

April 2020:

What are we updating you about?

We have continued to work in partnership with Blackwater Aggregates, to develop a scheme to reduce the risk of flooding to properties and communities in the villages of Coggeshall, Feering and Kelvedon.

We are continuing to finalise the design of the scheme based on the various environmental surveys we have completed across the site and the feedback offered by members of the public following the drop-in events and on-line questionnaire offered last year.

The need for the scheme remains unchanged and the following is intended to provide an update on how the design has evolved, which would have been explained at the drop-in events that were cancelled due to Covid-19.

We have updated our webpage to include all of the information we would have presented.

Please visit: <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/east-anqlia-c-e/coggeshall-flood-alleviation-information-page/> (please scroll to the bottom of the page for the documents)

Overview of the scheme

The flood alleviation scheme combines the construction of a dam across the River Blackwater and the creation of an extended floodplain storage area next to the river which will be created in phases as Blackwater Aggregates' quarrying operations progress across the site.

To limit the impact of these works on local residents, a rolling programme of excavation and restoration will progress in an easterly direction from the old Coggeshall Quarry towards the western fringes of Coggeshall. The works will move in a phased and systematic manner across the site, which will incorporate a rolling programme of backfilling and restoration following excavation of mineral, thereby minimising the open/working areas.

At its nearest point, the edge of the quarrying operations will be at least 150m from any residential boundaries on Grange Hill. The works in this area of the site are likely to be carried out during years 15 to 20 of the 20-year construction programme.

This is shown more clearly in the updated display boards which indicate how the works progress across the site. We have also included images of how the scheme will appear at key viewpoints across the site.

The images have been prepared in accordance with landscape guidance and indicate how the site will be screened as the works progress and how it will look on completion of the works.

What changes have been made since the public engagement events in May 2019?

There have been some key changes to the design of the scheme in terms of technical detail; however, the overall principles of the scheme and required level of flood protection for the 203 houses (some of which are important heritage assets) and 15 local businesses located within Coggeshall Feering and Kelvedon remain the same:

- We require 3.02 million m³ storage capacity to create a long-term significant improvement to the flood protection for three communities.
- The dam location and finished height remains the same (and will avoid upstream impacts).
- The extension to the floodplain provided by the quarrying activity is still a major factor in the scheme's design, without which the scheme would not be feasible
- Contributions by Blackwater Aggregates and the commercial viability of the project remain a key part of this partnership delivery.
- The processing plant and means of access for HGVs to and from Bradwell Quarry remain the same.

customer service line
03708 506 506

incident hotline
0800 80 70 60

floodline
03459 88 11 88

What has been changed?

- The extended floodplain has been designed to provide bio-diverse habitats connected to the existing floodplain.
- The shape and profile of the restored side slope across the southern side of the Blackwater valley has been shaped to provide differing side slope angles, sympathetic to the site's setting and future land uses.
- A crossing point will be established over Cuthedge Lane midway between Deeks Cottage and Haywards.
- Dedicated permissive footpaths have been incorporated into the design of the scheme which will provide new links and lines across the site based on agreements with landowners and discussions with the Public Rights of Way Officer.
- Additional areas of broad leaf woodland will be created across the site which will connect existing habitats with the flood alleviation scheme.
- The dam itself has been made wider at its base following further analysis of the structure and local ground conditions, this has resulted in changes to the dam and realigned section of the river.

We have considered the feedback from the public consultation events we held last year, and where possible made changes. Key to any changes is agreement of the local landowners. If the scheme is successful, we hope to build on the project and promote further opportunities for ourselves to work with local stakeholder groups to explore other local initiatives which may be incorporated into the scheme through partnership working.

Planning Submission

We held public consultation events in 2019 and had planned two further drop-ins in March/April 2020 which would have allowed us to show you the final design in person, but the Covid-19 pandemic has meant these have been cancelled.

We have published the information online and are aiming to submit the planning application later this year.

The planning application process will follow Essex County Council (ECC) guidelines which may vary depending on the current and future response to Covid-19. There will be opportunity to comment on the detail of the flood alleviation scheme via your parish council or directly to ECC during its public consultation.

Ultimately any impacts arising from the scheme need to be balanced against the protection it will offer to 203 houses (some of which are important heritage assets) and 15 local businesses, both in the short-term and for future generations.

Climate change indicates that wetter winters and drier summers are increasingly likely, so areas such as the Blackwater Valley are more vulnerable to these extreme events, reinforcing the need to provide a sustainable, long-term solution.

Contact

If you need to discuss this scheme further please contact our Partnerships & Strategic Overview (Essex) team:

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Further information

Further information about the scheme, including our previous updates, is available on the following web page:

<https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/east-anglia-c-e/coggeshall-flood-alleviation-information-page/>

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