

# Constable paintings pledge for centre

**GREAT HORKESLEY:** Company insists it will display original artworks

By Amie Keeley

THE company behind plans for a new £25million heritage centre in the Stour Valley insists it will display original paintings by John Constable.

It was responding to concerns from the Stour Valley Action Group (SVAG), which is opposed to the proposed Horkesley Park visitor attraction, claiming it will ruin an area of outstanding natural beauty.

The planning application, which will be considered by Colchester Borough Council at the end of the month, includes details for a fine art gallery at the site called The Chantry. On the Horkesley Park website, it states it will display works "by John Constable and other artists of the region".

But a spokeswoman from the SVAG said: "Knowing the extraordinary value of Constable paintings, and knowing that Constable's works and their whereabouts are exceptionally well documented, the Stour Valley Action Group has been attempting to



**LOOKING FORWARD:** Stephen Bunting with a 3D model which shows the proposed Horkesley Park centre

check the credibility of these claims." She added: "It would be immensely helpful to us all if they would release some information on the works they propose to exhibit.

"If they insist they cannot release this information on the grounds that it is commercially sensitive, then we can only suggest that the council take steps to verify their claims in advance of the planning meeting."

Hector Bunting, partner of Bunting & Sons, which is behind the plans, said: "The creation of an art gallery within the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty that will display original paintings by John Constable and

other artists of the region will be a major coup for Colchester and the area." Kate Bunting, also partner of Bunting & Sons added: "We understand that SVAG has encouraged people to write to the paper attacking what the council's consultants state are key attractions of Horkesley Park, seemingly in an attempt to sway public and councillors' opinion.

"Although this is not surprising, it is a pity it attempts to detract from celebrating the wonderful benefits that will be delivered by Horkesley Park."

The Horkesley Park Heritage and Conservation Centre, which was rejected by Colchester Borough Council in 2011, has been scaled down and includes a demonstration nursery and indoor display ring.

The proposed new buildings, designed by UK architect of the year Sir Michael Hopkins, have been relocated away from the AONB.

However, objectors claim the scheme is not financially viable and would destroy the peace and tranquillity of the area.

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