

NEWSFLASH

7th June 2007

It is not usually our policy to publish letters to the press, but this one, which appeared in the East Anglian Daily Times on Saturday, June 2nd, was so strong we thought it deserved a wider audience.

The writer is a concerned local resident who is a professional art historian arranging exhibitions, so speaks with inside knowledge on the subject of the art 'outstation', which Buntings advertise as one of the major cultural elements of Horkesley Park.

Farmers' dream will spoil the countryside

Sir, - The Bunting family have a dream. They hope to take 117 acres of uneconomic farmland, a third of which lies in an AONB and turn it into a leisure park with the theme of conservation, heritage celebration and education. On a recent visit to Horkesley Park, the Buntings gave a small group of visitors a slick description of their plans. We were bombarded with emotive words such as green, celebration, countryside, endangered plants and animals, tradition and art.

Concerning the art exhibitions, I am told that an art "outstation" will be created for loan shows of important artists from this area: Constable, Gainsborough, Munnings and Nash (presumably both Paul and John). No one in their right mind would lend their original paintings and drawings to an organisation which has no experience in the exhibition and installation of works of art. The unlikely venue is the Chantry, an early 19th century building with plate glass windows which is supposed to be turned into a secure art gallery with internationally accepted specific LUX levels, state of the art security systems and humidity controls. I suggest the four local museums do it better: Why not let Gainsborough's House in Sudbury show Gainsborough, the Minories in Colchester show East Anglian artists, Munnings House in Dedham show Munnings and Christchurch Art Gallery in Ipswich show Constable?

But the bottom line is cars: a tarmac car park in front for 240 cars, an overflow car park for 420 cars and a coach park for 18 buses. This amounts to 700 cars on the small and twisty A134.

If there are two people in every car and 35 in every coach this is a minimum influx of nearly 2,000 people. On a rainy afternoon midweek I noticed almost constant traffic on the narrow A134. The theme park will necessitate exit spurs to be built to take cars to the Horkesley Park entrance. Once off the A134, the Buntings, aware of the congestion, plan a double lane road to the park itself. On a busy day there could be a tail back as far as the new junction 28 on the A12.

I understand that the Buntings as farmers must be creative in the use of their land. Farming is no



DIVERSIFICATION: Stephen Bunting with the 3D model showing the proposed Horkesley Park Heritage and Conservation Centre

Photo:EADT

longer viable in this country and the Buntings like most farmers have had to diversify. However they should stick to what they understand, animal husbandry and crops. Unfortunately they

have hit upon a totally spurious project with the most superficial values cloaked in the green buzz words of today. This development will be one huge 117-acre leisure theme park set in one of the most

beautiful, unspoiled parts of the Suffolk/Essex countryside.

MRS C W BROCKLEBANK