

'NO' TO £25M TOURISM SITE

Heritage centre plan is likely to be turned down

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opposition to the proposed park over the last ten years.

He said: "We're very pleased the recommendation is for refusal. We always thought it would be on a whole host of grounds, not least because it would be a retail centre in a very inappropriate location."

The park would comprise a country park, art gallery, show gardens, food and hor-

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ticultural experiences, specialist nurseries and an art gallery inspired by the countryside.

The main centre would replace largely unused glasshouses.

The nature viewing area would be largely underground and set in the countryside.

As a result, the planners say the application consti-

tutes a major new development and the onus is on the would-be developer to demonstrate it is needed.

In his report, planning officer Alistair Day acknowledged there would be some benefits, including boosts to tourism and employment, and the protection of the famous Suffolk Punch breed of horses.

He concluded they would not outweigh the "magnitude of harm caused by accepting a development of this scale in the open rural country".

He also questions if the park, with entry fees proposed of up to £14.95, would attract the 485,000 visitors a year the applicants said it would.

Bunting & Sons faced an uphill task to convince the councillors to reject their officer's advice and approve the application.

Partner Kate Bunting insisted Horkesley Park would be good for Colchester.

She said: "We are disappointed the planning officer did not recommend approval.

"However, we believe the reasons he has given are fundamentally wrong and trust the planning committee will see the overwhelming benefits the scheme delivers.

"It will be an important draw for tourism, providing information and education about the countryside, benefiting bio-diversity and wildlife habitats, while creating hundreds of jobs."

Councillors told: Reject Horkesley Park plans

By JAMES CALNAN james.calnan@nqe.com

A £25MILLION tourism attraction set in 117 acres of north Essex's countryside should not go ahead, according to planners.

Colchester Council's officers have spent more than two years considering an application to build Horkesley Park.

They have recommended the planning committee rejects Bunting & Sons' proposal when it meets next Thursday.

Will Pavry, chairman of the Stour Valley Action Group, said the recommendation vindicated the group's

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