

# New heritage centre bid on smaller scale

A LONG-established family firm is to submit a new, smaller-scale application to develop a 117-acre site at Great Horkesley.

Bunting & Sons had wanted to build a £25million heritage and conservation centre on the edge of the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, but the controversial plan was rejected by councillors in May.

Opponents led by the Stour Valley Action Group included Nayland Parish Council, Nayland with Wissington Conservation Society, the Dedham Vale Project and Suffolk Preservation Society.

The centre would have included an art gallery, show gardens, Suffolk Punch breeding centre, nurseries, restaurants and a 101-acre country park.

Buntings had indicated it

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would appeal but has now confirmed it will not do so and instead plans to submit a fresh planning application.

Senior partner Stephen Bunting has written to all 60 members of Colchester Borough Council and planning officers, saying the new plan will be a "substantially scaled-down version" focusing mainly on the redevelopment of the firm's nursery site.

It will no longer include an underground nature watch building or a fine art gallery, which would have been within the AONB.

Partner Kate Bunting said: "We see this as another step in the planning journey. We are modifying the proposals for Horkesley Park, addressing the issues raised by the planning and councillors,

principally that of scale and the impact on the AONB, and shall submit a new application in due course.

"We are confident that even as a scaled-down scheme Horkesley Park will be a major benefit to Colchester and the rural communities, creating for local people and visitors recreational, educational and other amenities, as well as providing many, many jobs. We're determined to make good use of an already extensively-developed site."

Will Pavry, chairman of the Stour Valley Action Group, which has always opposed the development, said the group was still concerned that the peace and tranquillity of the surrounding area should be preserved.

He added: "We are very glad Buntings is not going to appeal the decision made in May but really cannot comment on the new application until we see the details."