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Villagers divided over highway!

A PROPOSED four-lane highway has divided a village council and involved environmental organisations and government agencies.

The planned road, which would connect Lania village with Limassol town has been the issue of much debate.

‘The Council’s main arguments against the road are that the resulting noise pollution will undermine efforts to promote Lania as a quiet agrotourism destination, and will also devastate agricultural development as it will cause air pollution,’ said Giorgos Ktistis, Lania Council member.

Ktistis is one of the three Lania Council members who oppose the project. The other two members, including the council president, are in favour of the road and accuse those who are against it of acting to protect their personal interests.

‘It is just three members of the Council who are opposed to the road, because it will pass next to their land and they think this will reduce its value,’ said Giorgos Sykas, Lania Council president.

‘As President of the Lania Council, I can tell you we want the road. It will help the community in many ways. The village will be more accessible – just ten minutes away from Limassol. So, village residents can continue to live here instead of spending a fortune buying houses in Limassol,’ he added.

The current village council is newly elected and since it started work on January 1, its members started voicing their objection to the plan for the road construction. In February the Council sent a letter to the Transport Minister and the Environment Service, explaining their views.

The letter was signed by all the members of the Council, including the president. The president and another member then changed their mind, bringing about the current split in the council’s views.

The new Communications and Works Minister Maria Malaktou-Pamballi referred the issue to the Environment Service. A meeting took place in September at Environment Service where the Game Fund, ETEK, the Federation of Environmental Organisations and the Department of Agriculture expressed their opposition to the project.

The residents are not opposed to the road itself, but the inappropriate choice of location.

‘We don’t want a motorway just 200 yards off our quiet and beautiful village. The road should be moved to the west,’ said Michael Owen, a resident artist who has been running a gallery in the village for the last 34 years.