



NEWSLETTER May 1st, 2009

Dear Member,

Thank you all for your hard work in the last few weeks. In particular, the Committee and I would like to thank everyone who has written a letter of objection to Colchester Borough Council, and everyone who turned up in their cars or on foot at the Easter Monday Rally and made such a powerful point about what Horkesley Park might mean to all of us! It was a huge success and made excellent headlines!

The deadline for letters to CBC is now passed, and the Council is still counting. At the last estimate, we believe that well over 940 individual and original letters of objection had been received and only about 450 in support. The letters – some of which are extensive and deeply argued – can be read on the CBC website ([www.colchester.gov.uk/planning](http://www.colchester.gov.uk/planning)). Everyone who wrote a letter should receive a response from CBC in the next few weeks; if you do not receive a response, do please check the website and see that your letter has been received and *correctly logged as an objection*.

We have had a very successful poster campaign which can best be judged by the strenuous attempts of others to take them down! Now that the official consultation period is at an end, we have been asked by Colchester Borough Council to remove them from outside houses etc. Please make sure that you do this by May 10th or you may be in breach of local by-laws and subject to possible fines! This should apply on both sides of the County border as we have received a similar request from Babergh District Council. Posters inside houses and cars are not affected if you wish to keep them up. A letter from Mr Vincent Pearce, Planning Services Manager is on the web site ref: <http://www.stourvalleyactiongroup.org.uk/Campaign.html>.

SVAG's own detailed letter of objection can now be read on our website (<http://www.stourvalleyactiongroup.org.uk/HorkesleyPark2.html>). In order to give real 'weight' to our response on your behalf, we engaged the services of Dalton Warner Davis LLP as Planning Consultants and Visitor Attraction Consultants to look at the underlying figures as well as detailed help from our members. In brief the conclusions from our report are as follows:

- **The Application is contrary to the whole ethos of government and local planning policy and must be rejected on these grounds alone.**
- **The Application would compromise the peace and tranquillity of the AONB in a totally unacceptable way.**
- **No overriding *national* need has been established for the Application. (Such 'need' has to be established for it to receive approval; this has not been done.)**
- **Over 75% of revenues in the Applicant's Business Plan come from retail activities. The Application is a retail development and must be treated as such in the assessment of its conformance or otherwise with Planning Law.**

- **The projection of visitor numbers is grossly overstated. Our expert's view is that, as a visitor centre, it is unlikely to attract more than 150,000 visitors by its third year of operation.**
- **Any reasonable estimate for visitor numbers and per capita spend results in massive losses for the Proposal. Horkesley Park is not viable as a Heritage and Conservation Centre.**
- **We conclude that the Proposal is no more than a thinly disguised attempt to get planning permission for the buildings and infrastructure for a shopping village using the disguise of a visitor attraction.**
- **Because of the demonstrated lack of financial viability of the Proposal the promised creation of 155FTE jobs on site cannot be relied on in any way. The actual number of new jobs on site is likely to be much less than 100 even when it is mature.**
- **Second and third order jobs created in the wider economy are not real and cannot be demonstrated. They must be discounted.**
- **The potential for job creation in itself must not be a reason to override all other planning considerations.**
- **The Proposal is contrary to national, regional and local policy in respect of traffic issues. The local road infrastructure is not sufficient to cope with the influx of the Applicant's predicted 480,000 visitors per annum.**
- **The Application would generate at least an additional 3000 tonnes of carbon dioxide per annum from visitors' car journeys alone. The Applicant has not assessed the overall carbon footprint of the development.**
- **There are serious architectural shortcomings in the Application which have health and safety implications.**

We encourage you to read the SVAG Response in full. The appendices include the Dalton Warner Davis report, the expert analyses of the tourism potential of Horkesley Park by experienced independent tourist consultants, and an analysis of the Buntings' business plan by two SVAG members who have senior positions in the Financial Sector.

You will also be pleased to know that CBC has received letters of objection from the following organisations:

- Parish Councils of Little Horkesley, Great Horkesley, Stoke-by-Nayland, Boxted, Langham, Nayland with Wissington, and Leavenheath
- Babergh District Council
- The Environment Agency
- Natural England
- The National Trust
- Gainsborough's House
- The Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Joint Advisory Committee
- The Dedham Vale Society
- The Colne Stour Association
- Suffolk Preservation Society
- CPRE Essex
- Dr John Constable

- Dr Ronald Blythe
- The Nayland with Wissington Conservation Society,
- 20 local farmers and 32 local small businesses

South Suffolk MP, Tim Yeo, has also come out forcefully against the Application and has requested that it be 'Called In' for determination by the Secretary of State. We are also informed that Bernard Jenkin, MP for North Essex will seek to get the Application 'called in'.

The decision, however, is not made yet. You can still influence it by making your views felt through the democratic process. Please continue to spread the message to your friends and neighbours, and take the time – if you haven't already – to lobby or write to the following:

- to your local borough councillor, county councillor, and parish councillor .
- to your MP
  1. Bernard Jenkin MP (North Essex)  
address: The House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA  
email: [JENKINBC@parliament.uk](mailto:JENKINBC@parliament.uk)
  2. Bob Russell MP (Colchester)  
address: Magdalen Hall, Wimpole Road, Colchester CO1 2DE  
email: [brooksse@parliament.uk](mailto:brooksse@parliament.uk)
  3. Tim Yeo MP (Suffolk South)  
address: The House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA  
email: [timyeomp@parliament.uk](mailto:timyeomp@parliament.uk)
- to your local newspapers, local radio and local TV

We are in touch with the CBC. The Planning Department are preparing their report for Councillors and we will advise you as soon as we know when it will come before them for determination. When this happens we will need all your support to make our views known! In the unlikely event that they do decide to support it, it would then have to go to the Regional Office of Government ('Go East') for a decision which could result in a Public Enquiry. This could take months and we are prepared to fight it all the way!

**We have another major event planned in June and will give you details in due course!**

Keep up the fight and we will stop this dreadful potential blot on our landscape!

Thank you for all your support

Will Pavry  
Chairman, Stour Valley Action Group.

Note: We have been told by Mr Daniel Bunting that some of their cattle got out of a field on Easter Monday, where the gate was unfortunately not padlocked. We have reassured him that we do not believe this was a deliberate act by a SVAG member and that we would never condone any such action.