

Lafarge Aggregates

New hue added to long lasting colours

Development of a naturally coloured asphalt for a large estate in Buckinghamshire has produced a new addition to Lafarge Aggregates' durable and aesthetic materials – AxoColour Natural.

The customer can have any colour he wants, so long as it is black" remarked Henry Ford, as his 'Model T' motorcar first rolled off the production line 100 years ago this autumn. Asphalt suppliers offered much the same, but all has now changed. Lafarge Aggregates has its colourful AxoColour range – just extended by its new 'natural' option, following a specific request for a bespoke, tinted, durable surfacing.

The brief came from the owner of a large property in Buckinghamshire. The results are an expansive driveway with an excellent finish; and a new product – AxoColour Natural – ideal for heritage sites and large estates. The new material has been developed to the same mix design principles as Lafarge's existing AxoColour range of high performance coloured

asphalts. But the new natural colour comes through from the aggregate in a clear binder instead of from addition of pigment.

"Our client did not want their driveway to be filled with an expanse of black asphalt. Instead they wanted a surfacing that complemented rather than distracted from the property; and they wanted it to last," says Lafarge's National Value Added Products Manager Phil Battle. "We initially developed AxoColour Natural specifically for this contract but the product is now available for all estate owners and authorities looking for a highly durable and aesthetic asphalt surface."

The client in Buckinghamshire asked for a hint of yellow aggregate to show through the surfacing of her driveway and Lafarge suggested use of its Somersham golden gravel, quarried in Cambridgeshire, to be coated with a clear bitumen binder. Trials of the new material were carried out at the company's Stevenage asphalt plant, before a contract was signed to carry out the driveway surfacing during May this year.

The extensive private driveway and parking areas of the Buckinghamshire mansion were surfaced with around 150t of AxoColour Natural containing a 10mm single sized aggregate. The coloured surface was laid and compacted to a depth of 35mm over newly installed base and binder courses and a tack coat. Use of a polymer modified binder in the mix allowed greater workability of the material for longer and great care was taken when laying the material around newly installed kerbs, granite setts and stone plinths.

Lafarge Contracting operatives took particular care when laying AxoColour Natural and produced a flawless finish

The driveway had been cambered to aid drainage and operatives worked carefully to ensure no joints were visible in the finished surfacing. Lafarge's Assistant Contracts Manager Lee Godding says: "The client requested a flawless finish, but as there was insufficient room to operate two paving machines in echelon, we employed up to 14 operatives on site to carry out machine and hand laying simultaneously. We are pleased with the finish and the client has written to thank us for a job well done."

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Lafarge has been manufacturing coloured asphalts for the best part of a decade, but the development of AxoColour Natural represents more than just an offering of an attractive new hue. The new material gives the tried and tested durability of modern asphalt and has a track record as an aesthetic surfacing able to withstand delivery vehicles and tough summer climate

Lafarge is confident in the technical merits of its new material. Laying is only by Lafarge Contracting to ensure a high level of quality control and according to Battle,





Up to 14 operatives carried out machine and hand laying of AxoColour Natural, attracting a letter from Lafarge's client congratulating on a job well done

an exemplary level of care is taken during production and application to ensure the end product is of a consistent high quality.

Production plant used to coat the Somersham aggregate with the clear binder is cleaned thoroughly prior to the start of mixing, to remove every trace of black bitumen or coated stone.

Lorries used to transport asphalt to site also receive a thorough clean and Lafarge site operatives are issued with tools, boots and protective equipment never before

used for laying conventional surfacing materials.

"We are vigilant against the threat of contamination spoiling the finished surface and refuse to lay the material if there is the merest hint of rain," says Battle. "The surfacing is applied in small sections at a time and the priority is on getting the finish just right, while still completing the work on schedule."

Lafarge is supplying AxoColour Natural from Stevenage and its Renshaw plant

near Sheffield. Further contract opportunities are being pursued; including one for a local authority client keen to demarcate cycle lanes with a surface colour other than a bold red and more sympathetic to a park environment.

The material can also be further refined to meet stringent requirements demanded by local authorities for adoptable areas. By meeting such expectations, the material creates wider appeal for house builders.

"Coloured surfacings are becoming increasingly popular on exclusive building projects and we are confident the colour of our new material will have wide appeal for use beside prestige buildings in a conservation or heritage setting," adds Battle. "We are also confident of the long term durability of the material."

AxoColour Natural has the same mix properties as other AxoColour asphalts. These have been laid on private and public driveways as well as bus laybys and busy urban pedestrian areas subjected to traffic.

"We have not experienced a single failure in nearly 10 years, so the mix design has clearly stood up to these challenges. The key is in the attention to detail in manufacture and installation," Battle adds.



AxoColour Natural has produced an attractive and durable finish in Buckinghamshire

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