



# Stour Valley Action Group

[www.stourvalleyactiongroup.org.uk](http://www.stourvalleyactiongroup.org.uk)



## SVAG Meeting 4th July 2012

Over 100 members of the Stour Valley Action Group attended a meeting in Little Horkesley Village Hall on July 4th to discuss opposition to the latest Bunting Application for the creation of a Stour Valley Visitor Centre at Horkesley Park.

**Introduction:** Kate Charlton-Jones opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and emphasised that this Application was the fifth submission since the first one in April 2001. All the others had either been rejected by Colchester Borough Council, or withdrawn by Buntings prior to registration or a decision being made.

**Current situation:** Will Pavry emphasised the main reasons for objecting, namely;

- ◆ The potential destruction of the peace and tranquillity of the AONB which our predecessors had fought so hard to establish.
- ◆ The unacceptable increase in traffic – particularly on the minor roads in the area.
- ◆ The fact that, if approved, it would be a Trojan Horse for further retail exploitation of the site when it fails in its present form as it surely would.

In looking at the main issues he said that:

- ◆ There was no need for any of the substantive elements of Horkesley Park. All the elements are available elsewhere in East Anglia at other attractions or, in the case of the open countryside, freely available for all in the Stour Valley.
- ◆ The question of unacceptable increase in traffic on minor roads in particular has not been properly addressed. The impact on Protected Lanes (Fishponds Hill) has been grossly understated.
- ◆ Visitor numbers have no believable rationale behind them. Studies show that they are more likely to be close to 150,000 rather than the 316,250 claimed – a figure largely fabricated using unrealistic target markets and unjustified penetration rates.
- ◆ Employment numbers of 106.4 FTE employees are not believable and cannot be guaranteed through a section 106 Agreement with the Council. Buntings can assert what they like to make employment numbers look attractive to the Council. The creation of secondary jobs cannot possibly be demonstrated in practice.
- ◆ We do not believe the Proposal is financially viable. This is a critical requirement under the NPPF. Buntings are refusing to publish any data on this. Income is shown at about £7.5m of which less than 50% will come from ticket sales. The rest must come from some form of retail sales. Retail sales cannot therefore be said to be ancillary (as they state). The Category D2 application for Assembly and Leisure only, is unrealistic.
- ◆ The Application is not sustainable. In terms of its environmental sustainability it relies on the use of the private car for at least 85% of access leading to increased carbon emissions. In terms of economic sustainability, it is almost certainly not viable in the form presented and is therefore probably not sustainable.
- ◆ In terms of Planning Policy, it cannot be considered as Regional (as they claim) and is therefore subject to the NPPF and the Colchester Core Development Policy and LDF. It falls foul of these in many respects including DP22, ENV2, DP21 and many others. It is not a site designated for development in the Colchester Borough Plan.

Will Pavry said that many other key organisations were objecting to the Proposal including the Dedham Vale Society, the Colne Stour Countryside Association, the Nayland with Wissington Conservation Society, CPREssex, the Suffolk Preservation Society. The position of the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project was not yet known. Their response is all-important. *(Roger Drury said that he was attending their meeting on behalf of the Parish Councils and was confident that they would object).*

**Planning Process:** Simon Oats outlined the possible stages in the Planning Process depending on whether or not approval is given by the Planning Committee following a recommendation one way or the other by the Planning Officers. In the event of refusal, Buntings would have the choice to go to Appeal which would result in a Public Enquiry, or re-submit. In the event of approval, the Application might be 'called in' for consideration by the Secretary of State which could also result in a Public Enquiry at which we would need to be represented.

**Finance:** Carolynn Pissarro reviewed expenditure by SVAG over the last four years. The majority of this had been associated with professional fees for our Planning Consultants. She emphasised the need for further funds to meet expenses associated with the current Application and asked for donations to be sent to SVAG at PO Box 6587, Great Horkesley, Colchester, CO6 4TN.

**Publicity Material:** Fred Grosch presented the posters and car stickers prepared for the current campaign. These were well received and taken up at the meeting.

**SVAG Committee:** The SVAG Committee of Will Pavry (Chairman), Simon Oats (Deputy Chairman), Carolynn Pissarro (Treasurer), Kate Charlton-Jones, Andora Carver, Fred Grosch, Katie Romer-Lee, Patty Ramsay was re-elected at the meeting.

**Discussion:** There was a vigorous discussion on many issues during the course of the meeting.

**Conclusion:**

Will Pavry, thanked everyone for attending the meeting. He emphasised the need to write to the Council with objections by July 26<sup>th</sup> 2012. The address being:

**Ms. Sue Jackson, Application 120965, Colchester Borough Council, PO Box 889, Rowan House, Colchester CO3 3WG.**

**Or: e-mail [planning.services@colchester.gov.uk](mailto:planning.services@colchester.gov.uk)**

He also asked that donations would be most welcome and should be sent to:  
**SVAG, PO Box 6587, Great Horkesley, Colchester CO6 4TN.**