

# Visitor centre 'would hit peace of Vale'

BUILDING a visitor centre at Horkesley Park would have a major impact on the "peace and tranquillity" of Dedham Vale, an MP told a planning inquiry.

Bernard Jenkin, MP for Harwich and North Essex, spoke at the fourth and final day of an appeal by Bunting & Sons against Colchester Council's decision not to award planning permission for the Stour Valley Visitor Centre.

The Bunting family insist the

centre, including an art gallery, a Suffolk punch horse centre, a Chinese garden, gift shops, countryside experiences and exhibitions, would create 150 jobs and draw 316,000 visitors a year.

But Mr Jenkin said this would "detract" from the Dedham Vale area of natural beauty, on which part of the site lies.

He said: "I have grown to love and to cherish Dedham Vale, as I am sure the appellants do, too.

"But how does this justify infrastructure to support 316,000 visitors per year, supported by an art gallery to celebrate an artist whose original paintings are already on public display all over the country, and a Chinese garden whose relevance to Suffolk Punches, or to John Constable, or to Dedham Vale is baffling?"

Mr Jenkin added he had been "overwhelmed" at the number of people contacting him to express

opposition to the project, while very few had spoken in favour.

At Friday's hearing, Mr Jenkin's colleague, South Suffolk MP Tim Yeo, also voiced opposition to the traffic impact he said the centre would have.

Discussions were also held on what upgrades and contributions Bunting & Sons would offer if the appeal was successful.

A decision is due early next year.