

Gravel pit plan facing protests

By MIKE SHERBURN

Campaigners opposed to a new quarry are preparing for the next stage of their battle after a planning application for the site was lodged.

Villagers living close to the site of the proposed gravel pit are fighting to stop historic parkland being developed.

The land, belonging to Earl Ferrers, one of the region's senior aristocrats, is at Ditchingham, near Bungay.

Residents and members of Enraged (Norfolk Residents Against Gravel Extraction at Ditchingham) have held a protest meeting about the development, which would provide about a million tonnes of sand and gravel from about 25 acres over eight to 11 years.

Last night, Jonathan Chadd, a member of Enraged, said the next stage was to convince planners that the site, off the B1332 Norwich Road, was not appropriate for a quarry.

"We will take a vigorous part in the democratic process and try to persuade the council that this site should not become a quarry," he said. "If the proposal goes ahead then our lives will be made more unpleasant and we will witness the destruction of the landscape."

"People understand that there is a need for gravel, but there are good sites and bad sites - and this is not a good site," he added. "It's not just Ditchingham people, but people from Hedenham, Bungay and Broome who drive up the B1332, who are also worried about it."

Mr Chadd added that opponents of the scheme were also concerned that other activities, such as landfill, concrete or bitumen plants, might end up being included on the site as well as the quarrying operation.

Aggregates firm Lafarge, which operates quarries at Whittingham and Easton, near Norwich, has submitted its application to Norfolk County Council, which will start its own consultation procedures including the district and parish councils and other interested individuals and organisations.

Stuart Anderson, senior planning and estates manager at Lafarge, said it had already started a "dialogue with the local community."

"We have produced a Non Technical Summary as part of the comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment which accompanies our planning submission," he said. "We have sent this to everyone who attended the exhibition and provided us with a legible address."

"This is the latest stage in our ongoing dialogue with the local community. If planning permission is granted for the site, we would set up a local liaison group," he added.

To apply for a copy of the Non Technical Summary contact the Lafarge Planning Information Line on 01992 512764 (24-hour answer phone).

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