

■ "We must protect the vale for future generations" - Will Pavry.

On the one side, groups are fighting to protect the

THE Battle of Horkesley Park

countryside which they hold

On the other, a family business both camps.

wants to open that land up and provide a financial shot in the arm to Colchester's economy. The two sides are incompatible.

WENDY BRADING spoke to

Picture: TERRY WEEDEN (QZFS7-

Horkesley Park battle lines drawn between residents and the Buntings

"We got it right this time" - Stephen, Hector and

## Action group: 'We want to keep our peace and quiet'

Applicants: 'We have listened and made changes'

has been declared.

It epitomises everything which is beautiful and sacred about the English countryside - and Will Pavry would like it to stay that way.

As chairman of the Stour Valley Action Group, he is passionately opposed to development, which he believes would destroy the peace and tranquility of the prized landscape.

And that means he will stand up and fight against the proposed development of the Horkesley Park Heritage and Conservation Centre.

It is the fourth application the group will have fought in eight years. A campaign, Mr Pavry says, which has been longer than the Sec-

ond World War. Mr Pavry said: "Our chief reason is we do not believe anything should be done to endanger the peace and tranquility of the Dedham Vale, which is an area of outstanding nat-

ural beauty (AONB). "This must not be allowed to happen in our lifetime, and we must protect the vale for future genera-

"Colchester Council recognises the core development strategy which states that development which has an adverse impact on the AONB will not be supported. We believe the impact would be adverse.

"The plan is clear that any development which has an impact on the Dedham Vale would only be accept-able where an overriding national need has been demonstrated. We don't consider this has been done."

Mr Pavry also contends that the retail aspect of Horkesley Park should not be allowed in the area.

He said: "Colchester Council recognises the site is not designated in any way for retail sales."

Another major concern is the amount of traffic which would be generated. It is estimated that people would visit Horkesley Park every year if it was given the go-ahead.

The Stour Valley Action Group believes this would put inordinate pressure on the small lanes which wind through the villages, including the protected lane Fishponds Hill.

Mr Pavry said: "They claim the increase in traffic at the weekends

the north through Nayland, Boxted, East Ash Green and West Bergholt.

"We don't think anything like enough consideration has been given to the impact of this."

There is also the issue of light pollution and of noise. Mr Pavry said: "The valley acts as an echo chamber. During the summer months, you can clearly hear people talking across the valley.

"If there are 3,000 people there in a day, the peace and quiet we enjoy here will be lost.

Mr Pavry admits there is an element of Nimbyism in the group's objections, but he is not ashamed of that. He has lived in the valley for 30 years and he likes his home. So do other objectors to the scheme.

Mr Pavry likes the tranquility and to be able to enjoy the splendour of the countryside which surrounds

But the determination to fight the proposals go further than the group's own gratification.

"The support we have received is from way beyond the villages," he

will not be significant.
"We really question that. We believe there will be significant trafbelieve there will be significant.

The indirect roads from Dedham Vale area of outstanding Dedham Vale ar

The Horkesley Park Heritage and Conservation Centre is described as a venue for tourism and recreation and a cultural centre devoted to agricultural and artistic traditions.

■ A Rotunda entrance leading to a Stour Valley walkway, featuring exhibitions, displays and



## Features planned for the centre

■ The Life and Times of John Constable experi-

ry from the 19th and 20th centuries ■ An exhibition space chronicling farming through the ages

■ A 250-seat lecture theatre

■ Parking for more than 220 cars and 28 coach-

A food experience described as a cross between an exhibition, farmers' market and a food show ■ A variety of gardens and wildlife features, including five acres of gardens around the

Chantry, where Georgian and walled gardens would be restored and a Chinese garden created ■ The creation of an art gallery in the Chantry to display paintings by John Constable and other artists of the region

■ A Suffolk Punch breeding centre

■ A farm barn, mainly underground and covered by pasture, featuring domesticated farm animals and rare breeds

■ The underground Warren to provide an entrance into the western part of the country park, housing displays and wildlife observation

■ 101 acres of country park, featuring parkland pastures and wildflower meadows, with areas designated for falconry, fishing lakes, cricket bat willow plantations and an aerial walkway

has taken Bunting and Sons nine years and so far cost £6 million.

But the company behind planning application number 090231, believe they have now got it right.

Three previous applications have come and gone, and now the fourth awaits a decision from Colchester

The firm withdrew its 2005 application and went back to the drawing

Kate Bunting, a partner in the company, said: "There were things about it which the public commented on.

"We have listened to what they have said, and we have made changes in accordance with that."

Public consultation was undertaken in 2007 with roadshows being held to gauge reaction.

The team of consultants cost £75,000 alone, but the Buntings were determined to show they valued public

Miss Bunting said: "We made alterations and improvements. We had lots of feedback about the buildings, and the main building has been altered considerably.

'People's requirements for a modern building have changed considerably since the first application in 2001.

"Renewable energy and sustainability were the buzz words from the consultation.

"The new building is wonderful, with renewable energy factors and a wildflower roof."

Her father, Stephen, added there would only be one entrance to the heritage centre, and this would be through a series of courtyards and gardens.

World-renowned architect Sir Philip Dowson volunteered his services to assist with the design of the new cen-

A new exhibition has also been included to recognise the importance

of travelling farm workers.

In addition, opening times have changed. If given permission, the new centre will close at 6pm or a "suitable time before dusk", whichever is earlier. The only exceptions will be for special

Entry to the heritage centre will be by ticket only, and visitors will pay according to which zones they want to view. Only the Chantry art gallery will

The Buntings deny Horkesley Park will damage the AONB and said a transport assessment had concluded Horkesley Park would generate a

ditional peak times.

The highest levels of traffic would be during the weekend when background traffic flows are less.

The report also states the increase in traffic would have an insignificant

impact on the surrounding roads.

Bunting and Sons said the centre would also provide a much-needed

economic boost to the area. They claimed about 200 full-time equivalent jobs would be created after taking into account displacemen although the Stour Valley Action

Group disputes the figure. Mr Bunting said: "Horkesley Park will enhance, protect and conserve the

landscape and biodiversity of the area "In addition, there is not a shred of evidence to say it will be detrimental to

local businesses. "Socio-economic studies make it clear the centre will benefit the local

economy. Stephen and Kate Bunting contend they had been good neighbours and that their door was always open.

Mr Bunting said: "The Stour Valley Action Group came to the roadshows and, whatever they said, we listened.

"We don't regard their comments any differently to other people's.

"We have listened to everyone's "modest" mount of traffic during traopinion and have taken account of every suggestion.