



**SISTERS ACT:** Protesters against the proposed heritage and conservation centre at Horkesley Park mount an hour-long slow drive protest on the main road to Horkesley. From left, Jessica, Gemma and Sarah Newton

Photograph: ALEX FAIRFULL

# Villagers campaign against heritage site

**CONGESTION FEARS:** Traffic slowdown highlights their concerns

By James Hore

HUNDREDS of cars, tractors and lorries were out in force yesterday to campaign against a £25million countryside heritage attraction planned for the Essex/Suffolk border.

The high-profile event attempted to highlight the possible impact that Horkesley Park Heritage and Conservation Centre could have on the local way of life.

Bunting and Sons want to transform disused green houses at Great Horkesley, near Nayland, into a tourist attraction, including a John Constable experience, and have hailed the project as a "celebration of the English countryside".

Nearly 500,000 people are predicted to visit every year, helping to create 270 jobs.

But protesters from the Stour Valley Action Group (SVAG) yesterday created their own "holiday traffic" in a bid to show how the surrounding roads, including the A134 from Colchester to Sudbury, will be affected by the extra vehicles.

From 11am-noon, a procession of drivers repeatedly did a slow lap from Nayland, past the proposed site and into Great Horkesley and brightly coloured posters stated: "Not wanted, not needed, not right



**SEEING RED:** Protesters aboard a vintage fire engine

– say no to Horkesley Park".

A HGV with "Say No, to Horkesley Park" emblazoned on its side joined the convoy and drivers hooted their discontent as they passed the site and members of the Buntings' family.

Ed Romerlee, who lives in nearby Stoke by Nayland, said: "The road network cannot take it – the local villages are swamped with traffic already and they are talking about another 485,000 people coming into the area every year.

"This is an extremely beautiful

area of the world so why box it up as a commodity when people can already walk the paths and enjoy it for free?"

Chairman of SVAG, Will Pavry, said: "The roads will be like this during peak weekends such as August and the tractors that are out here really demonstrate the farmers' concerns.

"This is a demonstration of people who are concerned, not just about the traffic element, but about the whole concept of Horkesley Park and – as we have stated before

– this is an excuse for a very large retail development in the heart of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and this view has not changed."

Mr Pavry said those in opposition include the National Trust, famed East Anglian author Ronald Blythe and The Joint Advisory Committee to the Dedham Vale AONB.

But Mr Bunting told the EADT: "SVAG has misrepresented the Horkesley Park scheme and they have caused scaremongering and a lot of people are going up and down that road will have been influenced by that misrepresentation and scaremongering.

"Horkesley Park will be an asset to the community; it will be an amenity for local people and a draw for tourists and provide 270 jobs net.

"We have refined and improved the proposals and that has been carefully done over a long period of time and we have listened to people and adjusted things.

"It has been professionally assessed and these assessments are not something that we have dreamt up – they are the ones that Colchester Borough Council wanted."

Colchester Borough Council's planning committee will vote on the scheme later this year.

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