

# Villagers prepare for battle over pit plan

**MORE** than 120 residents packed a village hall to draw up battle lines against the proposed gravel pit at Ditchingham.

The group has appointed transport and environmental experts as it prepares to fight the plan.

People living in Ditchingham and neighbouring villages fear the pit would cause noise and safety

problems, with dozens more cars and lorries expected to go in and out of the site.

Further concerns have been raised about the area being close to the Tindall Wood SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) in Ditchingham and about the development destroying an ancient hedgerow and oak tree.

Residents, including members of the campaign group eNraged (Norfolk Residents Against Gravel Extraction at Ditchingham), gathered in neighbouring Broome on Wednesday night.

The site, off Norwich Road in the village, is part of the Ditchingham Hall estate and is expected to reach a maximum depth of 16m.

It would be operated by Lafarge Aggregates on a 57-hectare site and would produce more than a million tons of sand and gravel.

But even if planning permission was granted, work on the scheme would not begin until 2007 at the earliest. In the meantime, Lafarge has begun masking the site by planting more than 2000 trees along the eastern boundary.

Jonathan Chadd, who lives in Ditchingham, said he hoped the site, between the Broads National Park and grade two listed parkland, would never be developed.

"The site is wholly unsuitable, situated as it is on a most dangerous stretch of the B1332 road and adjacent to the grade two listed parkland of Ditchingham Hall near to sites of special scientific interest and close to the

boundary of the Broads National Park," he said.

"There are many other existing gravel quarries in the area serving the same market, which have adequate mineral reserves and plans for extended extraction.

"This calls into question the need for an additional new quarry such as this," he added. Julian Green, chairman of eNraged, highlighted the history of accidents on the stretch of the B1332 which would link with the quarry.

"The Lafarge proposals will result in an additional 70 to 90 extra HGV vehicle movements each day, with an estimated further 40 movements from other commercial traffic, including builders' vehicles with trailers," he said.

"All vehicles will be turning off the already unsafe stretch of road to access the site and this will only add to the already unacceptably high level of accidents."

The eNraged group has appointed planning and mineral consultants, along with highways, landscape and environmental experts to help it fight the Lafarge planning application, expected to go to Norfolk County Council in the next few weeks.

It has also contacted a range of environmental groups, including English Nature and the Norfolk Wildlife Trust, in search of support.