



SHOWING THEY CARE: The Stour Valley Action Group demonstrates its opposition to the proposed £25million development

Photograph: LUCY TAYLOR



NO GO: Campaigners, left and above, gather to send out a clear message about the proposed scheme close to Dedham Vale

Photos: CONTRIBUTED and LUCY TAYLOR

# Protesters oppose tourist attraction

**GREAT HORKESLEY:** Campaigners' final action before plans submitted

By Amie Keeley

MORE than 300 people joined a final protest against a £25million retail development of Horkesley Park, which overlooks Dedham Vale.

The Stour Valley Action Group organised the event on Sunday as a last-ditch stand against the proposal

before the planning application will be considered by Colchester Borough Council on May 26.

The plans for the £25m heritage and conservation centre, which is on the boundary of the protected Dedham Vale area of outstanding natural beauty, include a country park of more than 100 acres, an art gallery and craft studios.

Bunting & Sons, the company behind

the scheme, has said that the centre would attract 485,000 visitors a year and create hundreds of jobs.

Local residents and campaigners met on London Road, Great Horkesley, beside the development site and walked across to a large hayfield where they formed a huge human "NO" with giant ribbon.

Chairman of the group, Will Pavry, said he was very confident the protest

would influence the council. He said: "I'm absolutely thrilled with the turnout. People have come from far and wide and it really demonstrates how upset and concerned they are about this development."

He warned that if it were to go ahead, the area would suffer enormous light and noise pollution. "There will be a

**From Page One**

huge increase in traffic. 90% of the visitors will come by car through local roads and lanes. The development has not been properly assessed."

The campaign has received support from South Suffolk MP Tim Yeo who said: "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."

Bunting & Sons says Horkesley Park will be "a celebration of the English Countryside" that will be sustainable for the long term, both ecologically and

economically. The firm claims a key feature will be a Suffolk Punch horse breeding centre, helping to save the endangered species from extinction.

Speaking in April, Stephen Bunting, of Bunting & Sons, said: "Having spent 10 years working on Horkesley Park we are not going to give up now - so many people want this to happen and the pluses of the scheme

for the area are overwhelming."

Georgina Harding, whose idea it was to stage a final protest, said: "It's hard to call what will happen at the meeting but I think looking at all rational planning laws and public opinion it should be rejected. Today will turn the spotlight on the council.

"I love the landscape and feel passionately about it. I'm very lucky

to live here and it's our responsibility to look after it."

To view the application visit [www.colchester.gov.uk](http://www.colchester.gov.uk) and search for the application number 090231. For more information visit the applicant's site at [www.horkesleypark.co.uk](http://www.horkesleypark.co.uk) or the campaign group's site at [www.stourvalleyactiongroup.org.uk](http://www.stourvalleyactiongroup.org.uk)

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