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Plans for gravel quarry revealed

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PLANS to open a big sand and gravel quarry in Ditchingham, where more than a million tonnes of raw material would be extracted, have been revealed.

Lafarge Aggregates wants to dig a quarry off the B1332 Norwich Road near the village and has arranged a public exhibition to discuss its plans with nearby residents.

The proposed quarry off Fen Lane would be in use for up to 11 years and Lafarge is in the process of applying for planning permission.

The exhibition will be held at the King's Head pub in Bungay on July 18 with representatives from Lafarge and technical consultants on hand to answer questions.

But residents are already worried about the proposal because of the extra traffic on the Norwich Road and the potential loss of an ancient oak

tree, Oliver's Oak.

Ditchingham resident Julian Green estimated that the quarry would bring an extra 90 operational vehicle movements a day.

He said: "The road is the big issue. For some years we have campaigned for safer roads, and only recently a mandatory 40mph speed limit has been introduced on the Norwich Road, through the Belsey Bridge bends.

"I am concerned that the anticipated volume of additional traffic turning onto the B1332 in this vicinity will have an adverse impact on safety."

Soil mounds will be built around the site to shield people from it and trees will be planted around the edges to screen the operation from neighbouring houses.

The company already operates four other quarries in Norfolk at Whitlingham, Lyng, Easton and Frettenham and has planning permission for fifth one in Swardston.

The Ditchingham site, if given the go ahead, would not start production

until 2007 and once excavation was complete the land would return to agricultural use with extra habitats incorporated such as trees, wet grassland and ponds for wildlife.

Stuart Anderson, senior planning and estates manager for Lafarge, said: "Early extraction and engineering in the south east of the site will allow us to excavate a site to accommodate a low level processing plant, which will be positioned significantly below ground level and be visually screened.

"A low profile readymix concrete plant using processed mineral from the site will be developed alongside the processing plant.

"The site will be operated in 10 phases with restoration progressing sequentially.

"The restoration plan has been developed to assist in meeting national and regional biodiversity targets and will include a mosaic of different habitats, providing plentiful encouragement for new species to colonise the site."