

Schools join quarry campaign

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 local schools and nurseries are worried that the quarry would also bring heavy traffic and change the character of the area.

Meanwhile people at Hedenham announced this week that they would support their neighbours at Ditchingham in the battle to stop gravel extraction.

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 more than

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 in 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."

At a specially convened parish meeting at Hedenham Village Hall, people voted unanimously to oppose a plan submitted by Lafarge to

extract sand and gravel from the site on the Ditchingham estate, owned by former Tory government minister, Earl Ferrers, which borders Hedenham parish.

Residents said they were worried about more traffic using the B1332 passing through the village plus environmental damage to parkland on the Ditchingham Hall estate.

They were also upset that no representative from either Lafarge, the Ditchingham estate or its agent Savilles attended the meeting on Sunday.

Chris Tyacke, chairman of the parish meeting, said: "It is disappointing that those who are seeking to impose this quarry on our community and who make much in their publicity about their continuing dialogue with local residents have not had the common courtesy to send a representative."

● For more information about the campaign visit www.nraged.org.uk