

OPPOSED: Residents determined to stop sand and gravel plan

Picture: JAMES BASS



SITE VISIT: Stuart Anderson, senior planning & estates manager for Lafarge Aggregates and Jane Tebbatt, geologist on the site of a proposed sand and gravel extraction quarry on land off Fen Lane at Ditchingham.

Tempers fray at quarry meeting

By LYNETTE ALCOCK

Campaigners determined to stop a quarry being dug on a Norfolk country estate turned out in force yesterday, to confront the company behind it.

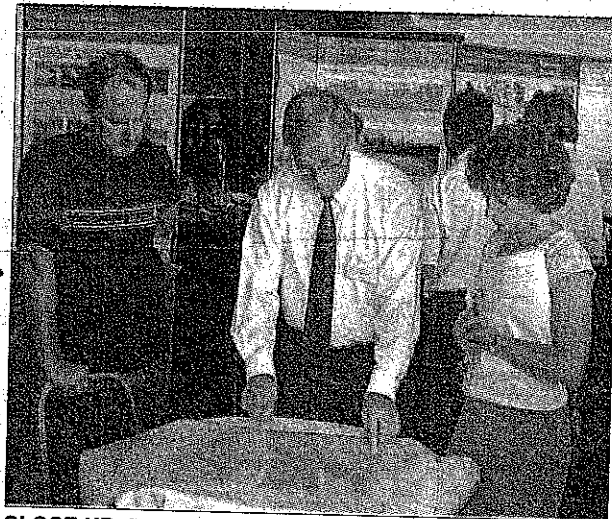
Residents filled the King's Head Hotel in Bungay for a public meeting hosted by Lafarge Aggregates to explain how the proposed quarry would affect the area.

But owners of neighbouring properties, furious at the proposal which is yet to be submitted to Norfolk County Council for planning permission, vented their fury at the consultants Lafarge had invited to answer queries.

Noise, traffic and the overall look of the area were high on the residents' agendas, but as answers were given tempers flared.

Lafarge is hoping to extract a million tonnes of sand and gravel from the 30-hectare site on the Ditchingham Estate, near Bungay.

The work would be carried out over 10 years, depending on the demand for materials, and once complete Lafarge



CLOSE UP: Looking at plans yesterday.

would restore the site as well as creating a conservation area with ponds and reed beds.

But people whose homes overlook the land are determined to stop the quarry.

Julian Green, 48, who lives at the north-east corner of the proposed site on Norwich Road, said the plans were

"wholly unacceptable."

He said: "We have a number of concerns: traffic noise, traffic volume, increased speed of the traffic, the fact they have removed a hedgerow and will cut down a wood.

"We fought for a long time to get a 40mph speed limit on this stretch of the

Norwich Road.

"It is not a safe piece of road, so now putting a lot of HGVs on it will make things even worse."

He added: "This quarry will not happen.

"It is not a case of when or how we can amend the plans, it just will not happen."

At this stage Lafarge is predicting that more than 20 HGVs a day will use the site.

Transport consultant, Bill Gallear, of Scott Wilson, said: "The road is designated for HGV use by Norfolk County Council Highways and we are talking about a relatively small number of vehicles for a short period of time.

"There would be no increased danger to the public through our use of the road," he said.

After hearing the public's views, Lafarge is hoping to submit its application to the council in the next five weeks.

However, even if planning permission is granted, work on the scheme would not begin until 2007 at the earliest.

In the meantime Lafarge has begun masking the site and has planted more than 2000 trees along the eastern boundary.