

AN ENERGY company is seeking to tap into possible gas and oil reserves beneath some of the East Riding's most picturesque villages.

Rathlin Energy has ordered a "geophysical seismic survey" of Cherry Burton, Bishop Burton, Walkington, Rowley and Skidby.

It says the survey, which does not require permission from East Riding Council, is key to its "ongoing evaluation of the area for potential hydrocarbon reserves."

Hydrocarbon reserves refers to the underground supply of oil and natural gas.

But villagers have spoken of their concerns, fearing a large drilling operation could eventually be on their doorstep.

David Drew, chairman of Walkington Parish Council, said: "This won't be popular. It wouldn't be very pleasant having drilling machinery on our doorstep."

Because the initial surveying is low-level testing, this does not need planning approval.

This will see a network of cables spread over East Riding farmland and, in some areas, over driveways and roads, with residents told to expect a "slight, muffled, background thud".

Tom Wragg, chairman of Skidby Parish Council, said villagers would like to know more about what is involved, particularly what impact drilling would have if reserves were found.

He told the Mail: "We would have to view any proposals on its individual merits. There is concern, although low-level at this moment in time. We need to know more."

Mr Wragg, who has lived in the village since 1971, added: "If it turns out to be a big operation, with extensive drilling, there will be considerable concern – not just here in Skidby but across the area."

Drilling and seismic tests are expected to begin any day, according to a public notice issued by TESLA-IMC International Ltd, the geological company appointed by Rathlin Energy.

The company said the "extensive" cable network, fitted with microphones, would be spread along the ground for up to two weeks.

Individual seismic 'shots' would be fired through the cable, enabling geologists to map the location and extent of natural gas and oil.

Geologists are set to start in Skidby and move north with the survey scheduled to be completed in Cherry Burton by mid January.

A spokesman for TESLA-LMC International Ltd said he was unable to comment before talking to Rathlin Energy.

No one from the latter company was available for comment.