

Protesters' final say on centre

AROUND 300 protesters turned up on Sunday to take part in a final demonstration against the proposed £25million heritage and conservation centre at Great Horkesley.

The event beside the development site was organised by the Stour Valley Action Group, which has been campaigning against the plans for 10 years.

Objectors walked the short distance along footpaths to the hayfield beneath Great Horkesley church where they formed a chain to write a huge human NO with yellow ribbon.

A spokeswoman said: "We wrote our NO to

the commercialisation of Constable country, to a shopping centre ruining an area of natural beauty, to traffic, noise, the exploitation of our heritage and the loss of real rural life."

Before the demonstration, the group received a message of support from MP Tim Yeo, saying: "It is of the upmost importance that Colchester Borough Council is aware of how controversial this proposal is.

"It will be hard for the planning committee to ignore the significant degree of local concern this application has provoked."

Three previous applications by Bunting

and Sons for the centre – described as a "celebration of the English countryside" – were withdrawn before they reached the planning committee.

The proposed 117-acre development, intended to replace the firm's redundant tomato glasshouses, will include a John Constable exhibition and art gallery, a Suffolk Punch breeding centre, nature trails, refreshment areas and a country park. Buntings claim it will attract 485,000 visitors a year and create hundreds of jobs.

The application is due to be considered by the council next Thursday.