

BOMBSHELL

Damning council report criticises Horkesley Park project and voices concerns on 'negative traffic and landscape impacts'

A DAMNING report has been prepared on the multi-million-pound Horkesley Park heritage centre – by Colchester Council's officers.

Colchester councillors are due to vote on the project for a major heritage and conservation centre in Constable Country next month.

A final recommendation is still to be made by the planning department.

But a report from officers representing planning policy, enterprise, tourism and transportation has come out against the scheme.

In the report's conclusion, it states: "It is considered the tourism and job creation benefits of the Horkesley Park proposal have been overstated and are, in any case, outweighed by the negative traffic and landscape impacts of its large scale."

It adds: "The proposal fails to make the case set by national, regional and local planning policy for exceptional status to merit its development in a rural area."

The report says it is important to consider the scheme in relation to Colchester's local development framework which provide key planning guidelines.

It says: "The key strands which run through these policies are that they pri-

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mary focus of growth in Colchester is to be in built-up urban areas, accessible to public transport, with the limited development provided for the countryside to be small-scale and serving local needs."

It later continues: "The primary justification for exceptional status given for the site's location is the association with Constable.

"The links to Constable, however, are tenuous and not in themselves sufficient to provide a rationale to the proposal."

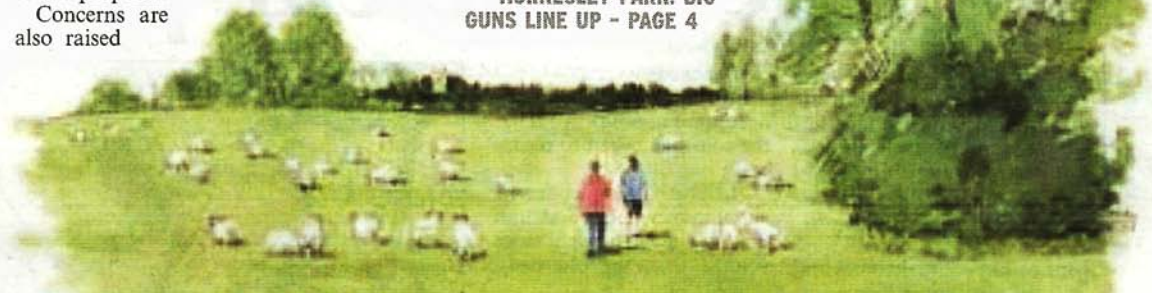
Concerns are also raised

about the long-term viability of the business plan and the traffic generated.

The report said: "Traffic generated by the proposal is a major concern given that 82 per cent of the estimated 485,000 visitors are estimated to arrive by car with a further 14 per cent arriving by coach."

Kate Bunting, a partner with applicants Bunting and Sons, said: "We are aware of the preliminary views of the planning policy team at this stage and we are in active discussions with the council on all policy matters in relation to our proposals."

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'The proposal fails to make the case set by national, regional and local planning policy for exceptional status to merit its development in a rural area'