

October 2019:

What are we updating you about?

As you may be aware, working in partnership with Blackwater Aggregates, we are currently designing a scheme to reduce the risk of flooding to properties and communities in the villages of Coggeshall, Feering and Kelvedon. This newsletter provides an update on the design of the scheme and the feedback offered from May's public drop-in events and survey questionnaires.

What have we been doing since the last update?

We presented the outline design at two public drop-in events and conducted a survey to gain your feedback on the details behind the proposed scheme. Where possible, the feedback offered has been used in the development of the scheme's design.

Baseline environmental surveys are ongoing, and the findings will be presented within the planning application.

Overview of the scheme

The flood alleviation scheme combines the construction of a dam across the River Blackwater with an "off-line" flood storage area next to the river which will be created in phases as Blackwater Aggregates' quarrying operations progress.

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. By working in a phased and systematic manner across the site, areas of excavation will be backfilled and restored as it progresses.

At its nearest point, the edge of the quarrying operations will be at least 150m from any residential boundaries on Grange Hill. Plus, the works in this area of the site are likely to be carried out during years 18 to 20 of the 20 year construction programme.

What's happening next?

Before we submit the planning application we will be holding two further public drop-in events early in the New Year. This will be your opportunity to provide us with your feedback before the design is finalised and the planning application is submitted for determination.

We would like to encourage you to come along to these events, where you will be able to see the details of our design, have the opportunity to discuss the proposals with our team, and raise any final thoughts you may have regarding our proposals.

We're currently aiming to submit our planning application to Essex County Council's Minerals Planning Authority (MPA) early in 2020. In its determination of the application, the MPA will consult with the parish councils and ask for their views on the flood alleviation scheme. As local residents you will also have the opportunity to offer your views to the MPA.

As we have openly stated before, if our planning application is unsuccessful, we will not be able to progress this scheme, or any other scheme further. We have previously considered a range of flood mitigation proposals and we have concluded that there are currently no viable alternatives to the scheme we are currently proposing.

Questionnaire feedback: responding to your concerns

During and after our public drop-in events in May, we asked the residents of Coggeshall, Feering and Kelvedon who will benefit from the scheme if they would take a few minutes to fill out our questionnaire and provide feedback on the design of the scheme.

This feedback was intended to help us identify areas where we can improve the design or offer more informed outcomes. The feedback so far has ranged from those who strongly support the scheme and others who are strongly opposed to it.

customer service line
03708 506 506

incident hotline
0800 80 70 60

floodline
03459 88 11 88

Initially the responses we received were based on the scheme's outline design that we presented at the public drop-in events. The comments generally related to the design of the scheme, including opportunities to improve public access. The ideas and comments offered have been considered as the detailed design evolves.

In July a public meeting was arranged by Coggeshall Parish Council, and a leaflet was widely distributed by a local group known as Coggeshall Residents Against Quarrying (CRAQ).

Whilst this helped to raise the profile of the scheme in Coggeshall, unfortunately many of the responses we received after this event were based on factually incorrect information contained within CRAQ's leaflet, and the feedback subsequently offered did not relate to the scheme we are designing. However, based on the comments given, 3 key points we wish to address are:

Issue 1: There were several comments regarding quarrying operations being less than 100 metres from Coggeshall for at least 20 years.

Our response: As stated earlier in this newsletter, at its nearest point the edge of the quarrying operations will be at least 150m from any residential boundary located along Grange Hill. Plus, the works in this area of the site are likely to be carried out during years 18 to 20 of the 20 year construction programme.

Issue 2: There were a large number of comments relating to increases in traffic movements and concerns over lorries passing through Coggeshall.

Our response: We have explained to local stakeholder groups and Coggeshall Parish Council on several occasions: HGV access to and from Bradwell Quarry will continue to be provided via the established site access road to and from the A120. There will be no change in the number of HGVs entering or leaving Bradwell Quarry, and there will be no change in how HGVs will get to and from the site, which already avoid all local villages.

Issue 3: There were comments about public footpaths being unavailable for use for 20 years.

Our response: We have explained to local stakeholder groups and Coggeshall Parish Council on several occasions that as the quarrying operations progress across the site, existing public rights of way (such as the Essex Way) will be temporarily diverted around the working area. The interconnection of the various public rights of way which provide north, south, east or west access will be maintained throughout the works, albeit through temporary diversion. They will be reinstated to either their original or an agreed alternative definitive alignment, as the restoration works progress across the site.

New footpaths and bridleways will also be created across the site, some of which will be created and made available for use during the early stages of the works.

Feedback summary

Your feedback has highlighted that as we move forward we will: make improvements to the availability of information relating to the detailed design of the scheme; provide images of how the scheme will be delivered; hold further public drop-in events; and improve our response to inaccurate information issued by other groups or individuals.

The full results from the survey are available online: <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/east-anglia-c-e/coggeshall-flood-alleviation-information-page>

We understand not everyone living within the local communities is directly affected by flooding and that the proposed quarrying operations will result in changes to the local landscape. However, in working to develop the scheme there will be opportunities to enhance the existing landscape through the creation of bio-diverse habitats which can be linked across the site. There will also be opportunities to enhance and improve public access.

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:

☎ 02030 258 483

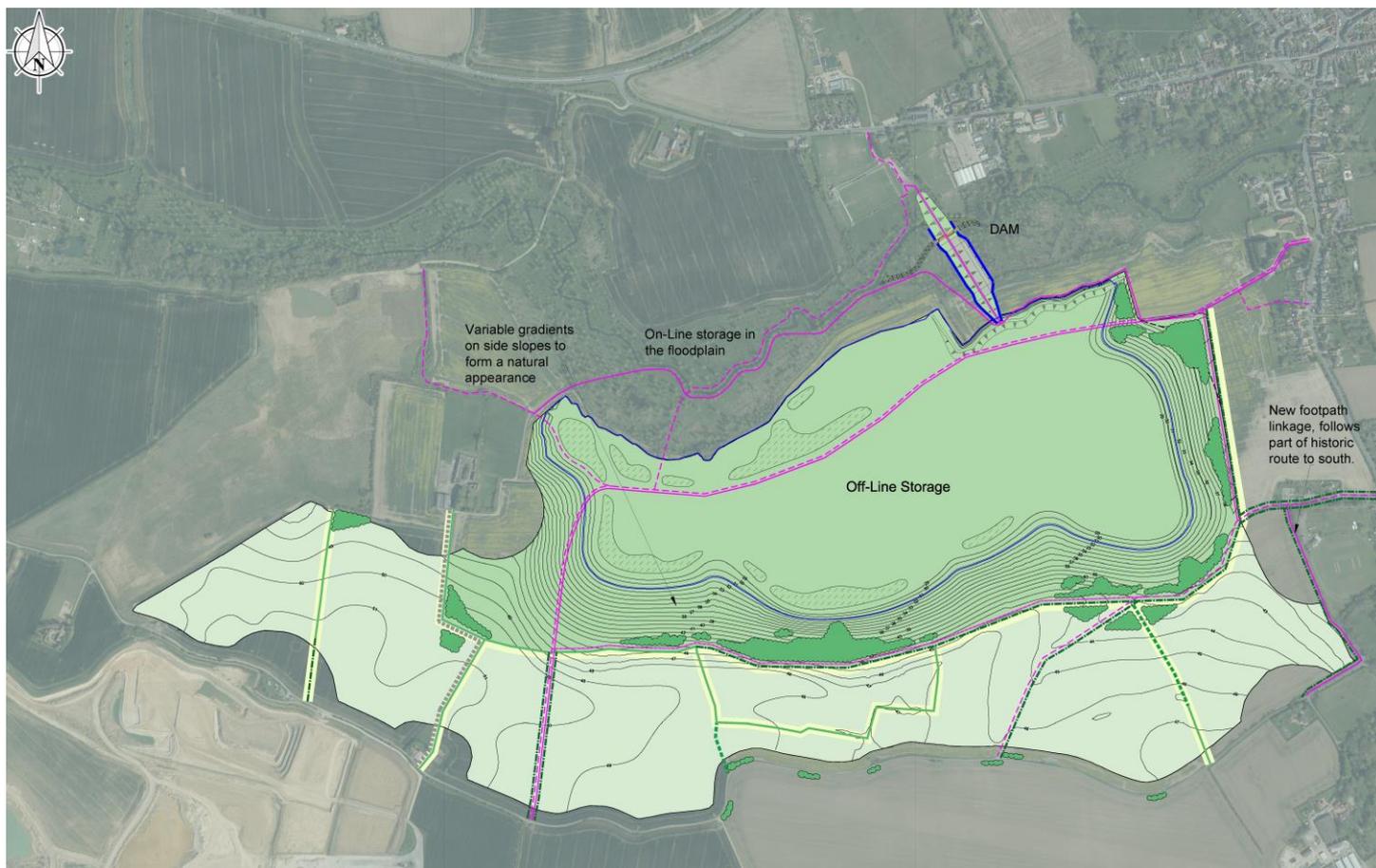
✉ roger.webster@environment-agency.gov.uk

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/> We will send you further updates as the scheme progresses.

Map showing the extension to the river's flood plain or "off-line" flood storage area (edged in blue) to be formed through Blackwater Aggregates' quarrying and restoration operations across the site. The purple lines are the public rights of way.



customer service line
03708 506 506

incident hotline
0800 80 70 60

floodline
03459 88 11 88