

Farmers fear the impact of more cars

FARMERS have joined forces to protest at the heritage centre proposals.

Twenty farmers and landowners wrote to Colchester Council objecting to Bunting and Sons' plans for Horkesley Park Heritage and Conservation Centre.

They cited concerns about traffic and its impact on their business and said they believed the land should be farmed.

"It's already an arduous and challenging enough business to transport our goods as increasingly frantic drivers make dangerous overtaking manoeuvres on these lanes and highways.

"How are farmers in the vicinity of Horkesley Park expected to go about their daily lives with so many more cars on the roads?"

"With visitor numbers expected to peak in August just when most of us have the harvest to get in, an already tricky situation will be made nigh impossible," they said in the open letter.

Mr Bunting said: "We believe they signed it because they have been misinformed and Horkesley Park has been misrepresented to them.

"We have more than 100 farmers and producers who have confirmed their support directly for Horkesley Park who perceive it as an opportunity to derive income from it and promote their produce.

"It will also have considerable educational facilities, which will promote farming and production to the general public."

■ **Your views:**
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■ Backing - roadside campaigners support the four-wheeled protest against the proposed Horkesley Park plan on the A134.

Pictures: NIGEL BROWN (QVHYL-57)

32 firms object to council

SMALL businesses have come together to protest against the plan.

A total of 32 companies have appealed to Colchester Council to turn down the proposal for the centre.

A joint letter states: "We fear the proposed Horkesley Park development will do more harm than good to the local economy.

"It will threaten our livelihoods, the services we offer and the very fabric of the community."

Bunting and Sons claim about 200 full-time equivalent jobs will be treated after taking into account displacement.

But the businesses' statement said: "None of us have ever been formally approached by the consultants who drew up the glossy plan and so we have to conclude that their assertions are based on pure speculation rather than fact.

"We feel most strongly about this 'displacement' as it would be our jobs and businesses, built up in some cases over many years, which are likely to disappear."

Culture issue, claims writer

RENOWNED writer and historian Ronald Blythe is one of more than 720 people who have objected to the Buntings' application.

The patron of the Woodland Trust, who lives in Wormingford, said: "My reason for objecting is primarily that the cultural aspects of it could not be supplied by the Horkesley Park Heritage and Conservation Centre.

"All the things which it promises are already present and professionally offered to the public."

Dr Blythe said he believes the scheme is more like a theme park than a heritage conservation centre.

■ by Helen Orrell and Claire Owen

HUNDREDS of campaigners brought traffic to a standstill in Constable Country with a four-wheeled protest at plans for a heritage centre.

About 200 supporters of Stour Valley Action Group took to the road in a medley of weird and wonderful vehicles to highlight their concerns about the proposed Horkesley Park Heritage and Conservation Centre.

They honked their horns as they drove up and down the A134 between Nags Corner in Nayland and Coach Road, Great Horkesley, for an hour to demonstrate the pressure they believe the development will put on the route and the surrounding network of country lanes.

Lorries, tractors, vintage cars, fire engines and military vehicles decorated with posters "Say No to Horkesley Park" "Dedham Vale Not for Sale" and "Constable would have hated it" all joined the motorising convoy.

Meanwhile, supporters waving placards lined the roadside

Just a taste of things to come, say protesters

to cheer them on.

Those caught up in the gridlock expressed some frustration, but their complaints served as fuel to the protesters' fire.

Group chairman Will Pavry said: "We are doing this to bring to the attention of the local area the potentially adverse impact the Horkesley Park development will have on the A134 and all the other local roads.

"We want to make sure the community at large is fully aware of the impact and we thought the Bank Holiday would be an appropriate time

to do it as it will have the least impact on commercial life."

He was backed by fellow protester, Ed Romerlee, 25, of School Street, Stoke-by-Nayland, who said: "This is what the traffic could be like on a daily basis. It's a disgrace.

"We live in a beautiful area and this application has got a lot of people's backs up.

"I appreciate some people may see it as nimbysism but you have to protect your own back yard when it's as special as this."

Applicants Bunting and Sons said in its application to Colchester Council, an independent

travel assessment found the surrounding roads could accommodate the predicted traffic levels.

Stephen Bunting, partner in the family firm, said: "As far as we are concerned, it was just a publicity stunt.

"The transport assessments that have been undertaken by professional specialists are far-reaching and include traffic impact assessments, schedules of road improvements and a comprehensive travel plan which promotes non-car travel.

"They have concluded that the Horkesley Park proposals are entirely acceptable."

'It doesn't bear thinking about'

SARAH NEWTON, a mother of three, of The Crescent, Great Horkesley, said: "It's just awful to think this is what it could be like every Bank Holiday, if not worse.

"The local roads and the infrastructure are just not up to taking this volume of traffic and we are concerned it will lead to long tail backs and possibly accidents."

LOUISE KILLICK, 48, of The Causeway, Great Horkesley said: "I didn't believe there would be so many people here today and I think it does demonstrate how busy this road could be.

"At the moment, the A134 is busy throughout the week.

"If this development goes ahead, it could be like that every day and worse. I think it's a real shame.

"This is a really lovely part of the countryside and if you build something like that there is no going back."

ANN TOLHURST, of Dedham Road, Langham, said: "The road is bad enough without the added congestion.

"With the numbers involved, it will just clog everything up.

"We are doing this for an hour to minimise the problems, but if the development were to go ahead it would be all the time.

"We are just trying to protect a beautiful area and if this is allowed we



■ Opposed - clockwise from top left, Sarah Newton, Anita Golding, Louise Killick and Ann Tolhurst.



feel it would set a dangerous precedent."

ANITA GOLDING, 50, of Water Lane, Great Horkesley, said: "On a normal day, it is a busy road and you have to wait for a long time to even

pull on to it.

"With the numbers they are talking about, the traffic level is a major concern, particularly for my children, who have to walk down these lanes to catch a bus."