

PUBLIC SUPPORT: 7 out of 10 prefer No Buntingland

A new Horkesley Park proposal was launched on Thursday 19th February with a great fanfare in the press (as shown far below). The following week the public had the opportunity to begin voicing their own opinions!

Heritage centre: your views

SO the Buntings are back with new plans: marvellous. The battle to prevent them turning not just Great Horkesley, but Nayland, Higham, Thorington Street, Little Horkesley and Eight Ash Green into a series of congested villages has been ongoing since 2001.

If the proposed £20 million venture is to create 155 new jobs, can the Buntings guarantee those jobs will all be filled by local people? I think not.

If the main objection to all the previous incarnations of this proposal was traffic, can the Buntings assure us that the local lanes will not be affected? I think not.

Kate Bunting confidently asserts that the family has registered all the previous objections and "has taken it all into account".

Its proposals, she claims, "now reflect what the majority would like to see created". Really?

So there has been some kind of a vote in which a majority view has been made clear? So there will be no bus loads of tourists, and no danger posed to horse riders, children on bicycles and walkers who already roam these lanes and fields unimpeded? I think not.

Kate Charlton-Jones
Little Horkesley

■ EVERY spring another variant on the proposed Horkesley Theme Park is unveiled with huge publicity. The Bunting family tells us of the entertainment paradise that awaits us and how it will solve the unemployment problem.

Apparently, using 16 acres and putting up numerous "iconic" buildings will enhance the Dedham Vale landscape. This year's idea is several underground buildings – presumably to enhance the countryside experience.

As a minimum 485,000 visitors will flood in to enjoy this Dedham Vale "conservation centre" – surely, the coach parking needs more than 28 spaces?

I know it is a radical idea, but perhaps the Buntings might consider farming as an alternative. It appears they have 117 acres of unused grade-one land and numerous empty greenhouses.

Andy Hamilton
Acland Avenue
Colchester

■ SO the Buntings have produced yet another application for Horkesley Park – the fourth in eight years. A quick comparison with previous versions of the project reveals some curious figures.

In 2005, the investment was stated at £20 million; 760,000 visitors were expected in the first year; and 184 full-time jobs were to be created. In 2009, the investment remains at £20m, visitor numbers go down to 485,000 (making the traffic survey so much easier in the planning), and 200 jobs or more are to be created.

How clever to conjure such investment, in these of all times, to create so many jobs, and to sustain it all on so many fewer visitors than before. What optimism.

Georgina Harding
Little Horkesley

■ I OBJECT to the proposal for a Horkesley Park Heritage and Conservation Centre by Bunting and Sons. We do not need this here. It will create havoc on our already crowded roads.

The A134 has a bad reputation with pot-holes, and this will create even more pot-holes, costing the rate payers dearly. As for widening the A134, this will create dangers to all traffic and cyclists – even with a cyclepath.

So many cars and lorries go up and down that hill already. Giving open access to the countryside for tourists means we will have no countryside. No, I and my family do not want this here.

Mrs J Marun
Exeter Close
Great Horkesley

■ A CULTURAL and heritage centre in Great Horkesley – what a splendid idea.

I hope that the borough council not only approves the planning application, but gives the project every support it can. This does not mean using taxpayers' money. Help and support can be in kind – by giving good publicity to the project, and not bickering about small things that are irrelevant.

The centre will be complementary to the Visual Arts Facility in the town, and will be a further encouragement for tourists to visit the area. Good luck to it.

Chris Manning-Press
West Lodge Road
Colchester

■ REGARDING the plans for the heritage centre in Great Horkesley: every year the town seems to be encroaching on the villages surrounding it; last year, we saw much house building.

Towns and villages constantly evolve and it would be naive to think that everything will just stay the same. What we need is positive, managed change and something that will be a place to go for people living in the area, rather than more houses.

The plans should be welcomed.

Simon Watson
By e-mail

■ WILL Horkesley Heritage Park be a benefit or a blight? A big country park with

heritage farming preserving a big area of the countryside for the future and opening it up to the people of Colchester is definitely a good thing.

Particularly in times of economic instability, unemployment and recession, and the news being full of doom and gloom, this is good news.

Barry Harding
By e-mail

■ CELEBRATE the countryside? Ruin it, more like.

The site proposed for the Horkesley Park centre is currently freely available via footpaths, and very beautiful it is too. The Buntings' plans will fence it off and charge £10.95 an adult to visit (the developer's figures), with the footpaths fenced into corridors.

This is not accessibility, this is denial. Expensive fake countryside replacing the free real thing.

Lesley Watson
Little Horkesley

■ THE projected visitor numbers of 485,000 for the first year of operations at Horkesley Park Heritage Centre are substantially lower than the 760,000 predicted in the previous application, which was withdrawn in May 2006.

Is this a ploy to keep numbers down to make the plan more acceptable?

James Carver
Nayland

■ I WAS sorry to read of the resurrection of this unfortunate plan.

Most of the same objections apply. Why cannot people accept a rejection with good grace rather than trying again to force a development on a rural community which does not want it?

Julian Lang
By e-mail

24th February 2009

AMBITIOUS PLANS: Kate Charlton-Jones at Horkesley site

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SUFFOLK/ESSEX BORDER: Battle lines drawn again

A place to celebrate the English countryside

£20m heritage centre unveiled

But residents fear the impact of heritage and conservation centre

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NEW plans were today unveiled for a major