

Pickles to consider Northants case when ruling on visitor centre

Wind farm veto raises hopes in Horkesley

By JAMES CALNAN

james.calnan@nqe.com

CAMPAIGNERS are hoping a High Court ruling stopping a wind farm being built near historic gardens in Northamptonshire will also scupper Bunting & Sons' Horkesley Park plans.

Communities Secretary Eric Pickles has said he will look at the ruling to block plans for four 400ft-tall turbines as he considers



■ Hopeful sign? Anti Horkesley Park campaigner Will Pavry hopes news Communities Secretary Eric Pickles, inset, will follow the example of the Northamptonshire wind farm case and refuse the plans

This reinforces the position the appeal should be refused on the basis there may be an impact on listed buildings

impact of developments on listed buildings.

The Buntings' proposed visitor centre would be near the Chantry, a listed Georgian property, and the Grade I listed All Saints Church.

Mr Pavry added: "This reinforces the position the appeal should be refused on the basis there may be an impact on the listed buildings.

"The Secretary of State has decided to make the final decision on this appeal himself. I'm not clear which way he's going to lean."

A letter, sent by Mr Pickles to Colchester Council, the appli-

cants and leading supporters and opponents of the Horkesley Park plan, also lists potentially-relevant changes in Government planning policy.

Mr Pavry explained: "We have commented on one or two aspects we think are important.

"They emphasise the fact that the viability of an undertaking should be an important consideration. We have always maintained Horkesley Park is not viable and should be refused on those grounds alone."

A Colchester Council spokesman: "The council believes the High Court decision adds increased weight to the impor-

tance of preserving listed buildings. The council believes the introduction of a Chinese garden in the grounds of the Chantry and the conversion of the building to a gallery would run counter to the statutory duty reaffirmed by the recent High Court decision."

Mr Pickles has stressed the letter should not be read as an indication of which way he is likely to rule on the Horkesley proposal.

Stephen Bunting, a partner in the company, said: "We understand it is all part of the due process of an appeal to be asked to comment on related matters.

"We remain hopeful of a positive outcome."

FIRM'S DREAM TURNED INTO A NIGHTMARE

BUNTING & Sons, an old-established company, founded 1820, has been trying to turn the 117-acre Horkesley Park site into a tourist attraction for more than a decade.

In February last year, Colchester Council refused an application for a visitor centre plus attractions, including a

Suffolk Punch horse centre and a fine art gallery.

Bunting & Sons appealed against the decision, but just before last October's public inquiry, the family firm announced it could not afford to pay lawyers to put its case.

Days after the hearing started, Deloitte was appointed as

administrator to the company, with its assets, including Horkesley Park and the Westwood Park business park, put up for sale as going concerns.

If the company won planning permission, it is thought administrators would be able to sell the site to a developer, which could then build the visitor centre.

the family firm's controversial Stour Valley Visitor Centre proposals.

Mr Pickles is due to rule on May 6 on the Buntings' appeal against Colchester Council's refusal to allow the £20million visitor centre

He has said he is reviewing a planning inspector's report relating to the wind farm plan before deciding the appeal.

All parties involved in the Horkesley issue have been sent copies of the Court of Appeal decision on a site near historic gardens in Sudborough, Northamptonshire.

The court upheld a High Court ruling, overturning the local council's original decision to grant planning permission.

Will Pavry, of the Stour Valley Action Group, said the case had parallels with Horkesley Park, because both had focused on the