



Dear SVAG member,

September 2007.

September is here again and this is the month that Buntings have submitted their last two Applications in 2003 and 2005 and there is every chance they will do it again this year.

There have been a number of recent developments that I would like to bring to your attention:

1 Recent Applications:

Buntings have submitted retrospective Planning Applications for two of their activities on the London Road site that have been on-going for some time.

Mobile homes for Permanent Accommodation:

The first of these is Application number 071086 which was registered on August 2007. This is for permission to use three mobile homes on the site for the permanent accommodation of agricultural/estate workers. We have written to the Colchester Borough Council objecting strongly to this proposal on the basis that the Site is not designated for residential use of any kind in the Colchester Borough Plan and that to grant permission would create a very dangerous precedent. We have also pointed out other detailed areas where we believe the Application to be in conflict with the Plan. We have made the point that Buntings have other properties adjacent to the site which could be used for accommodation of staff if they so wished. A copy of our letter is on our website.

Brewery:

The second of these is Application number 071084 which was also registered on August 1st. This is seeking permission for Buntings to allow one of the buildings on the site to be used as a brewery. We have written and objected to this Application on the basis that any further extension of the site for industrial use is inappropriate in view of the location of the site on the edge of the Dedham Vale AONB. A copy of our letter is on our website.

In both letters of objection we have made the strong point that Buntings have a history of ignoring planning regulations on the site going back to 2001 – soon after their first Application for the first version of their major proposal, the John Constable Countryside and Heritage Centre.

The first retrospective Application, C/COL/01/1259, was to regularise their activities for two businesses operating on the site, manufacturing kitchens and selling fitness equipment. This was granted, after protest by us, for a temporary period to April 30th 2003. This was renewed under Application F/COL/03/0784 for a further period of 18 months to October 2004. We have not been able to find any evidence that this Application has been renewed or extended and if this is the case, the business operations would be continuing without current Planning Consent. The new Applications referred to above continue this history of Buntings operating without Planning Consent.

We have spoken to the Planning Office very recently and understand that no date has yet been set for the two Applications to come before the Planning Committee.

The Brewery operated an Open Day on September 16th where the public is invited to taste and buy their products. They have declared their intention to continue these Open Days every month. This is extending the activities on the site to retail activities to which we strongly object. We have written to the Colchester Borough Council through our Councillors to point out that Buntings are effectively thumbing their nose at the due process of planning to which the rest of us have to conform. At the time of writing, we have received no reply.

2 Status on Horkesley Park proposal:

We must expect the major proposal for the Horkesley Park Heritage and Conservation Centre to be re-submitted at any time. We have no details of this at present but the indications are that Buntings are still talking of 500,000 visitors a year and a £20m investment. They are also believed to be playing down the retail elements by emphasis on specimen gardens, education, heritage etc but they cannot get away from the commercial reality that they will need to generate very substantial sales if they are to get a financial return on the huge investment they are apparently anticipating. In our view, nothing much would appear to have really changed but the 'packaging' to make it more attractive for the Planning Authorities. We are very much indebted to the Dedham Vale Society for some of the most recent information.

3 The Anchor lights:

Buntings recently appealed against a decision by the Babergh District Council in July 2006 requiring them to remove lighting from the Anchor Inn. This Appeal was dismissed by the Planning Inspectorate in Bristol on August 16th 2007 primarily on the basis that the lighting had an adverse effect on the building itself which is Grade II listed. This is not strictly a SVAG matter but is part of the picture of the greater 'Buntingland' that threatens to envelop us. Buntings indicated that they needed the lighting to attract passing trade. Would the same apply to Horkesley Park?

I hope this brings you up to date with recent activities. As ever – 78 months on into the Bunting saga - we must be vigilant for the next major Application which could come at any time!!

Thank you for your continued support.

Will Pavry
Chairman, Stour Valley Action Group