bridge to calculate Head Drop, and at the Langel Common ‘bund’ – this is critical for assessing the effect of the bridge and bund during flood/high water conditions – EA [Quick Win](#)
- Place or replace Gauge Boards at key points that do not become submerged during flood conditions, once again critical for assessing capacity during flood/high water conditions: E.g. Woodford Mill (head, by the trash grid), Downstream of the Bridge, Langel Common (upstream and downstream bund) – EA [Quick Win](#)
- Witney Bridge Redesign or Rebuild – OCC
- Proper maintenance of main river and ordinary watercourses – Combined Team
- An Attenuation Scheme upstream of Witney between Worsham and Crawley – Combined Team
- An Attenuation Scheme for Hailey Road Drain above Eastfield Road. OCC, as the highway authority, is the riparian owner for the Hailey Road Drain, where it is culverted under Eastfield Road and Hailey Road – Combined Team

# How WODC can help it's citizens and business owners



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- Review adequacy of and provide Crisis Management plan details, to reassure all residents
- Responsibly support the residents and this action group – why are you not leading/promoting a partnership funding scheme for Witney?
- Press OCC and EA for action and responsibilities, supporting us
- Press EA for assessment of riverbed and flow capacity assessment
- Press OCC for a bridge capacity investigation and remedial measures arising, including head drop across the bridge
- Pause all development contributing run off to the floodplain pending these investigations
- Assess how you will correct the errors made in allowing extensive development on and around the flood plain in Western and Central Witney
- Lead an active working group as our elected representatives, to help achieve a dependable remedy – from our perspective what we have observed so far is dysfunction amongst government departments

# Summary of WFMG & OCC Meeting – 5 August



- A much briefer visit than we had anticipated, despite offering to give the councillors a full tour of the area and point out all our engineering issues. We offered the councillors the opportunity of a more thorough visit next time
- We presented our evidence, including items attached within this document and photographs highlighting poor/inadequate maintenance
- Numerous questions posed, that we are awaiting answers for
- We requested that OCC conduct a study to alter or redesign the bridge, including how it IS economically viable, if consideration is given to the effect on Witney, it's critical infrastructure and the well being of it's people.
- We asked how we can help embellish/improve the Section 19 Flood Report being prepared which OCC will present on 30 September
- We asked how we can help OCC work better as a group with the other respective parties (OCC, WODC, EA, Publica, WFMG) assumed to be after September's District Council meeting

# Summary of WFMG & EA Site Visit – 11 August



- We spend c5.5 hours with the EA team of 4, visiting all areas and providing evidence of our concerns (poor maintenance, fallen trees, sand banks, illegible gauge boards etc.)
- The EA's primary Engineer (Shaun Shackelford) played down all of Witney's engineering issues. The overall message portrayed was: 'There is no problem here'. Much reference was made to 'normal conditions', however what we are trying to deal with here is capacity during flood conditions. We therefore made it clear that we have no confidence in his ability as technical adviser to the EA, therefore it is no wonder we have problems.
- We presented all our evidence, including items attached within this document and photographs highlighting poor/inadequate maintenance
- The EA confirmed that the Flood Warning system has been adjusted to provide better warning in future, through the adjustments of thresholds and use of flow measurements at Worsham
- Numerous questions posed, that we are awaiting answers for – roles and Relationships, Desilting, Monitoring and Flood Warnings, Riparian Owner Responsibilities
- We asked how we can help EA work better as a group with the other respective parties (OCC, WODC, EA, Publica, WFMG) assumed to be after September's District Council meeting
- We asked for clarification on maintenance schedule/engineering work plan data we downloaded from EA website which cannot be cross referenced to Witney so makes little sense.
- We agreed to review Partnership Funding to assess a Flood Alleviation Scheme for Witney (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/partnership-funding>)
- We provided detailed information on properties that flooded at Christmas (which were not on the EA's records)
- We await a report and outcomes from the site inspection, by the EA Team and a follow up meeting at EA Wallingford

**Material Presented to the EA and OCC**  
(photographic evidence provided separately)

# Interesting Facts from Previous Flood Reports



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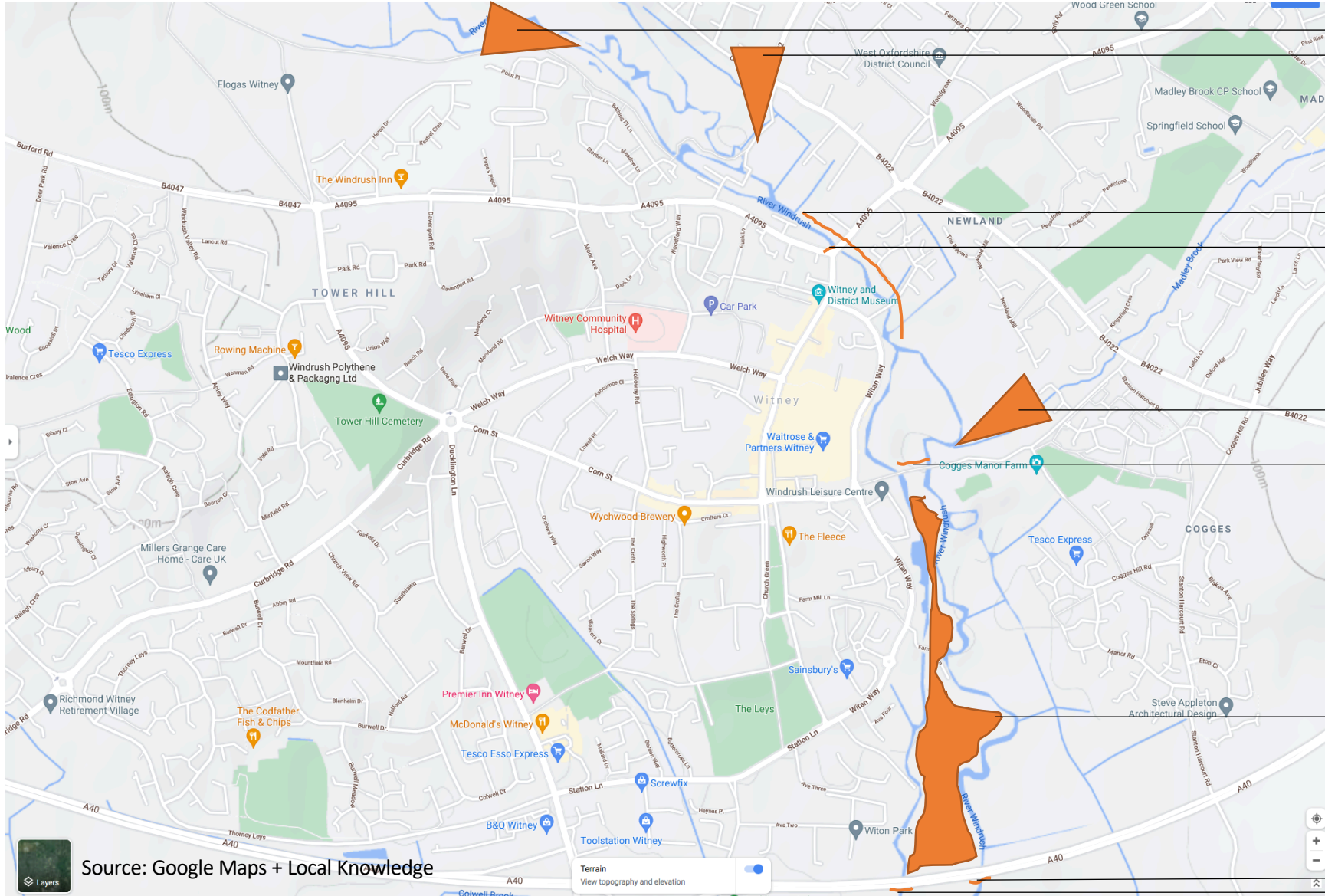
- **OCC Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, April 2016, Page 14** - Refers to Oxfordshire Strategic Flood Group, that meets quarterly. Where are they now ? Page 20 - As a result conducted in 2012 which indicated that many people (45%) want to know more about where work is planned to manage flood risk... OCC Will undertake the following: Keep residents informed, Provide info to councillors, Develop guidance for riparian Land owners, Develop and publicise a system for recording all flood incidents and undertake flood investigations. Strategy will be updated every 5 years... [What is your update on this](#)
- **EA Witney Flood Alleviation Scheme, April 2014. Page 15** References EA Flood Report 2007 on maintenance Specifically desilting 'as required'. Page 22 - Engineered Flood Defences for Witney are uneconomic. [Where is the economic calculation and there is not desilting evidence.](#)
- **WODC - Parish Flood Report, May 2008, Option B from Area 6A** "De silt the right bank opening of the bridge under Bridge Street. This is not a difficult operation provided only the silt under the bridge is removed. EA and OCC have confirmed this will be carried out in 2008... 'Unlikely that this will cause increased flood risk downstream, cost £5k - £20k. [No signs of this taking place.](#)
- **WODC - Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, Nov 2016, Page 13** – Numerous points about working together etc... references numerous flood groups including 'West Oxfordshire Flood Group', 'Oxfordshire Strategic Flooding Group' – "It is chaired by the Lead Local Flood Authority Cabinet Member for flooding and reports to the Leaders of all authorities. The group is responsible for the prioritisation of schemes to be put forward to the Environment Agency." **Page 15** – "Oxfordshire County Council and its partners will identify potential schemes from past flood events including information and evidence received from Parish Councils and residents of Oxfordshire. These potential schemes will be assessed and prioritised by the relevant risk management authorities and submitted to the Oxfordshire Strategic Flooding Group for approval and to bid for additional funding where appropriate." [Has a scheme for Witney been put forward or even considered? What is OCC doing about Witney?](#)
- **WODC - Parish Flood Defence Updates, Dec 2015, Page 15:** "Witney - OCC and EA are carrying out regular de silting of the Bridge Street bridge over the River Windrush (Option B from Area 6A of the Parish Flood Report). This has been added to their annual maintenance programme. The EA also carry out maintenance works on a large stretch over the River Windrush through Witney on an annual basis. [We request all parties to show us evidence.](#)



# Witney's Very Unique Situation



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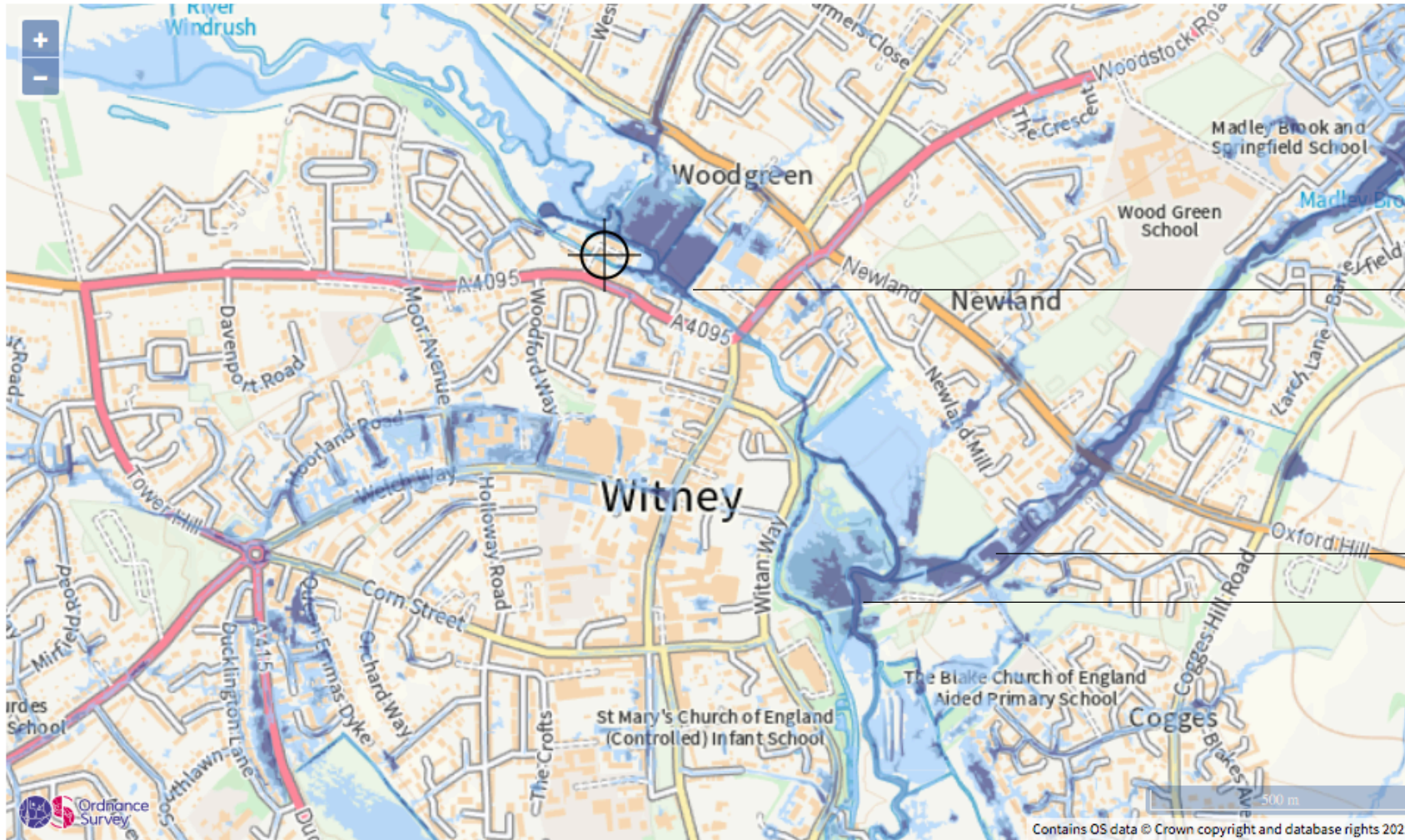
- Flood from main river + additional surface water drainage due to additional development**
- Eastfield Road/Hailey Road surface flooding due to lack of capacity and additional development**
- Narrow, single course river in built up area with 4 sand banks clearly visible**
- Witney Bridge acts as a dam during floods, causing properties upstream to flood**
- Madley Brook discharges on the upstream side of the bund causing additional pressure**
- Langel Common path is raised above the flood plain and holds water back**
- Room for more flood plain capacity in disused WTC land, if developed**
- 2 Railway bridges/ built up area will attenuate risk and prevent downstream flooding**

Source: Google Maps + Local Knowledge

# There are 2 Constrictions Clearly Visible on the EA Flood Map



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**Bridge acts as a dam during floods, causing properties upstream to flood**

**Madley Brook pours in on the upstream side of the 'bund' causing additional pressure**

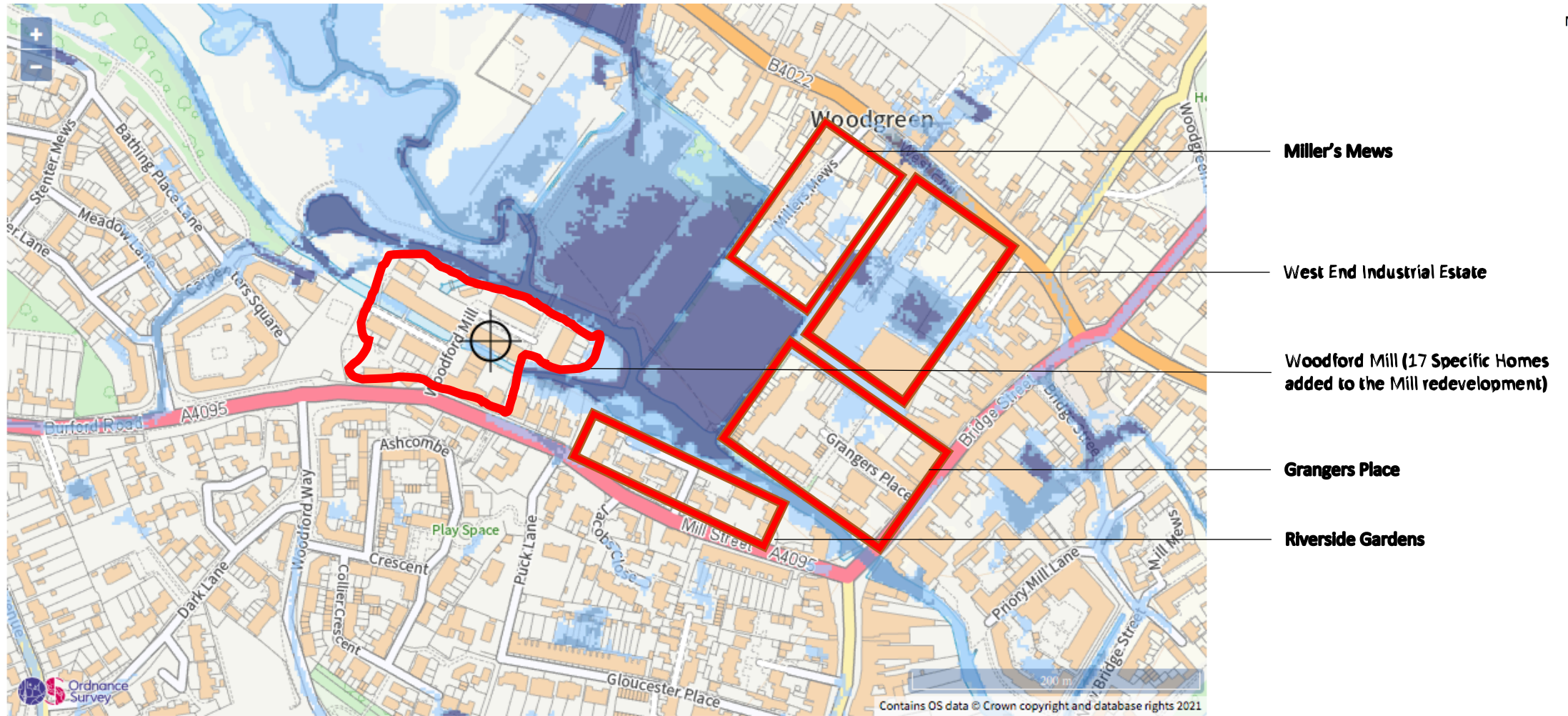
**Langel Common path is raised above the flood plain and holds water back**

Source: EA Flood Map

# Development on the Flood Plain Upstream of the Bridge = Decreased Capacity



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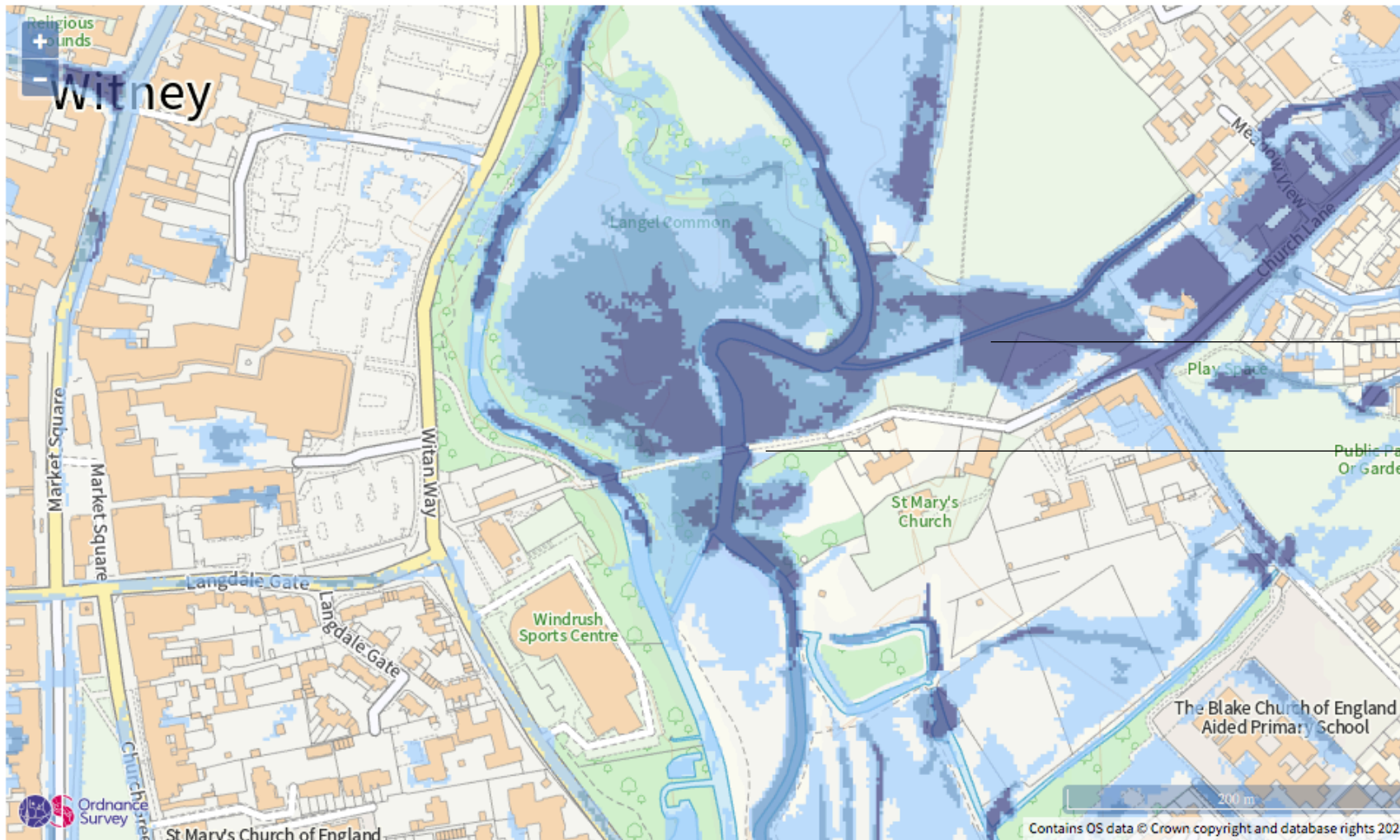


Source: EA Flood Map + Local Knowledge

# Close Up – Langel Common Bund holds water back



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**Madley Brook discharges on the upstream side of the bund causing additional pressure**

**Langel Common raised path is a bund, preventing flood water from moving downstream**

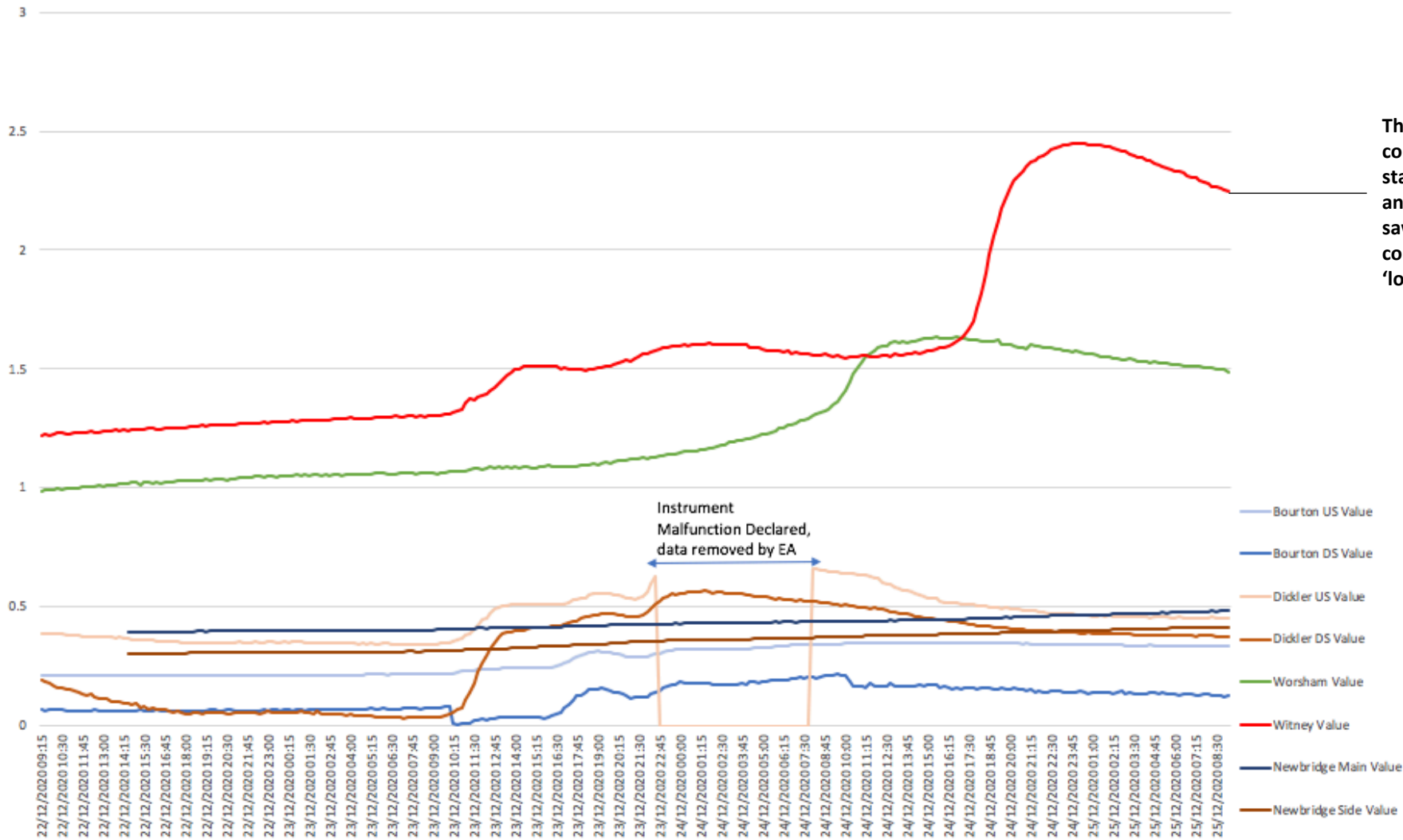
Source: EA Flood Map + Local Knowledge

# Dec 2020 River Levels – Factors Show how these all Contribute



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Windrush Monitoring Stations 22-25/12/2020



The marked and sudden rise in river levels compared to all other nearby monitoring stations is extreme. The same happened in 2007 and 2013/14. We were present at all events and saw the speed the water levels went up. The correlated maps explain why. It cannot be 'localised downpours'.

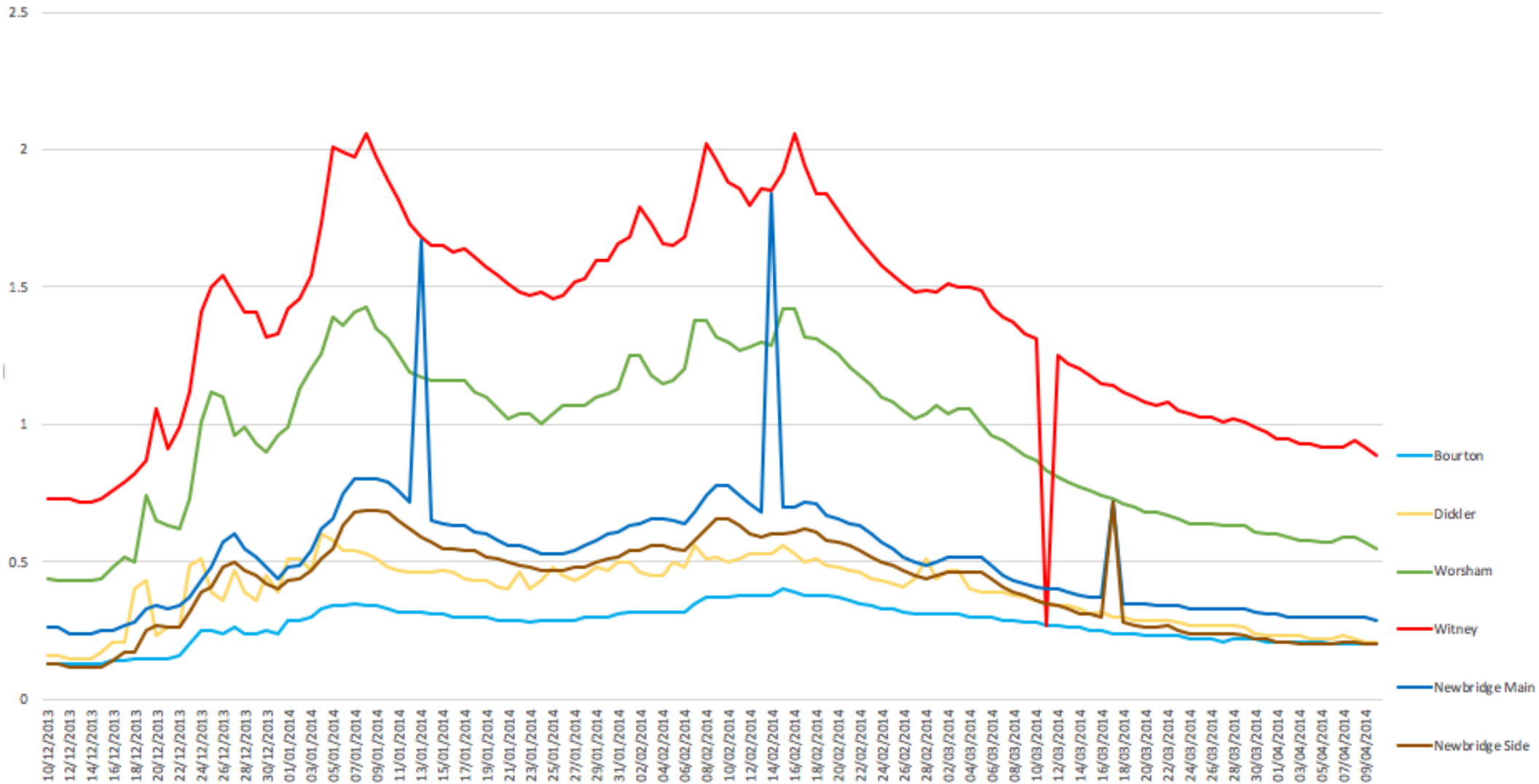
Source: EA Monitoring Station Data

# Historic 2013-2014 River Levels Show a Similar Relationship



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Windrush Monitoring Stations 10/12/2013 - 10/04/2014



Source: River Levels UK

# Witney's Unique Situation – Fields North of Eastfield Road



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Fields north of Eastfield Road and Hailey Road Drain are all ploughed in a direction that sends surface water down towards the drain, increasing flooding risk

Hailey Road Drain culvert inlet

Hailey Road Drain cannot cope, flood water moves down Eastfield Road then Hailey Road into Witney

Source: Google Maps