

# Maida Vale Flood Alleviation Scheme

**Client:** Thames Water

**Location:** Chippenham Road, London

**Value:** £17.5m

**Duration:** 19 Months



Work in Tamplin Mews Gardens retaining the playground



Map of alternative spaces

## In Brief...

Hundreds of homes and businesses in Maida Vale have experienced dramatic flooding from heavy summer rainfall over a number of years. Thames Water and our contractor Optimise devised a solution to reduce the flooding risk for over 350 homes and businesses. The scheme includes new sewer tunnels under local, Central London roads and two new storage tanks to be constructed under local parks. It had the potential to cause widespread nuisance and disruption.

The importance of providing timely, targeted information on the project's progress to MPs, councillors, community leaders, businesses and residents was recognised and care has been taken to keep customers informed by a variety of means. As well as traditional letters and face-to-face meetings we hold weekly surgeries, a web page, a quarterly magazine for residents and a text messaging service update fortnightly or when something needs to be communicated. Once residents call us, they are registered to this service. A business and residents liaison group meets monthly, chaired by an independent consultant to ensure impartiality. The group reviews progress and work planned for the following month, here concerns are aired and actions are agreed. Following these meetings, we have improved lighting to pedestrian walkways and used battery power at night rather than generators to reduce noise. We also produced eye-catching 'business as usual banners' using photos of business owners to encourage trade.

## Objectives...

With a budget of £17.5m The Maida Vale Flood Alleviation Scheme was the largest sewer flooding project in the current investment cycle. Construction started in August 2103 and was completed by March 2015. From the outset the importance of consulting with and reacting to the views of MPs, councillors, community leaders, businesses and residents was recognised to:

- Highlight wider community benefits and gain support for the project
- Minimise and mitigate concerns of local residents and businesses

To deliver the project on time and achieve tough targets for customer satisfaction it was essential that local stakeholders understood the need for this scheme and the benefits for their area. It was also important that we understood their concerns and addressed them. With two public open spaces partially closed for the construction of storage tanks we revised our proposals to maintain the local residents' well-being. We surveyed residents to see how the open spaces were used and took action to minimise the impact of our works. Amenity lost constructing storage tanks in public open space and disruption caused by constructing sewers in the highway demanded a big commitment from local people, many of whom did not suffer flooding. It was important to recognise this and provide wider benefits to customers.



### Customer Benefits...

- Barhale funded Sport Westminster to provide additional facilities for exercise. Step up to fitness classes aimed at providing exercise for Muslim women have been funded at the Stowe Centre along with free running and football for young people at Westminster Academy. These sessions were important in an area with the highest rate of childhood obesity in the country
- Some of our staff manned a stall at the Westbourne Festival this year handing out water bottles and project information
- We also funded the stage and sound system as the festival had to be relocated as a result of our construction works
- Care was taken to locate new sewers and shafts in the least disruptive locations
- Above ground works were kept to a minimum and clever landscaping was used to reduce the visual impact
- Access routes used Hexapath, which reinforced turf for maintenance vehicles to drive over the grass all year round without damage
- Kiosk buildings have been clad in timber or brick, and screened with shrubs so that they do not look out of place
- Extra trees, benches and bins were provided
- Footpaths resurfaced to improve the parks
- Funded improvements to a children's playground, and to "The Pit" – a small area of local space which currently suffers from anti-social behaviour

### Measurement of Success...

The success of the approach to customer care at Maida Vale has been shown by the very low level of complaints and by the feedback received directly from customers at our liaison meetings. Our survey highlighted although there were a number of open spaces in the area, these were not well known to residents. To improve awareness of alternatives, we commissioned a colourful map of open spaces close to the affected parks.

As well as maintaining amenity during construction it was important to mitigate the long term impacts. Detailed consultations with parks management at design stage to develop improved landscaping plans in line with park user requirements. We received three written complaints following submission of the Planning Application, but only one relating to construction of the works. One group particularly affected by work in Westbourne Green was Kyu Yo Bu Shin. They used the park to training for an annual cycling event held at Crystal Palace. The site team arranged for transport to Crystal Palace both for training and the actual event. Mary Amayo the group leader believes her team's success this year was due to the training opportunity that we've provided. Funding has also been provided for 'The Hub' a scheme run by Westbourne Baptist Church to provide weekly breakfasts for vulnerable people in the area.

### Business Benefit...

The Maida Vale Flood Alleviation Scheme was accepted by customers as an important and necessary project despite the impact the work is having on open space and traffic congestion in the area over a two year period. This was demonstrated by the extremely low level of complaints received and the positive feedback we received at our liaison forum.

Another key business benefit was the work was delivered to the programme, which would not have been possible without the support of our customers. This led to lower overall costs. The scale of this project has meant rewriting the rules of customer care. The level of consultation, communication and collaboration set new benchmarks for city centre location work, which was demonstrated by the fact there was no adverse PR, limited complaints and high level of engagement by the community.

