



Outrage at quarrying plans

'Villages will be blighted to help areas outside of Notts'

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PLANNERS have been accused of attempting to "blight" local villages by allowing quarrying for materials the county doesn't even need.

Critics of the minerals local plan – put together by officers of Labour-controlled Nottinghamshire County Council to set out how the region will provide fuel and resources up until 2030 – spoke out at yesterday's environment and sustainability committee meeting in County Hall.

They called the plans "preposterous" and "crass" for naming more sites than necessary to dig out sand and gravel and basing the amount needed on "old figures" that they said needed updating.

But planning officers defended the choices, saying that with more than 80,000 homes planned for the county over the next 15 years, a lot of the material would be needed, and without a plan, developers would have free reign to build where they wanted.

Conservative councillor Bruce Laughton, who represents Southwell and Caunton, described planned quarrying sites such as Shelford and Flash Farm, in Avenham, as "madness". He said the plan would lead to a 20 percent rise in the amount of the materials being driven out of the county to be used in places such as

South Yorkshire and Lincolnshire – meaning 72 percent of all sand and gravel would not even be used at home.

He told the meeting: "What is really upsetting my residents is we are doing this plan to dig materials to go over borders and it will be them that has to suffer, from the noise, the traffic and the drop in house prices, which has already happened with the suggestion of these plans. It is not a plan for the people that are paying our salaries and that is the council tax payers."

Councillor Sue Saddington (Cons) who said any more traffic around her ward in Farndon and Muskham would result in the nearby town of Newark suffering. "When we have diversions from the A1 because of a crash, which happens at least twice a month, then the whole of that traffic comes through Muskham. Kelham Bridge was built in the Victorian times for horses and carts, not for 40-ton lorries.

"Newark businesses are crying out for help as the traffic already there around Cattle Market Island is stopping access to shops, so people are going elsewhere. It won't just be the sand and gravel leaving the county to go to South Yorkshire if this goes ahead, it will be the people too."

Villagers in Shelford, where the quarry would be the size of 139 football pitches, have been protesting against the project for two years.



A YOUNG mum's mission to stop exploratory drilling on her doorstep took a step forward when she handed a petition of almost 3,000 names to Nottinghamshire County Council.

Rachel Kitchin, 26, lives under a mile from the proposed Tinker Lane site near Blyth, where an application is being considered for three exploratory boreholes – which could eventually lead to fracking.

Rachel fearful that if the plans do lead to fracking, her two-year-old daughter Nina's health could be put at serious risk.

"I looked into fracking after seeing it on TV some time ago and after looking into it further, I found that permission could potentially be granted to a place very close to where we live. It was really upsetting," she said.

"I have a two-and-half-year-old daughter and she goes to Blyth Pre-School, which is very close to where it could happen.

"She'll be breathing in the fumes, drinking the water and all sorts – you don't mess with mummy!

"It's about basic human rights. We all have the right to clean water, clean air and a safe environment."

She also has concerns about an increase in lorries on what she says is already a busy road.

"I often have to cross the road which leads to the site and it's dangerous enough as it is, and if all these lorries are coming down it will just make it worse."

She is pictured with Nina, presenting the petition to the council's planning manager, Sally Gill.

MUM'S ANTI-FRACKING PETITION

Penny Oldham, a committee member of the Save Shelford Valley group, believes that if the development goes ahead, the picturesque village will be "lost forever". She said: "Most of the people who live here have been here more than 30 years. People don't move out of Shelford unless it is for business. We know who everyone is and we are all here to help each other out. The community has really rallied together to fight these plans. We feel emotional and passionate about this because it is important arable land. This land goes back before the Domesday Book started, it is steeped in history."

Councillors had suggested an alternative site in Barton in Fabis but one planning officer

said it would not be a "like for like" swap, as the Shelford site could provide 500,000 tonnes of materials each year, compared to just 200,000 tonnes in Barton in Fabis.

Committee chairman and Labour member for Carlton West Jim Creamer supported the officers and said the plan was a necessary step to protect the whole county. "Barton in Fabis is not permanently removed from ever becoming a site," he told the meeting. "It may return to the plans in 15 years time. But delaying this plan and rewriting it would mean delays of months, if not years.

"We have to carry on with this plan to protect all of Nottinghamshire. If we don't have

a plan, then developers can come in and do what they like and they are already looking.

"To assume because we have allocated it they will definitely dig on it is wrong. They will still have to go through the planning process."

The plan itself will still have to return to the full council, go through a public consultation and be approved by the Government before it is signed off.

The committee backed a draft Government plan to pay local residents affected by the drilling for shale gas but will be writing to the secretary of state about where exactly that money will go to.

Labour councillor for Hucknall John Wilkinson called the proposal "disingenuous" and

"tendentious". He said: "It talks about supporting individual household but what about the communities? There is no definition. At one point it is homes, then it is districts, parishes, counties. There is no accountability to where that funding will go and who will have the say in who it goes to."

But Councillor Laughton said: "In some green projects in my area, communities have really valued the money put in by developers afterwards, such as in Eakring, where they are re-doing their playing fields because of cash from wind turbines. But other communities are missing out on this because they haven't ticked the right box."