



In their March 2020 Press Release, the Environment Agency (EA) gives an update on the Coggeshall, Feering and Kelvedon flood alleviation scheme without ever mentioning the quarry. That's the quarry that will be right on Coggeshall's doorstep. The one that is twice the size of Coggeshall!

The site of this quarry is not in the Essex Minerals Local Plan – probably because no one could envisage a quarry this close to Grade I listed buildings and the Coggeshall Conservation Area. Yet a planning application to be submitted later this year will ask Essex County Council to permit the extraction of 13 million tonnes of aggregates from the site over a 20 year period. The justification they will offer goes back to 2001.

In 2001, 203 homes and 15 businesses in Coggeshall, Feering and Kelvedon were damaged in a flood that has been described as a 1 in a 1,000 year event. Proposals for managing flood risk were explored but the level of risk did not justify government grants. With this level of risk to a relatively small number of properties government grants could not be justified. But in 2015 the EA announced a review of options for reducing flood risk in the three villages and in November 2016 they asked for preplanning advice for a new scheme they had developed with Blackwater Aggregates. Blackwater Aggregates would quarry the site which would become flood storage and contribute £8 million to the cost of a dam. The EA estimates that without Blackwater Aggregates help the whole project would cost them £34 million, that's around £156,000 for each property that might be at risk.

CRAQ (Coggeshall Residents Against the Quarry) is against this proposal. It will cause irreparable harm to the Blackwater Valley, destroying the landscape that gives Coggeshall its character, context and significance as a historic village of national importance. It is a solution that is out of all proportion to the problem. A proposal that will affect the lives of local residents for decades and destroy for ever a landscape shaped by hundreds of years of history. And yet the drop-in events scheduled to allow the public the opportunity to discuss it have been cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This proposal needs to be given the scrutiny such a large scale proposal deserves, based on full disclosure of the facts not press releases that fail to mention a quarry the size of 400 football pitches!

The EA insist there are no alternatives and without the quarry there can be no scheme. But there are other ways to manage risk and protect properties. The EA should delay the planning application, reschedule the drop-in events and discuss the proposal in an open and honest way with those whose lives are affected. Let us explore the alternatives before we lose the irreplaceable.

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On behalf of CRAQ
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