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Fears over scale of new quarrying plans

By Helen Draycott
NEWS REPORTER

THREE new quarries could be opened in Lichfield and its surrounding areas – and eight others extended, under new proposals revealed by the county council.

New sand and gravel sites could be created at Fisherwick, Wychnor Estate and Bancroft Farm.

And extensions might be allowed to permitted sites at Newbold South West, Barton (Wychnor), Alrewas South, Cranebrook,

Bucks Head Farm, Hints, Weeford (Camp) and Shire Oak.

But Lichfield Rural East county councillor, Matthew Ellis, has slammed the plans by the quarrying industry, saying he is 'staggered and concerned' at the scale of digging proposals being put forward.

And he says it is 'vital' that Staffordshire County Council takes a stance to help protect the local environment.

"Although the process of agreeing new and existing quarry sites is in the early stages I want the county to take a robust view to protect the countryside around Lichfield," Cllr Ellis said.

"The proposals put to the county by the industry amount to nearly 150 million tonnes of aggregate extraction over the next 10 to 15 years.

"That is a massive amount and would create swathes in our countryside scarring the landscape forever."

The proposals have been submitted during consultation work around the county's Minerals Core Strategy.

The plan formally identifies preferred sites where mass extraction of sand, gravel, clay and other minerals can be expanded or new quarries created.

In the submitted strategic site proposals, the new and extended sites would boost Staffordshire's current 60 per cent output of sand and gravel for the region.

To meet national guidelines Staffordshire needs around 46 million tonnes which equates to seven years' supply.

"The current seven-year reserve of aggregate production from quarrying here is almost twice what is needed according to national legislation," Cllr Ellis added.

"The recycling of used building material should reduce the need for large increases in quarrying and I want the county to ensure that is

utilised rather than destroying our countryside."

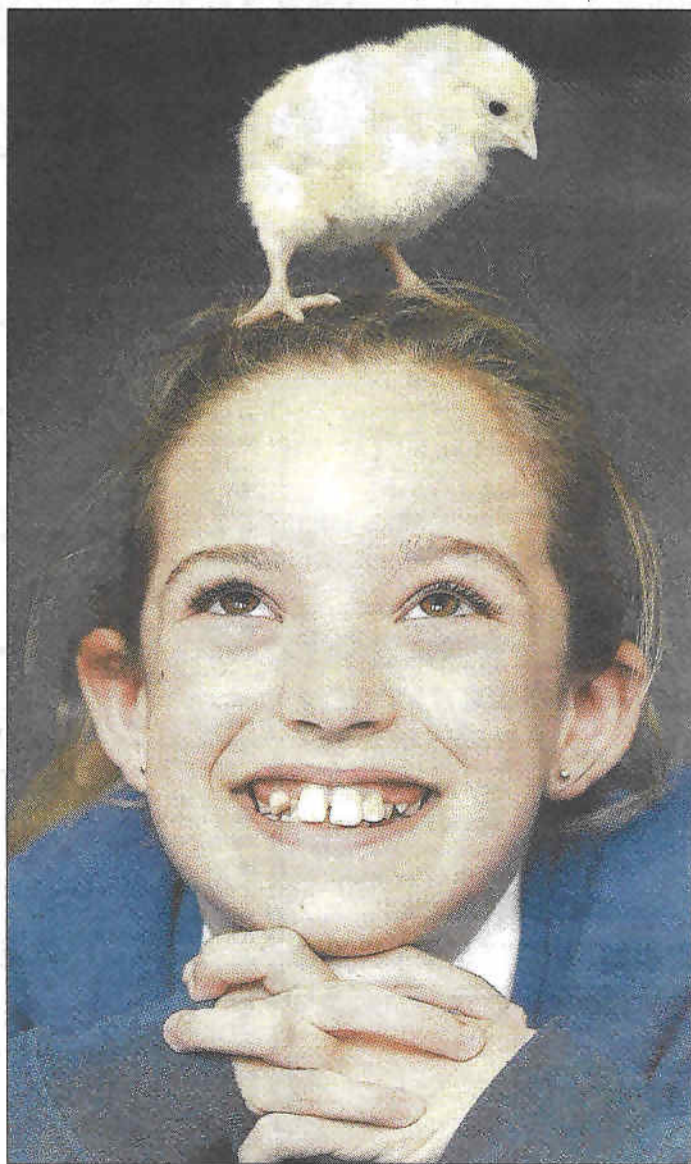
Members of the public will be able

to make their views known on the proposals during an upcoming consultation.

To register for updates on how, visit www.matthewellis.cc/quarry.

A more substantive plan is due to be presented to John Wakefield, county cabinet member for development and environment, for his approval in March 2009.

Feeling very chirpy



What a cheeky chick! Year five pupil Bethany Mellor is pictured with one of the birds hatched in time for Easter after being cared for by pupils at St Peter's Primary School, Yoxall. (AW7625-0003LM)

"This would create swathes in our countryside scarring the landscape forever"

Councillor Matthew Ellis



Cc

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