



# Essex County STANDARD

## Time to enjoy the view Will fought to protect for years

### Wendy Brading

AS Will Pavry stands in the garden of his country cottage, he might allow himself the slightest smile of satisfaction.

For 13 years he was chairman of a campaigning conservation group which fought plans for a £25million heritage centre in the Dedham Vale.

And earlier this year, the Secretary of State threw out an appeal for the centre.

It was not an easy victory, neither was it a quick one.

Mr Pavry moved to his home in Little Horkelesley in 1979.

He said: "I had always lived in the countryside. When we first saw the house, we were struck by the wonderful view from the back across to Great Horkelesley Church.

"I knew it was an area of

outstanding natural beauty and presumed, as it was a protected area, we would continue to enjoy the countryside we lived in."

But in 2001, established family firm Bunting and Sons put forward the first of five applications to create the John Constable Heritage Centre at Horkelesley Park.

Mr Pavry remembers: "I think I felt somewhat incredulous. The original application was obviously going to be a large retail development on the site of the old greenhouses. It was portrayed as a heritage centre, but gave us great cause for concern."

The Stour Valley Action Group was formed to fight the scheme and Mr Pavry has been its chairman until he stepped down this month.

Following opposition to the size and scope of the developments, the Buntings withdrew the first bid, but a succession of applications followed, of varying sizes, but all along the same lines. The Stour Valley Action Group held firm.

Mr Pavry said: "It was determined opposition. We had a stream of letters in the paper and we had the demonstration on the fields. We always tried to be measured in questioning the merits of the applications."

In 2001, Mr Pavry was working as the managing director of Paxman, in Colchester. He became the group marketing director of Man BMW Diesels when the firm took over. He retired the following year and became bursar at Littlegarth School, in Little Horkelesley, from 2004 to 2008.

In April, when the final appeal regarding the heritage centre was rejected, Mr Pavry and the army of campaigners could finally celebrate victory.

But Mr Pavry added: "I don't think any of us felt great glee. It has been such a long battle."

Throughout the 13 years of conflict, Mr Pavry had practically no contact with Stephen Bunting, the driving force behind the Horkelesley Park applications.

Mr Pavry said: "I had various letters which were quite unpleasant. We made overtures to him in 2002, asking to talk to him. Those overtures were not met with the kind of response we would have hoped for."

However, Mr Pavry does not celebrate the demise of Buntings and Sons. The firm which had existed for nearly 200 years, was put into administration, with debts of £14million.

Mr Pavry said: "I think it is a great tragedy. It was clearly a wonderful company, built up by previous generations."

Bunting and Sons' assets were bought by W and H Park, a subsidiary of Pigeon Investments.

Stephen Bunting, for his part, maintained the scheme had the support of thousands of people, but was prevented by "a small number of people". He added: "As a consequence, Colchester's oldest family-owned and run business was put into administration."

Mr Bunting said he showed Mr and Mrs Pavry around the scheme, along with other visitors, and said: "Everyone who wanted to see us was always warmly welcomed. I was polite and civil to everyone."

Representatives have so far had two meetings with the action group saying their preferred option is now for a limited number of high-quality houses on the site of the old greenhouses off London Road.

The Stour Valley Action Group will continue, but Mr Pavry has been succeeded by Kate Charlton-Jones as chair. He added: "It is time for the younger generation to pick up the reins."

Perhaps he will instead stand in his garden and enjoy the view.



CAMPAIGNER: Will Pavry.

C076649