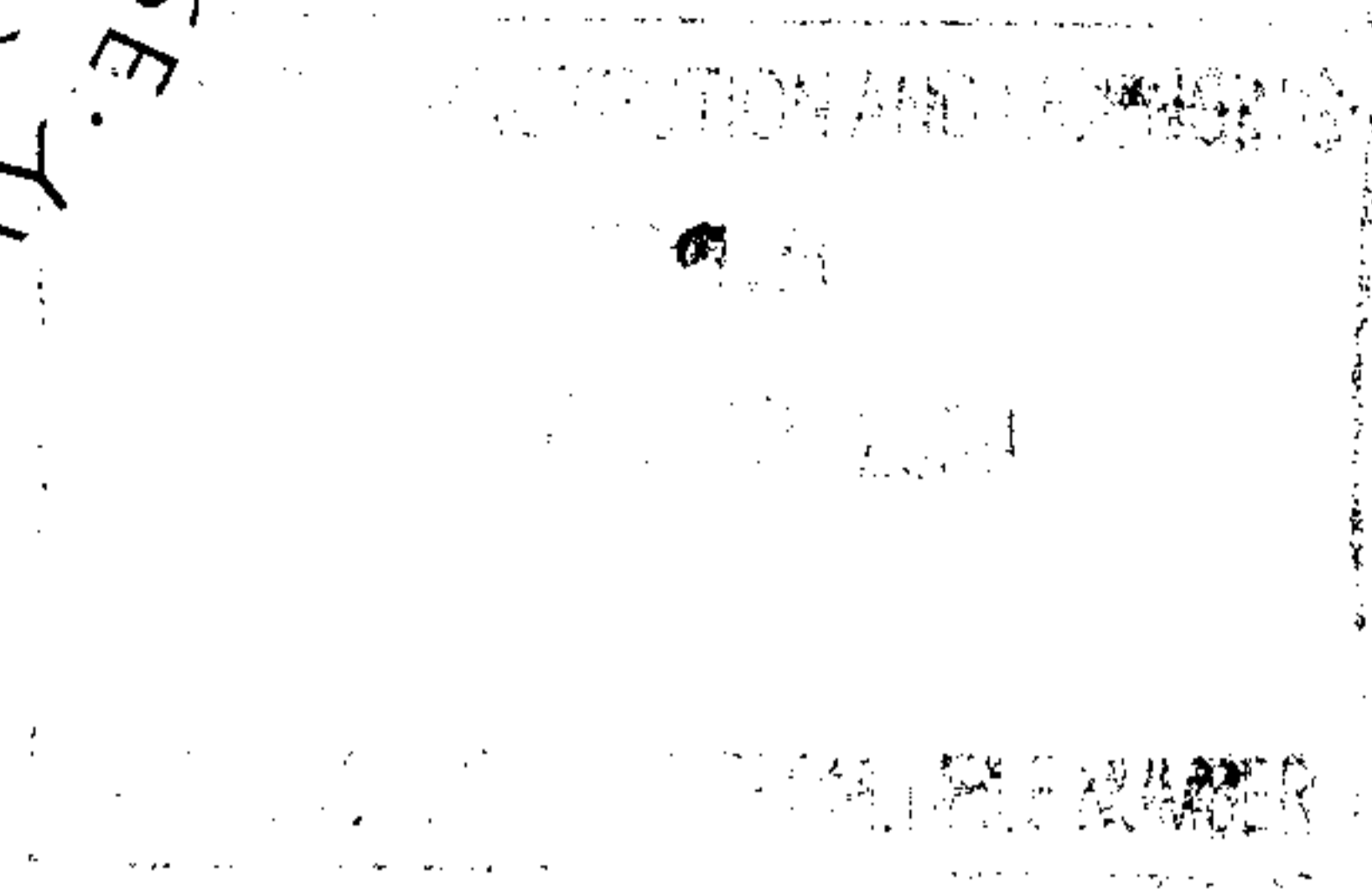


April 5 2009



John Davies  
Principal Planning Officer  
Colchester Borough Council  
PO Box 889  
Town Hall  
Colchester  
CO1 1FL



Dear Mr Davies

**Planning Application 090231**

Gainsborough's House, the birthplace Museum of Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788) in Sudbury, has been made aware of the Bunting proposal for a 'heritage and conservation centre'.

There are several objections, queries and observations that we, as a Museum, have about this proposal.

What would the Chantry Art Centre consist of?

Although the establishment of an art gallery and heritage centre at the Chantry appears to be central to the whole proposal, the level of research, consultation and understanding about running an art gallery or looking after art works, appears to be negligible. The facts about this proposed arts centre are very vague. For example, in the Tourism and Feasibility Study it states that the Chantry 'will display the works of John Constable and other great artists for the region'. But where do the art works come from? The applicants clearly do not already possess such an art collection but there is no explanation of what these art works are. It is important to note that national, public and most other museums, including Gainsborough's House, are not allowed to lend art from their collections to non-museum or commercial organisations. As the Chantry would not be a registered or accredited museum they would not, therefore, be able to borrow any works of art other than from private individuals. So there is, in reality, little chance of an art gallery of worth being established at the Chantry. Nor would they be able to apply for Government Indemnity, meaning that they would have to pay huge amounts in commercial insurance. They do not mention anything about professional staff in this area or employing suitably qualified art curators or experienced professionals who will be able to undertake the necessary care of such a potentially valuable art display or to manage the research, interpretation, education and art handling.

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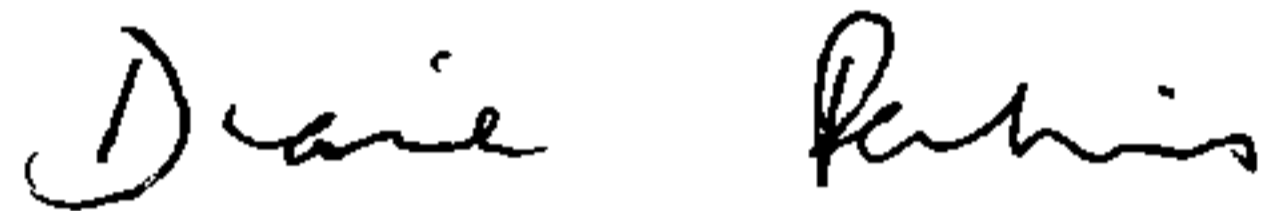
Gainsborough's House is a Registered Museum number 687 administered by Gainsborough's House Society (Registered Charity number 214046)

What about Existing Museums in the Region?

The plans make no mention of the already existing museums in the region. Gainsborough's House is a centre of excellence for the study of Gainsborough, his contemporaries and other great artists from East Anglia, including John Constable. We have a flourishing Education programme, hold an annual series of art history lectures and have regularly changing exhibitions, including of important regional artists. Other museums and art establishments in the area, including Ipswich and Colchester Museums, the Museum of East Anglian Life and the National Trust, already specialise in art, artists and culture from the region. Another 'heritage' centre such as this would therefore be at best duplication and at worst unwelcome competition in terms of visitor numbers, local funding or even for loans or acquisitions for the existing museums in the region.

In conclusion, the application for a Heritage site at Little Horksley does not appear to be a serious attempt to establish a genuine and professionally-run arts centre at this venue and, as a result, Gainsborough's House is not in favour of this proposal.

Yours sincerely



Ms Diane Perkins  
Director