



Stour Valley Action Group

www.stourvalleyactiongroup.org.uk

Newsletter



11th May 2016

Dear SVAG member,

You have yet to hear the committee's view on the latest application for the London Road site at Great Horkeley, application 160906, you may be wondering what is going on. Many apologies for our tardy response. The truth is that we have been going through exhaustive discussions in order to come up with a response to the Council that reflects a range of views on the committee and, I suspect, in the community.

Please note that the Council have granted us an extension: we now have until **May 20th** to submit a response. If you wish to express your own view we would encourage you to get your letter into the Council by that date. However, the planning officer informs me that all submissions will be considered until July 19th, the date the Planning Committee will meet. Details of how to submit your response are given on the Council website: [Link to Planning Application](#).

The Stour Valley Action group was established in 2001 with the sole purpose of opposing plans for the development of the Horkeley Park Heritage and Conservation Centre. This was a development of national significance entirely out of keeping with the rural setting that opened up the risk of significant commercial and retail operations within and abutting the Dedham Vale ANOB.

The potential for harm to the countryside was clear to all and the membership of SVAG was unanimously committed to the common cause of preventing that development from taking place. After battling a number of applications in different forms, SVAG was instrumental in seeing the application refused by the Colchester Borough Council and in the subsequent dismissal of the appeal by the Secretary of State in 2014.

Although the spectre of the Horkeley Park proposal was finally seen off by the administration of the Bunting and Sons business and the subsequent sale of their assets, including the site, SVAG resolved to remain in existence to monitor future development proposals. This was with the stated aim of gathering information about new applications, scrutinising the details and informing our membership.

As you will know, the site was acquired by W&H Park Limited in 2014 for the purpose of residential development. The proposal now before us is for a development of eighteen houses and four affordable homes limited to the site of the present greenhouses and associated buildings. There is also a commitment to make improvements to the church of All Saints. We have liaised closely with W&H Park and the Borough Council to monitor these proposals and in particular to seek to minimise the impact of the proposed development. We seek to encourage the imposition of safeguards against further development through the provision of restrictive covenants and the requirements of any S106 Agreement (the legal agreement that the Council will require before Planning Permission becomes effective). As you will also know, that application has now been submitted and is available to view on the Council's website.

It has become increasingly clear that the unanimity of views that bound us in our opposition to Horkesley Park no longer clearly applies. Within the SVAG committee and the wider membership there are a range of views – many object in principle to any development within the ANOB and to any residential development not in accordance with the local plan. Others are more tolerant of a “least worst” resolution for a site which they believe will inevitably be subject to redevelopment.

Accordingly the SVAG committee has decided to summarise the key ways in which the application is a departure from current planning policy and the Local Plan, reserving judgement on a formal objection pending:

- clear restrictions on any further development across the whole of the site if the Council are minded to approve the application.
- a justification of the scale of the development. Has there been a Viability Assessment not yet in the public domain and if not we would like to know the justification for twenty two houses on this site?

Your own opinion of this application will be guided by many things: where you live, concerns about policy and precedent and by your reaction to the proposals as you have examined them.

The SVAG committee hopes to be able to post our letter to the Council at the beginning of next week.

Unfortunately the SVAG mailbox cannot be monitored over this weekend, please do contact me directly on katescj@gmail.com if needed.

Kind regards

Kate Charlton-Jones
Chairman SVAG