

PLANNING: Noise and dust could upset tranquil rural atmosphere

Teachers worried by quarry scheme

Noise and dust from a quarry in rural South Norfolk would have a negative impact on nearby schools and nurseries for children.

That was the message yesterday from people living in and around Ditchingham, where aggregates firm Lafarge has applied to set up a sand and gravel extraction site.

Teachers at schools and nurseries are worried that the quarry, earmarked for the Ditchingham Estate, would also bring heavy traffic and change the character of the area.

Pauline McGowan, head of Woodton Primary since 2001, said extra lorries on the B1332 Norwich-Bungay road were her biggest concern.

"The road just outside the school is too narrow for lorries to safely pass each other," she said.

"The prospect of over 40 heavy gravel lorries a day in addition to all the other lorries presently using this road does not bear thinking about.

"They are physically unsuited to this stretch of road between Brooke and Bungay," she added.

Her concerns were echoed by Jo Fisher, head of Stepping Stones pre-school nursery at Ditchingham, which caters for 36 three to five-year-olds and employs six staff.

"There is anxiety among parents with young children as there have been several accidents in the very narrow lane that runs from All Hallows up to the main road," she said.

"And dust and noise are other concerns, as the prevailing wind is from the south west, blowing directly towards the school from the quarry site."

By MIKE SHERBURN

Lafarge filed a planning application last month for a quarry on the Ditchingham Estate, which is owned by former Tory government minister, Earl Ferrers.

Maria Howell, manager of Ditchingham Day Nursery, in the grounds of All Hallows' convent, said losing the peaceful atmosphere around Ditchingham would make her business less attractive.

"The peaceful surroundings are what make the nursery appealing to parents," she said.

And at nearby Hedenham, there are similar concerns from Willow Farm Nursery School about increased heavy traffic, noise and pollution.

Jonathan Chadd, from the Enraged group (Norfolk Residents Against Gravel Extraction at Ditchingham) said he believed the development would spoil the area for children and young people being taught and cared for in the area.

"There is a real threat that the quarry application from Lafarge Aggregates could completely spoil the surroundings for schools and nurseries by turning the area into an industrial zone wholly out of character with the landscape," he said.

Lafarge maintains that the company is committed to a dialogue with the community but believes the scheme can be screened from residents and the land restored once quarrying finishes.

■ For more information about the campaign log on to onwww.nraged.org.uk