



Newsletter October 2010

Dear Member,

Status of Horkesley Park Application No 090231

We believe that the whole Horkesley Park will in all likelihood come to a head within the next few months– but then we have been saying that since last December!

We have been in regular touch with the Colchester Borough Council Planning Officers and they advise us that they are now bringing all the documentation together and expect it to come before the Planning Committee of the Council in the near future.

Now we need you! When this happens, we must have maximum attendance from you all at the Council meeting to demonstrate our absolute opposition to this desecration of the countryside.

We do not know what the Planning Officers' recommendation to Councillors will be, but must presume that they will take note of the strong grounds for rejection from their own consultants, Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (NLP) and their own Spatial Policy team who also recommended rejection.

To remind you of activities over the last ten months:

- In December 2009, CBC commissioned a report into certain aspects of the Application from NLP. They responded in March 2010 but the report was not made publicly available until July 2010. The Report was very unfavourable to Buntings and a summary of their findings is given in our Newsletter of July 2010 which is on the SVAG website under www.stourvalleyactiongroup.org.uk.
- Buntings produced a 406 page response to the NLP report dated July 13th 2010 seeking to contest its conclusions.
- SVAG wrote a detailed response to the Buntings' document and in support of the NLP Report. Our letter was dated August 31st 2010 and is available in full on our web site above.
- Essex Highways finally concluded their response on traffic issues in their letter of July 6th 2010. They raised no objection but imposed very onerous public transport requirements which would seriously affect the financial viability of the Application. They made no comment on the status of the Fishponds Hill Protected Lane. We contested this in our letter of July 27th 2010 which has been acknowledged and a response is awaited.
- Suffolk Highways originally recommended rejection in their letter of April 2009. They changed their position in their letter of May 2010 and we wrote and contested this.
- There has been a steady stream of letters in the local press from many of our members which have been most helpful.

SVAG's position regarding the Horkesley Park Application is fully set out in our letter to Colchester Borough Council of April 17th 2009. The Application must be rejected because:

- **Horkesley Park would cause irreparable damage to the peace and tranquillity of the Dedham Vale AONB through the impact of an additional projected 485,000 visitors annually.**
- **It is contrary to national and local planning policy.**
- **It is a retail development with over 75% of projected revenues coming from the garden centre, restaurants, food sales and other merchandising.**
- **Whatever the Traffic authorities say to the contrary, the impact of cars associated with 485,000 visitors on local lanes and villages would be quite unacceptable.**
- **The countryside is free for all to access through the myriad of footpaths, bridleways and public areas that exist in the Dedham Vale. Why should people be asked to pay for something that is already freely available?**
- **There is no demonstrated need for the development. All the elements of the plan are available elsewhere in the region.**
- **There is no 'heritage' asset at Horkesley Park that could possibly justify the development.**
- **We have demonstrated that it is almost certainly not commercially viable as proposed. Any claims for job creation numbers must therefore be set aside.**

The Council has received **1307** well reasoned letters and e-mails of objection compared with only 445 letters and e-mails of support. Organisations to **object** include Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Joint Advisory Committee, Dedham Vale Society, CPR Essex, Suffolk Preservation Society, English Heritage, Natural England, National Trust, Gainsborough's House Museum, Colne Stour Association, Soil Association, Nayland with Wissington Conservation Society, Essex Ramblers, Babergh District Council, Parish Councils of Great Horkesley, Little Horkesley, Nayland with Wissington, Boxted, Stoke-by-Nayland, Leavenheath, Alphamstone and Lamarsh.

Buntings **still claim that their petition of 22000 signature obtained *before*** the application was submitted from their Suffolk Punch road show should be counted. Our view is that this is manifest nonsense as these signatures only showed support for the Suffolk Punch and cannot have had anything to do with the Horkesley Park application as submitted. We have made strong representations to the Council on this issue.

Horkesley Park must be rejected. We need you support at the Planning Committee hearing and will advise you as soon as we know the date.

Will Pavry

Chairman, Stour Valley Action Group

Keep in touch with developments on : www.stourvalleyactiongroup.org.uk