

Nayland with Wissington Conservation Society

Registered Charity No. 268104

Mill House
Nayland
Suffolk
CO6 4HU

20th March 2009

Mr. John Davies
Colchester Borough Council
Town Hall
Colchester CO1 1FL

Dear Mr. Davies,

COL/09/090231

Horkesley Park Heritage and Conservation Centre

We are a charitable organisation with 235 plus members, created in 1974 in order to protect the local environment and conserve the historic buildings of the parish.

The Society is worried and unhappy about this project which they feel could transform Nayland and Wissington's peace and tranquillity into just another tourist honey-pot. The Society is also concerned that this scheme would affect the viability of many local businesses.

The Society objects to the above application for the following reasons:

1. Impact on the AONB: The site, except for the main buildings, lies within the Dedham Vale & Stour Valley AONB. Under **PPS 7** AsONB are given special national and local protection and are suitable only for low-key recreation.

PPS7.22 states: *major developments should not take place in these designated areas.* What is proposed is also contrary to **CBLP CO2**, which states that *developments in, or likely to have an adverse impact on, the Dedham Vale AONB will be subject to special scrutiny and acceptable only when an **overriding national need for development in that particular location can be demonstrated.*** There is no proven need for this development, neither has this site been allocated for development of any sort in the Colchester Local Development Framework or the Essex County Structure Plan.

It is also contrary to **CBLP CO3** *Special protection for the Stour Valley from any development likely to be prejudicial to local resources.*

2. Traffic: The increased volume of traffic generated by the projected 485,000 visitors will have a dramatic adverse impact on the already congested A134 and the local lanes which will be used as short cuts by those using satnav systems. The A134 is already a dangerous road with already far too many fatalities and should have a 40mph speed limit. The medieval streets of Nayland will undoubtedly suffer from any increase in traffic, especially in July and August. The current problem with hgv's in the narrow streets with jettied buildings would be compounded by tourists seeking cross country "picturesque" routes to Dedham and Flatford, as well as short cuts to the A12 via Higham.

It is therefore contrary to **Colchester Borough Local Plan DC1 d & h** re *suitability of highway network to accommodate extra traffic and adverse impact on Colchester Town Centre, rural district centres, local shopping centres, village shops and services.* **PPG13** also applies.

3. Retail Scheme: The project is being marketed to enhance the status of Colchester Borough as a premier venue for tourism and culture. The site is in open countryside outside Great Horkesley village envelope. The applicant's own figures state that over 75% of the revenue will be from merchandise and

food sales covering 46,000Sq.ft of floor space. This is therefore primarily an out of town retail venue masquerading as a culture and heritage centre of which Nayland will be a victim. It is therefore contrary to **CPL DC1**. *Garden centres must be of scale compatible with their surroundings, not introduce a proliferation of buildings and be related to the highway network.*

We have concerns as to why the application was made under the D2 category (Assembly & Leisure) omitting any reference to A1 retail, given that there is such a large retail element in the scheme.

4. Visitor Numbers: The applicant claims over 485,000 visitors in the first year. This is more than six times the latest available visitor numbers for Sutton Hoo (75,817 EETB 2007), **the** iconic East Anglian tourist site, more than double the visitors to Flatford (225,000) and more than Woburn Safari Park (454,000 in 2008) According to East of England Tourist Board numbers, this project would instantly be in the top four visitor attractions in the six counties of the region. It is therefore contrary to **PPS7 21, PPS7 34ii and 34 iii**.

5. Jobs: Although the applicants claim they will create 155 full time equivalent jobs on the site, they also admit that more than 178 local jobs are likely to be “displaced”, meaning that many of our long established local suppliers are at risk if this development goes ahead. If the project fails, all these jobs would have been lost to no purpose.

6. All Saints Church

As a conservation society we are naturally concerned about the impact of this scheme upon the Grade I Listed All Saints Church. English Heritage commented on this in their response to the previous application in 2005 and we believe the points raised are still valid, although the height of the main building has now been reduced to below the level of the tree tops and the Church Tower.

In addition, concerns have been expressed to us by relatives who come to pay their respects at family graves, to sit in quiet contemplation and do not wish to be surrounded by the noise, bustle and commercialisation of a large tourist venue.

7. Redundancy Clause: We re-iterate the earlier comment of the Dedham Vale AONB & Stour Valley Project that a redundancy clause should be required so that if any part of the land within the AONB became redundant the land would be restored to its current condition.

For the reasons given above and so as to ensure compliance with the stated local and national guidelines, the proposal should be rejected. We repeat the comments made in our letters dated 26th October 2003 and 17th October 2005, that we believe an economic use could be found for the greenhouses which would not involve such a dramatic and adverse impact on the surrounding countryside and which would also provide jobs.

Yours sincerely,
Andora Carver,
Hon. Secretary

cc. Tim Yeo MP
SPS, SVAG, CPRE Essex
Dedham Vale Society,
Parish Council
Babergh DC