



Ready to fight the heritage centre

■ Saying no – William Pavry, chairman of the Stour Valley Action Group, and Robert Erith, president of the Dedham Vale Society, with Little Horkesley residents protesting against the proposed centre. Picture: TERRY WEEDEN (PLKUQ-13)

CAMPAIGNERS are gearing up to fight plans for Horkesley Park Heritage and Conservation Centre.

The Dedham Vale Society and the Stour Valley Action Group are leading protests against the plans which they

believe will generate an unreasonable volume of traffic in an area of outstanding natural beauty.

Will Pavry, chairman of the action group, said: "We remain very concerned about the size of the application,

the number of the visitors which are projected and the impact they are likely to have on the roads and the villages in the area, particularly at peak times in the summer.

"We are also concerned

that the tranquility and peace of the Dedham Vale area of outstanding natural beauty will be affected by this development, and we are not convinced that the measures being taken by Bunting and Sons will prevent this."

Vale in the running for world heritage status?



■ Bid for world recognition – the Dedham Vale.

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A PRIZED area of countryside could become an area of international importance.

Talks are being held over the possibility of applying for World Heritage Status for the Dedham Vale.

The status is awarded by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation to encourage the protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage which is considered to be of outstanding value to humanity.

There are currently 28 designated sites in the UK, ranging from architectural sites such as Canterbury Cathedral and the Tower of London to industrial sites such as Cornwall and West Devon Mining and countryside and landscape areas.

However, there are no designated sites in the east of England.

The Dedham Vale is already registered as an area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB), and now the Dedham Vale Society is considering trying to win world heritage status for the area.

The move comes as the society is fighting plans for Horkesley Park, a major £20 million development for a heritage and conservation centre.

Society president Robert Erith said: "To be included on the World Heritage List, sites must be of outstanding universal

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value and meet at least one of ten criteria.

"The Dedham Vale meets at least five of these, as it is an area of quintessentially English countryside, immortalised by the great painter John Constable in many of his best-known pictures which are admired and loved worldwide.

"Most of these views are still recognisable today thanks, in large part, to the work of the Dedham Vale Society which has successfully opposed inappropriate development for the last 70 years and, since 1971, through its AONB status.

"Over the years, we have had to fight off a new town in the 60s, a power station, major roads and gravel pit.

"We owe it to our children and grandchildren and to future generations to keep this corner of England as people imagine it should be."

The society will need to win support for an application from North Essex MP Bernard Jenkin and South Suffolk MP Tim Yeo, in addition to backing from Essex and Suffolk County Councils.

Mr Erith said the society had concerns about the proposed Horkesley Park development, including the impact of noise and light pollution.

He said: "The construction of

a major retail park, which is in essence what the so-called Heritage Centre at Horkesley Park will be, could well prejudice any application for inclusion on the UK's nominations for the World Heritage List."

Horkesley Park has been described as a centre which would be a celebration of the English countryside.

If approved, Bunting and Sons, which are behind the project, hope it will attract 485,000 visitors a year to see exhibitions focussing on farming through the ages, Colchester's engineering history, a 250-seat lecture theatre, fine art gallery, gardens and a wildlife observation area.

There would also be a Suffolk Punch horse breeding centre, a specialist garden centre and restaurant.

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