

LEAVE CONSTABLE COUNTRY ALONE



■ Artist – John Constable

Artist's relative joins the fight to stop £25m plan

By JAMES CALNAN james.calnan@nqe.com

A DESCENDANT of artist John Constable has urged planners to reject plans for a £25million tourist attraction in the countryside he made famous.

Dr John Constable says his great great granddad, whose paintings led to the Dedham Vale being known as Constable Country, would be embarrassed his name was associated with the Horkesley Park Heritage and Conservation Centre.

He is set to speak out against the application at Colchester Council's planning meeting on May 26. Stephen Bunting, a partner at Bunting and Sons, said: "Most of his claims are utter nonsense."

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Great, great, great-grandson says Horkesley Park proposal is 'just plain wrong'

Constable's descendant speaks out against plan



■ Disputed site – the area of greenhouses which the Bunting family wants to turn into the Horkesley Park heritage centre

Picture: STEVE ARGENT CO43634_04

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A DIRECT descendent of artist John Constable has joined calls for a planned £25million tourist attraction in the north Essex countryside to be turned down.

Dr John Constable, the great, great, great-grandson of the artist, believes his ancestor would have strongly opposed the Horkesley Park development.

Dr Constable intends to voice his opposition at Colchester Council's planning meeting on May 26 when councillors are to vote on the plans, for 117 acres on the edge of the Dedham Vale area of natural beauty.

He said: "John Constable would, I am sure, be embarrassed his name was associated with a proposal which is clearly damaging to the natural beauty of the vale."

Colchester firm Bunting and Sons wants to transform the site, creating a fine art gallery, a breeding centre for Suffolk Punch horses and gardens.

It insists the main centre would use less space than the unused greenhouses currently occupying the site.

Dr Constable grew up in Dedham and regularly returns to the area from his London home. He described Horkesley Park as an enormous retail proposal. He added: "Dedham Vale

HE LENDS HIS NAME TO AREA

JOHN Constable was born in East Bergholt in 1776 and died, aged 60, in 1837.

His father was a corn merchant, who owned Flatford Mill, now a tourist attraction.

Known for his paintings of Dedham Vale, now habitually dubbed "Constable Country", his most famous work is the Hay Wain.

He was never financially successful during his lifetime,

is an exceptionally precious local, national, and international asset. We have a duty to ensure its beauties are not harmed by inappropriate development.

"That's why the planning system is there, to balance the advantages of proposals against their disadvantages.

"Judged intuitively, or by

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■ Artist – John Constable



but his landscapes are worth millions and can be found at London's National Gallery, the Tate Britain and the Victoria and Albert Museum.

planning criteria, the Horkesley Park proposal is plain wrong in so many ways. It offers nothing which couldn't be done better in other, more suitable places."

Dr Constable added he believed his descendant's paintings would be better off in art galleries in London or Ipswich, than at Horkesley Park.

Stephen Bunting, a partner in the company behind the plans, dismissed most of Dr Constable's arguments as "utter nonsense".

He said: "The descendants of John Constable, who died 174 years ago, are entitled to express their opinions, just the same as everyone else.

"We believe Dr Constable has a completely false impression of what Horkesley Park will be like and he is going to stick to that, come what may."

Fellow partner Kate Bunting added: "Horkesley Park has many different elements, from farming and fine art to gardens and renewable energy.

"There is no way we are going to do anything to detract from it being anything other than a superb visitor centre."

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BATTLELINES ARE DRAWN

FOR THE PLANS

- East of England Development Agency
- Essex Chamber of Commerce
- Bob Russell, Colchester MP
- Sir Philip Dowson, President of the Royal Academy of Arts

AGAINST THE PLANS

- Dedham Vale Society
- Parish councils on the Essex/Suffolk border
- Stour Valley Action Group
- Bernard Jenkin, MP for Harwich and North Essex