

NEWSFLASH

21st April 2011

FOLLOW-UP LETTERS

As of 21st April, provisional totals of follow-up letters received by CBC and posted on their website were as follows:

Support of the Application:	17
Objections to the Application:	205

Well done, everyone who bothered to write again. Many of the letters were deeply considered. They can all be seen on the CBC website.

But what's become of the supporters of Horkesley Park? Is it perhaps that they just don't care?

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THE STORY OF THE NEWTS

Last week the ECS and the EADT both ran stories about the newts at Horkesley Park. Here's the full picture for anyone who wants to read it.

Peter Gaskin, a painter who lives in Great Horkesley only a hundred metres from the Horkesley Park site, has long been aware of the presences of newts in his garden.

For the last two years Mr Gaskin has been expressing concern about the newts, whose survival would be threatened if the site were developed and the ponds stocked with predatory fish. He first raised his concerns with Natural England in April 2009, being aware of the presence of great crested newts on his own pond so close to the ponds on the site. The site had been officially surveyed in 2006 but, knowing the movement patterns of the newts, he raised doubts as to the comprehensiveness of the survey.

Then, in January 2011, he happened to find a dead newt on the road that runs between his own pond and those at Horkesley Park. With this evidence of a population most likely spanning both ponds, he wrote once again to Natural England. On the advice of a taxidermist, he has preserved the specimen in vodka for anyone who should wish to see it.

Natural England have recommended a re-survey prior to determination of the planning application. This recommendation has been forwarded to Colchester Borough Council, and has been forwarded by them to the Buntings. The core period for such a survey runs from mid-April to mid-May, yet Mr Bunting says he has no intention of re-surveying now. Is it possible that, though he likes to describe themselves as a committed conservationist, he doesn't want to find any of these awkward little amphibians on his land?

Mr Gaskin is alarmed that Buntings' environmental consultants in their most recent report have failed to take the subject of the newts into consideration. He has submitted his own document to the planning officer at Colchester Borough Council. Moreover he is disturbed that Natural England have withdrawn their previous overall objection to the Horkesley Park plan, but only make it subject to mitigation measures – in such a way that Buntings are currently claiming that NE support their plan. He has submitted a further urgent request to Natural England to take action.



"I am an artist, a painter, I have the utmost reverence for the unique unparalleled beauty of the visual heritage our AONB affords us. What this applicant proposes will be a visual abomination with even the public footpaths turned into 6 metre walkways hedged sufficiently to restrain the might of the suffolk punch horse.

How can Natural England, of all our protective bodies, even begin to envisage that a package of mitigation measures could be drawn up that would adequately compensate for the visual and spiritual loss of our precious and increasingly rare tranquil countryside amenity.

It is incumbent on Natural England that they use every ounce of their legislative influence to oppose this development. To do otherwise would be a dereliction of trust.