

Essex County Standard

The voice of Colchester & district since 1831

Friday, September 27, 2013

www.essexcountystandard.co.uk

80p

'NO CASH LEFT FOR LAWYERS'

■ Horkesley Park visitor centre developers reveal they have no money for lawyers at massive planning inquiry

Ryan Jennings

THE family behind plans for a major tourist centre in Constable Country has revealed it "is not in a position" to pay for lawyers at a crucial planning inquiry.

A three-week investigation of Bunting and Sons plans for a £25million visitor centre in the Stour Valley will start next week.

But the family says, having spent several million pounds on trying, for 12 years, to get the scheme passed, it will have no lawyers present at the event.

Stephen Bunting, senior partner at Bunting and Sons, said: "Unfortunately, funds for this pre-development phase have now been exhausted and therefore we are unable to have legal representation and expert witnesses at the inquiry.

"Consequently, we shall rely on the substantial amount of submitted evidence, including the planning application and the volumes of associated documents and other information, to be the full extent of

Continued on: page 2

Page 2....

'No cash left for plan inquiry lawyers'

Continued from: page 1

our submission. We trust the inspector conducting the appeal will review all of the submitted evidence, which addresses matters fully. The far-reaching professional reports, compiled by a large number of independent specialists, confirm that what is proposed will be beneficial across the board, with no significant adverse effects.

"Provided planning permission is granted, as recommended by the council's own planning officers, additional funds will be released to complete the agreed development and enable delivery of the benefits of the

proposals. Funds are in place for this and will be without any draw on the public purse.

"Our decision not to have legal representation and witnesses at the inquiry will undoubtedly shorten the length of it and as a result save costs for the Council."

The Buntings' application would see the creation of a major visitor centre attracting 316,000 visitors a year.

Last week, it was revealed the family had the backing of a major Chinese corporation to create a Chinese garden at the site, alongside more traditional attractions, such as Constable paintings and a Suffolk Punch horse centre.

The planning appeal is taking place after Colchester Council voted against the plans in March, by ten votes to four, because they did not think the centre was economically viable and would cause damage to the picturesque Constable Country.

Chales Clover, chairman of the Dedham Vale Society, which has fought the plans, said: "I do not feel sorry for Buntings. They have wasted a lot of the time of a lot of good people on this project, which will do no good for the area."

He added: "This only serves to prove Buntings should have taken two 'No' answers as the answer."

The inquiry will start on Tuesday at Langham Community Hall.