

Villagers' anger at chicken farm plan
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VILLAGERS living near to the proposed site of an intensive chicken farm claim there could be problems with smell and noise, as well as a health risk.

However, the developer behind the project, at Thorington, near Halesworth, said conditions at the site would be tightly controlled by the Environment Agency and no nuisances would be caused.

Hillfairs, a farming company based at Heveningham, wants to erect six buildings capable of accommodating a total of between 280,000 and 340,000 birds on part of the site of the old gravel pit at Thorington.

But local residents say they are worried that nuisances will arise - in the form of noise, smell, dust and, possibly, health risks.

Dr Husain Arustu, who lives at Thorington Hall, a few hundred yards from the site, and is a local parish councillor, said: "It would be so near to us and we are worried about the impact it will have on our lives."

His daughter, Jasmin, has told Suffolk Coastal District Council in a letter: "We will not sit quietly on this matter and the general feelings of parish residents we have been able to contact to date would suggest there is going to be a unified resistance to the project, however far we have to take this."

Another local resident, Erika Clegg, said the prospect of the chicken farm was "horrifying".

"From my family's perspective, this is not going to be pleasant - our home is three fields to the north east of the site, as are various others - so we will be affected by light, noise and smell, not to mention possible health risks.

"More importantly, we thoroughly object to new proposals for this style of farming, at a time when, surely, the industry is moving away from it. This is not symbolic of the 'greenest county' that Suffolk is aiming to become."

Parish council chairman, Charles Mullett, said: "We are not happy with certain aspects of this application and would like more information and more time to consider it."

Sam Fairs, spokesman for Hillfairs, said his company had approached plans for the poultry sheds in a thoroughly professional way.

"We have had a formal Environmental Impact Assessment and we are satisfied that the development will not cause problems for local residents."

Mr Fairs said the operation of the site would be tightly controlled by the Environment Agency which would only grant a licence if it was satisfied there was compliance with environmental regulations. If problems occurred at any time in the future, the agency would be able to revoke the license.

"We are aware of local concerns and have offered to have a site meeting with parish councillors," he said.

Gravel was last extracted from the pit about four years ago and since then a large area had been restored by Hillfairs, including improvements to great crested newt habitat and the creation of a bat cave. Wildlife would not be affected by the proposed development, Mr Fairs added.