



Stour Valley Action Group

www.stourvalleyactiongroup.org.uk

Newsletter



October 2012

Dear Member,

The Stour Valley Visitor Centre at Horkesley Park - Application No: 120965

This is to advise you on the latest status of the Horkesley Park Application.

We wrote to the Council in July 2012 with a detailed response identifying all the reasons why the application should be rejected. Our response included a detailed statement from our Consultants, Pomery Planning Consultants detailing why the Application is contrary to planning policy at local, regional and national levels. We also included a detailed summary of other local attractions which shows conclusively that there is no 'need' for Horkesley Park. Our own experts constructed a business model from the information available in the Application that concludes that the project is almost certainly not viable, not 'bankable' and would make a loss of up to £2.5m in its first year of operation. Our initial letter was followed up with an analysis by our Tourism Consultants, Visitor Attraction Consultants, which shows that the visitor numbers and revenues forecast by Buntings are almost certainly grossly exaggerated.

In total there have been over 760 letters of objection including detailed letters from the Dedham Vale Society, Colne Stour Countryside Association, Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project, Nayland with Wissington Conservation Society, Little Horkesley Parish Council, Nayland Parish Council, Stoke-by-Nayland Parish Council, Leavenheath Parish Council, CPRE Essex, Suffolk Preservation Society, Colne Stour Countryside Association, Tim Yeo MP and many other organisations and individuals including an expert statement by Andrew Martin Consultants on behalf of one objector. There have only been about 350 letters of support including one from Great Horkesley Parish Council. They decided to support the Application having apparently considered the extensive documentation for only a very few days before the Council Meeting at which the decision was made. Many Great Horkesley residents have written to protest about this precipitate decision and their letters are on the CBC web site.

Bunting's Consultants, Collins and Coward Ltd, submitted a document to the Council dated September 2012 seeking to reject the objections raised by the objectors. We do not accept their findings and have sent in a further response dated October 5th 2012. Pomery Planning Consultants have also written refuting the criticisms made against their findings. We are entirely confident that our reasons given for rejection of the Application are irrefutable. Buntings continue to say that their business plan is 'bullet proof' but have singularly failed to release this in the public domain so that it can be objectively analysed.

All the documents from SVAG referred to above are available on our web site and the Bunting documents on the CBC web site.

We have met the Colchester Borough Council and they advised us that they are appointing independent consultants to review the tourism case, the financial viability of the Application and its sustainability. We expect the findings of these consultants to be published in due course with the exception of the financial viability report which is regrettably being held confidential.

The Council is awaiting responses from Essex Highways and Suffolk Highways departments and their own Planning Policy department. This last report is crucial and we do not believe that this will be published until the three external consultants' reports referred to above are available.

The Application will probably come before the Planning Committee of the Council before the end of the year.

We will need the maximum possible number of members at this meeting to ensure that the Council fully understand the level of objection to this totally unnecessary scheme. We will advise you of the date as soon as we are informed and *please* make sure that you come to this absolutely crucial meeting.

Will Pavry
Chairman, Stour Valley Action Group