



STOUR VALLEY ACTION GROUP PRESS RELEASE 6 APRIL 2007

Bunting and Sons have recently advertised the relaunch of their campaign for the 'Horkesley Park Heritage and Conservation Centre' at Great Horkesley above the lovely Stour Valley, with plans on public display during May and a new Planning Application to Colchester Borough Council expected soon after. They state their intention to open the Centre in 2010, subject to planning permission being granted in 2007.

This new Application will be the fourth that Buntings have submitted for this site in the past six years. The last one was withdrawn in March 2006, just before it was put before Council, in the face of widespread local and national opposition. The Stour Valley Action Group is once again observing developments with care. Assurance is being sought from Colchester Borough Council that Buntings will be made to pay the full Planning Fee due on resubmission since more than a year has elapsed since the previous withdrawal..

No indication has been given that the new proposal will differ in any substantive way from the previous ones. The one most evident change is cosmetic: the spurious connection with the painter John Constable which was the major gimmick of the previous campaign has apparently been replaced with a claim that Buntings will be the saviours of the Suffolk Punch heavy horse. It is SVAG's belief that the admirable Suffolk Punch is being exploited in this promotion just as Constable was previously.

Buntings claim their venture would be a 'Celebration of the English Countryside'. The Stour Valley Action Group fears that it would do irreparable damage to the landscape and the communities of the Stour Valley.

We will be asking the public to look beneath the conservationist spin of the Buntings' promotion and look at the hard commercial reality: the extensive retail element that is not ancillary at all but lies at the very heart of the 'Country Park.' Will this be a *celebration of the English countryside?* Or will it be a *destruction of the English countryside?*

What is behind the Buntings' handsome Suffolk Punch? A haycart or a shopping centre?

For our analysis of what Bunting and Sons' proposal might really mean, visit the SVAG website: www.stourvalleyactiongroup.org.uk . (Contact: Will Pavry 07740 783863, WillPavry@aol.com or Georgina Harding 07891 033369, hardinglewis@virgin.net)