

STONE FARM, GREAT GLEMHAM, SAXMUNDHAM, SUFFOLK, IP17 2DG

Telephone: 01728 663390
Email: research@ref.org.uk

Mr John Davies,
Colchester Borough Council
PO Box 889
Town Hall
Colchester
CO1 1FL

16 April 2009

Dear Mr Davies

Objection to Application Number 090231: Horksley Park

1. I am writing to you as a representative of the Constable family, the painter being my great-great-great grandfather.
2. I know the Stour Valley well, having lived in Dedham as a child for ten years, and visit it regularly to walk and fish on the river with my family. Though now living elsewhere in Suffolk we retain a close interest in the area and its preservation for future generations.
3. The Constable family is also continually involved in the study and exhibition of the works of my ancestor.
4. We have known of Bunting & Sons proposals for redevelopment of the glasshouse site since 2001, and my father, who died in 2003, studied the plans then current very carefully.
5. We have been made aware of the current 2009 application, and I have examined the ES published on the Council website.
6. In addition, we have visited Horksley Park (12.04.09), where Mr Stephen Bunting kindly explained his proposal in detail and showed us around the site.
7. I have discussed the project with the Dedham Vale Society, and with some local residents.
8. I have read the views of the Stour Valley Project, and some others.
9. I make the following observations:
 - a. The proposal is for a very large scale *non-agricultural* redevelopment, with a major retail component, immediately adjacent to an AONB, with part of the site in the AONB, facts which make it an exceptional exception development.
 - b. Even as currently specified the proposal contravenes the fundamental principles of sustainability as embodied in PPS1, and running throughout the United Kingdom's land-use planning system; that is to say, it would harm the local environment and economy without bringing compensating benefits.
 - c. The proposal is also incompatible with the basic drive of PPS6 in relation to the reinvigoration of town centre shopping, and the constraint of out-of-town retailing.
 - d. The number of visitors required to sustain the business as a heritage centre of this scale is extremely unlikely to be attained and sustained.
 - e. The site is not appropriate for a Constable gallery, and is extremely unlikely to attract loans of significant Constable works for exhibition.
10. Therefore, I infer that **the project is vulnerable to rapid failure as a heritage park, and would need to be refocused as a dedicated major retail centre in order to survive**. This failure and consequent refocus is, in my judgment, anticipated in the scale and character of the current design, a fact I find troubling.
11. **Conclusion:** While I understand that re-use of the site is desirable, and I note that the Bunting family's commitment and energy is remarkable, this is manifestly not an appropriate development as currently specified, and I therefore ask the Council, in the broader public interest, to refuse consent.

Yours sincerely,



John Constable.