

Horkesley Park: More views

REGRETTABLY, Bob Russell's remarks, as reported, appear to lack logic, an acquaintance with the ground, and more than a superficial knowledge of the issues.

He argues that because Horkesley Park is projected to be smaller in terms of visitor numbers than Colchester Zoo, and the former lies on an A road while the zoo is on a B road, objections to Horkesley Park on the grounds of an increase in traffic are unsustainable.

Apart from any other considerations, if Horkesley Park visitors are fewer than for the zoo, the project will not be financially viable, nor is the zoo in an area of outstanding natural beauty.

However, by definition, an A road carries heavier traffic than a B road. While, for the majority of visitors, the approaches to both attractions would come through Colchester itself, the short stretch of the B1022 Maldon Road between the edge of the town and the zoo is less than a mile of good wide open road, while the four miles of the A134 from Mile End to the Horkesley Park site are narrow for a main road and pass through Great Horkesley.

I do not know how much agricultural traffic there is between Colchester and the zoo, but I do know the A134 carries a lot of heavy agricultural machinery, as well as the usual commercial and private traffic, and can be congested in consequence, especially at harvest time.

Mr Russell has a narrow viewpoint on the prospective benefits of the project and we must hope Colchester Council recognises it as such.

Richard Channon
Almond House,
Stoke by Nayland

□ MRS Eversley suggests in the County Standard (April 8) that my objections to the Horkesley Park proposals are a joke.

I agree that life is difficult for many at the moment, with wars, tsunamis etc, but surely that is all the more reason not to further impoverish the world by ruining places such as the Dedham Vale for the short-term profits of a few shareholders.

This development will contribute nothing to anyone's understanding of the Vale that cannot already be learned at Flatford and, as to the green ethos of out-of-town shopping centres, surely Mrs Eversley is the one who is joking.

Chas Bazeley
Colchester

□ I WAS disappointed to read in last week's County Standard Bob Russell MP has chosen to express support for the Horkesley Park

development, particularly since it is outside his constituency.

His support for Horkesley Park, which I and many others believe has the potential to seriously damage the Dedham Vale AONB, would seem to be totally at odds with his well-publicised support for efforts to prevent the development of land in Myland for housing on the grounds of damage this might do to the countryside in the area.

His points about comparison with Colchester Zoo in terms of location do not seem to be appropriate. The zoo is not built in open countryside within, and on the edge of, the AONB as would be the case for Horkesley Park, but it is close to disused quarries on the edge of Colchester.

I also believe traffic congestion around the zoo on fine summer weekends can be very considerable – contrary to his assertion.

I do, however, note his point he thinks Horkesley Park will be smaller than the zoo despite the fact Buntings' estimated visitor numbers for Horkesley Park are equivalent.

I completely agree the forecast visitor numbers for Horkesley Park are overstated. By saying it will be smaller than the zoo, Mr Russell is supporting our opinion and must be concluding, by inference, that employment numbers claimed by Buntings are overstated.

Buntings' whole case is built on immediately attracting 485,000 visitors in the first year in order to make their project viable.

The attraction "message" of the zoo for families is immediate and obvious, but no such message exists for Horkesley Park.

In our view, the employment potential for Horkesley Park is far less than that claimed by Buntings.

It is clear from the recent Natural England report that little or no work has been done in respect of the traffic impact on minor roads and villages.

Residents of Nayland and Stoke-by-Nayland, in particular, would strongly contest Mr Russell's assertion there would be no disadvantage to them from an additional 485,000 visitors per annum, more than 85 per cent of whom would be reliant on access by private car.

W L Pavry
Chairman
Stour Valley Action Group

□ YOUR article 'New care home to create 70 jobs' set me thinking.

There will apparently be between 60 and 65 full-time equivalent jobs in an undoubted growth sector without apparently causing too much upset in the community.

Contrast that with Horkesley Park. If the

development is given the go-ahead in the face of opposition from every relevant parish council, residents and many official bodies, on the developers' own – possibly optimistic – figures, only 2½ times as many full-time equivalent jobs will be created onsite as at the care home.

Extra jobs will, it is claimed, be created off-site but, presumably, that is true for the care home as well. That seems to me relatively few jobs, considering all the planning reasons against it and the fact it will be competing, to some extent, with existing local business.

Moreover, many of the jobs will be part-time work available at weekends and in peak holiday seasons – not what unemployed bread winners need – and, of course, subject to the vagaries of the retail and tourism sectors.

It is often forgotten the only reason the site is vacant is because the Buntings sold an innovative and Queen's Award winning business they developed and ran on the site to a concern that then took the technology and jobs – and any future jobs such a successful firm may have created – out of the area.

They are clever and successful business people, surely they can find something that produces more full-time jobs in a more stable sector and without competing with established local firms.

Lesley Watson
Little Horkesley

□ JASON Collins (Essex County Standard Letters April 15) sets out to ridicule my concern with regard to a colony of protected great crested newts that current evidence indicates, inhabit the Horkesley Park development site.

Fortunately for the newts, Natural England published a 75-page mitigation guidance document, which I suggest he reads.



Response: Peter Gaskin.
CO43609-02

Hopefully, it would persuade him that the protection of great crested newts must be taken seriously as it is enshrined in English Law. Under the 1994 regulations, damaging or destroying a breeding site or resting place is an offence, regardless of whether or not the act was deliberate.

Mr Collins points out it is possible to have visitors and

native species happily co-existing, but I must continue to make the point. The introduction of Suffolk Punch Horses, plus thousands of visitors and their vehicles, is far too one-sided to constitute happy co-existence.

Mr Collins concludes with the hope my letter is seen for what it is. Just to inform him, it is an honest advocacy for the responsible protection of great crested newts from the commercial exploitation of their habitat.

Peter Gaskin
London Road
Great Horkesley

□ BUNTINGS are offering a cultural Tesco and the effect of this will be to leech out the lifeblood of the surrounding localities.

Would you rather go to the beating heart of Constable country and visit the beautiful Flatford Mill, or would you rather go to a reanimated mock-up exhibition and then eat food served by people who have recently lost their jobs in the local farm shop?

And what would be on your plate? You'll be eating the same sausages you would have bought in that farm shop because that farm shop will now be out of business.

So who benefits from this change? Simple. Buntings. They promise to shoe-horn everything Dedham Vale stands for under one "roof", and everybody else who has provided these things in the past will have to suffer.

Buntings is a juggernaut and it has no road manners. It must be stopped before it gains too much momentum.

Simon Aylward
Priory Road
High Wycombe

□ I LIVE on Fishponds Hill Great Horkesley.

Three years ago, I saw a heavily pregnant great crested newt walking across my lawn, trying to reach Peter Gaskin's pond next door.

It succeeded, with some help from me, and scrambled through one of the rabbit holes under the fence to Peter's pond.

Fishponds Wood has the remains of three large fishponds, the banks remaining but eroded from the spring water flowing down and through since the Reformation and the closing of the monastery in Little Horkesley.

Woods can be given protected status by Natural England or the Woodland Trust if offered to them by the landowner.

I do hope the newts are not removed before they are identified by Natural England.

A Tubbs
Fishponds Cottage
Great Horkesley