



17th April 2009

The SVAG Rally on Easter Monday sparked a surge of letters to the press

Essex County Standard Letters

Generations of work will be undone

IT would appear from correspondence about Horkesley Park that some of its supporters see it as a battle on behalf of the wider population against a bunch of selfish nimbys. In fact, the reverse is true.

Together, with other like-minded landowners, three generations of my family have worked at their own expense over the past 80 years to preserve and enhance the Dedham Vale.

Among other things, we have saved the valley from a massive housing development in the 1960s, which would have almost doubled the size of Dedham.

Stratford St Mary and East Bergholt planted up to 2,000 trees a year, restored Boxted Great Wood and covenanted our land to the National Trust to allow the formation of the area of outstanding natural beauty and protect the valley for the future.

Indeed, without this work, there would by now be little, if any, natural beauty left for the Buntings to "celebrate".

We have done this not from any selfish motive, but because we understood the unique value of such a landscape and felt it worth preserving for the benefit of everyone. As a result of our efforts, any visitor can now enjoy the genuine article in all its glory for free.

Horkesley Park, on the other hand, is an attempt to commercialise the Dedham Vale and cash in on the selfless efforts of others. If the Buntings are allowed to squander and trivialise this landscape for their own personal gain, not only those who have willingly worked to preserve it, but all who appreciate the beauty of the English countryside, will be the losers.

Chas Bazeley
Boxted Hall

Jobs created, not lost

I TAKE serious issue with the employment debate, with the number of jobs created by Horkesley Park being dismissed and terms such as "displacement" used to suggest local jobs will be lost, when in fact there will hundreds of jobs created.

There have already been 13,000 to 14,000 homes built in the borough in the past few years and an expected 17,500 in total by 2021, with the possibility of the Government increasing this, as it is such a popular place to live.

A high percentage of these new



■ On site – Kate, Hector and Stephen Bunting on land at Little Horkesley where they plan to open a new park and heritage centre. Picture: ADRIAN RUSHTON (Q2LTZ-32)

home owners of Colchester would love to work locally.

Common sense tells me that, when we work locally, we spend locally, thus having a positive knock-on effect for business in the surrounding area.

SW Kaboli
Ardleigh

Who pulled the posters?

WHO is the Phantom Poster Puller? I understand that a large number of posters objecting to the Horkesley Park proposals have been pulled down recently during the hours of darkness.

In Nayland, for example, a poster next door to the Anchor Inn disappeared last week, complete with its wooden post and a metal tube embedded in the ground. A number of posters on the A134, on private property, close to the Tog Lane junction, were also pulled down overnight. Even posters put up in trees on private land at Little Horkesley have mysteriously disappeared by night.

Can any reader offer an explanation as to the identity of the Phantom Poster Puller?

James Carver
Nayland

Applauding the 'nimbys'

REGARDING the Horkesley Park proposal, I was interested to read in the Sunday Times of March 29 that the chairman of the National Trust, Simon Jenkins, was quoted as saying "Thank God for nimbys. We rely on people spotting planning applications and asking what is going to happen to the countryside".

We should surely be supporting all those nimbys who are prepared to stand up and be counted in defence of the countryside, which would

surely be put at unacceptable risk if the latest version of the Horkesley Park proposals was to be approved by the Colchester Council.

Katherine Romer-Lee
School Street
Stoke-by-Nayland

Our village doesn't need it

IT is difficult to live in Nayland and oppose the heritage centre without being branded a nimby. However, I would like to raise the following points:

Why in this day and age do we feel the need to gift-wrap everything? The facilities being offered are already available for free and under-used as it is.

The supposed number of new jobs created – will they be jobs for existing local people so that the community actually feels some benefit or is this going down the route of local labour similar to the Olympics 2012, where builders have been imported and housed locally, thus meeting the promise of "local labour"?

When we are being told that we are entering a recession, can we really believe the figures being banded around that annually 475,000 people will have the disposable income to pay to visit the countryside which is available for free a few yards up the road?

I grew up in Nayland and returned after finishing university. I have chosen for my children to be raised in a quiet village.

Why should this choice be taken away by someone else's

profit-making venture?

I am not opposed to change as this is inevitable, but I have a duty to oppose this money-making atrocity marketing itself as a positive addition to our village.

Mrs K Maguire
Heycroft Way
Nayland

Democracy threatened

AS a long-term opponent of the Horkesley Park concept, I am increasingly alarmed by the manner in which the whole process is being conducted.

When a planning application is made, it should be assessed against local and national planning guidelines laid before the council's planning committee by the staff of the planning, protection and licensing department.

However, there is also the public debate which is engendered by any planning application to be considered. Often an application can arouse opposing views – the developer sees only the positive, while the opposition will focus on the negative.

This debate is healthy, helps to explore the issues, occasionally brings clarity and is what local democracy is all about.

However, in this case we have the developer releasing to the press a letter to one of the major opposition groups accusing it of "distributing misleading information" and threatening legal action.

I am also concerned by the involvement of Bob Russell, who is highly supportive of the development, but Horkesley Park is not even in his constituency. So we have a Liberal Democrat MP voicing his support for a project which is still being considered by the planning department.

I feel local democracy is seriously threatened and, hopefully, the application will be called in for decision at Government level.

Roger Drury
Little Horkesley

Entrance fee too high

I AM somewhat stunned by the proposed entrance fees for Horkesley Park and estimated

visitor figures.

While I can fully appreciate the Buntings' ambition is to run this as a profitable business venture, I find it saddening that we are looking at a price tag of £29.95 for a family to view our local heritage. The locals are what will keep their business going throughout the year and how many of us could justify a regular visit at that price?

A family of four wishing to go to Colchester Zoo would have to pay £49.96, but for that, you know that you can keep the little ones amused all day and that, no doubt, explains the coachloads of visitors who travel from far and wide every school holiday.

Do the Buntings seriously think that they can achieve similar visitor figures offering Suffolk punches, a nature area and wildflower meadow that will no doubt take years to establish?

And, if Horkesley Park becomes a reality and their estimated figures fail to materialise, what then?

Will we have churned up acres of our beautiful countryside for nothing?

Wendy Howes
West Bergholt

Road in will not cope

REGARDING the proposed Buntings' plans, the whole thing seems to get bigger and bigger and now I see they have left off the large restaurant, and all the buses and coaches expected.

The worst aspect is the size of the operation in the Dedham Vale. The chief worry for us who live here is the "main" road from Sudbury to Colchester. It is already overcrowded and the speed limit is 30mph and 40mph all the way.

Imagine the chaos if someone has just a small "bump" and has to wait for the police or a tow. There is no room for anyone to pass anywhere. This is not a main road and never will be. It was built for a few horse-drawn vehicles.

As for the inhabitants of nearby villages, our roads are all "passing places" lanes, full of children's bicycles and pushchairs, walkers with dogs, riders and horses and ponies.

Lastly, what about established eateries and plant shops?

Please don't even consider such a development.

Anne Bazeley
Workhouse Hill
Boxted

How did they take name?

WHATEVER the justification of the Buntings to open a heritage centre, I cannot understand why they have been able to hijack the name Horkesley Park.

Horkesley Park is situated about a mile north-east from Buntings, at present the home of Littlegarth School.

For about 200 years, this estate has been known as Horkesley Park and for many years was occupied by the Kelso family. My father, in his younger days, was employed there as a footman.

I grew up in Nayland in the 1930s and remember going to Horkesley Park with other schoolchildren to a party given by Captain Kelso once a year in the summer, tea being laid on, and also a fair with swings and a roundabout.

In the late 1930s, the house became empty and during the war was occupied for a time by the Army.

P Richards
The Paddocks
Bures

Area can be seen for free

I FIND all this newspace devoted to the Buntings' controversial plan boring. I have no intention of paying an admission charge to view their lands when the whole area – Langham, Statford St Mary, Flatford and Dedham – is full of free public footpaths where wonderful views can be seen.

The National Trust has an excellent Constable exhibition at Flatford (free), and its volunteer guides show visitors round the sites of Constable's famous paintings and lead walks along these footpaths, again showing relevant Constable paintings.

There is a tea room and the added fun of going on the boats at either Dedham or Flatford.

I wish the Bunting family had stuck to growing tomatoes. A few miles down the road from their land is a supermarket selling tomatoes from Morocco.

M Rose
Sanders Drive
Colchester

Traffic fears hypocritical

ANDORA Carver misses the point (County Standard, March 13), which is about hypocrisy.

Most of the people protesting about the extra traffic own more than one vehicle per household.

Also, when they holiday in this country, they clog up the lanes and countryside of perhaps the Cotswold villages, or the Lake District.

Ms C Lanham
Brick Kiln Lane
Great Horkesley



■ Vision – how part of the redeveloped Horkesley Park might look.