

Horkesley Park meeting moves to bigger venue

ONE of the biggest planning meetings in Colchester's history will be held in Charter Hall.

Hundreds of people are expected to attend the meeting to discuss the Stour Valley Visitor Centre at Horkesley Park.

It is the first time the venue at Colchester Leisure World, which has a capacity of 400, will be used for a planning meeting.

Colchester Council switched the meeting, on February 28, from Moot

Hall, which can accommodate 250 people.

The Stour Valley Visitor Centre is the fifth version of the scheme put forward by Bunting and Sons in the past 12 years.

The family firm says the visitor centre, on 117 acres of land, will be a celebration of the English countryside.

The project will include a 101-acre country park, a demonstration nursery, wildflower meadows, art studios, an indoor display ring and sculpture trail.

Colchester Council planning officers have recommended the application is approved – even though its own planning policy department says it should be refused.

The council has also commissioned three reports from consultants. One of the three reports supports the development but all three had serious reservations as to its viability.

Will Pavry, chairman of the Stour Valley Action Group, which opposes the

development, said: "Colchester Council should recognise the strength of feeling on Horkesley Park coming not just from us, but also from the Dedham Vale Society, the Campaign to Protect Rural England, Colne Stour Countryside Association, Little Horkesley Parish Council, Nayland with Wisington Conservation Society, Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project, Suffolk Preservation Society and many other parish councils.

"We and the other organi-

sations show how deep is the local feeling the Dedham Vale should not be put at serious risk by the totally misconceived Stour Valley Visitor Centre at Horkesley Park."

Kate Bunting, a partner in Bunting and Sons, said: "It is a great shame the Stour Valley Action Group has such jaundiced views about the visitor centre, which the vast majority of people just do not share."

Consultation on the application closes on Tuesday.