

Vehicles of all shapes and sizes out to highlight potential congestion

Vintage fire engine joins roads protest

WITH horns blaring, an estimated 200 vehicles turned out on Monday to demonstrate their opposition to a proposed heritage and countryside centre.

Purpose of the rally, organised by the Stour Valley Action Group (SVAG), was to protest against the potential increase in traffic it says will result from the projected 485,000 visitors annually to Horkesley Park and its possible effect on the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Bunting and Sons have submitted an updated application to Colchester Council for their £25 million project at

Great Horkesley, which they describe as a "celebration of the countryside".

Cars, tractors, a 1936 fire engine and an articulated lorry with "Say No to Horkesley Park" painted on the side, moved slowly along the A134 from Nayland to Great Horkesley and back for an hour. About 80 protestors lined the route brandishing placards.

The rally was hailed as a success, making a powerful point for SVAG, but Stephen Bunting, a partner of Bunting and Sons, dismissed it as an inappropriate publicity stunt.

SVAG chairman Will Pavry said: "We were absolutely delighted with the turnout and think this shows the serious concern in the local community

by Pat Bray

over the Horkesley Park centre.

"People are worried about the increased traffic and the damage the centre might do to the peace and quiet of the AONB. This was more than adequately demonstrated by the very large number of cars, tractors and other vehicles that took part as well as all the people prepared to stand on the side of the road with their placards."

But Mr Bunting commented: "SVAG's claims that Horkesley Park will cause traffic chaos is simply not supported by the facts. Independent special consultants have assessed the

proposals, including transport, and these show the centre will be beneficial across the board with no significant adverse effects.

"We claim it will be an asset for the community, an amenity for local people and a draw for tourists, providing 270 jobs net. Misinformation and scaremongering regarding traffic is rife and is deliberately emotive encouraging people to object to the Horkesley Park plans.

"Transport assessments include traffic impact, details of road improvements and a comprehensive travel plan which promotes non-car travel."