

Fresh bid to develop heritage site pledged

DEVELOPERS have announced their intention to submit "scaled down" plans for a controversial heritage site after planners rejected previous proposals.

Bunting & Sons had sought to build Horkesley Park, a £25million development which included a 100-acre country park, an art gallery and craft studios. But Colchester Borough Council rejected the application. The developers yesterday confirmed they will submit a new planning application.

In a letter to all 60 councillors, the developer of the scheme, Stephen Bunting, said it had been decided not to appeal against the council's previous decision – "instead, we shall submit a new application in due course for Horkesley

Park which will be for a substantially scaled down version."

The letter says the new application would not include developments such as an underground nature watch building or a fine art gallery, both of which would have been located in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

The new plans would focus on the development of their existing nursery site.

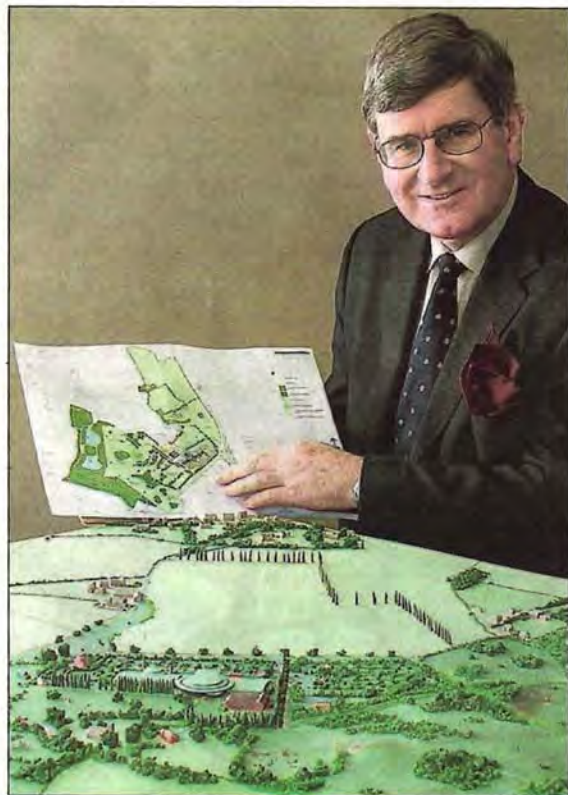
Kate Bunting, a partner of Bunting & Sons, issued a statement saying: "We see this as another step in the planning journey. We are modifying the proposals for Horkesley Park, addressing the issues raised by the planning department and councillors of Colchester Borough Council, principally that of scale and the

impact on the AONB, and we shall submit a new application in due course.

"We are confident that even as a scaled down scheme Horkesley Park will be a major benefit to Colchester and the rural communities, creating for local people and visitors to the area recreational, educational and other amenities as well as providing many, many jobs. We are determined to make good use of an already extensively developed site."

Will Pavry, of Stour Valley Action Group, which has campaigned against the development from the start, said the group would continue to fight to protect the countryside.

"We have to wait and see what the scope and scale of the application is before giving any full reaction, but we



FLASHBACK: Stephen Bunting with a model of the previously proposed Horkesley Park centre

Photo: PHIL MORLEY

will always want the tranquillity of the countryside to be conserved. We are glad to see they are not planning to appeal the previous application as

that would have been a very unwise decision.

"We will be waiting and watching with great interest to see what the scaled down plans will entail."