

Developers vow to fight on

GREAT HORKESLEY: Park application rejected but 'moving forward with appeal process'

By Amie Keeley

DEVELOPERS behind a controversial heritage site are vowing to fight for "as long as it takes" to get planning permission after their application was turned down by planners.

Bunting & Sons had sought to build Horkesley Park, a £25million development in the north Essex countryside with parks, craft studios and galleries.

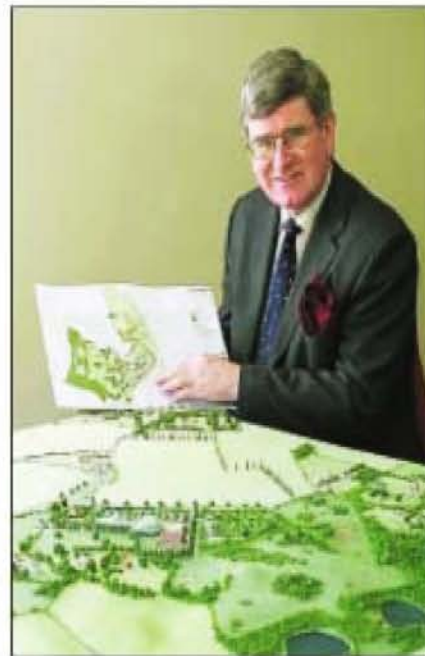
But Colchester Borough Council's planning committee voted against the application on Thursday after officers recommended the scheme be turned down.

Stephen Bunting, partner of Bunting & Sons, criticised the report saying it misled committee members and is appealing the decision.

"In view of the opinion of Queen's Counsel, which we shared with the council before the committee meeting, we believe the planning officer's report and its approach to policy to be fundamentally flawed," he said.

"The report gave the committee members incorrect guidance on how they should determine the application but nevertheless they attributed great weight to it and predictably went with the planning officer's recommendation to refuse the application.

"We are fully committed to the Horkesley Park scheme and the benefits it will deliver and we shall continue with the proposals until they come to fruition. Once the official confirmation of the decision is received from the



CONTROVERSIAL: Left, developer Stephen Bunting with a model of Horkesley Park and, above, residents protest against the scheme
Photos: LUCY TAYLOR/EADT

council, we will start moving forward with the appeal process."

Will Pavry, from the Stour Valley Action Group, welcomed the council's decision: "I am absolutely delighted with the result. I am grateful to my friends, colleagues and all the other groups and organisations who have campaigned against Horkesley Park."

The committee meeting saw 26 people speak, including Dr John Constable, a descendant of the artist, who spoke out against the plans alongside residents and conservationists.

Among those speaking in favour of the site were Kate Bunting, of Bunting & Sons, a

spokesman for Essex Chamber of Commerce, and a local resident.

After the meeting Kate Bunting said: "The scheme has been rigorously tested by independent specialist consultants, who have concluded that across the board it will deliver a raft of benefits, with no significant adverse effects.

"This includes the three bodies responsible for all roads in Essex and Suffolk raising no objection. We consider Horkesley Park to be a sustainable site and the activities proposed are a logical extension of our business."