

TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (as amended)

SECTION 78

THE TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING APPEALS (DETERMINATION BY  
INSPECTORS) (INQUIRIES PROCEDURE) (ENGLAND) RULES (“the Inspectors  
Rules”)

Appeal by Bunting & Sons (“the Appellant”) against a refusal of planning permission by Colchester Borough Council (“the Council”) for the change of use and development of land at London Road, Little Horkesley, Colchester, CO6 4AJ such land being known as Horkesley Park (“the Appeal Site”) to form ‘The Stour Valley Visitor Centre at Horkesley Park’ comprising a country park; art and craft studios (‘The Chantry’); public gardens; a central building complex to provide an indoor display ring; ‘Suffolk Punch breeding centre’; entrance building, shop, cafe, ‘field to fork’, ‘Farming through the Ages’, Active Learning, ‘Nature Watch, and retained greenhouse as demonstration nursery and gardens, and ‘Energy Centre’; main and overflow car parks, service yard, highway improvements, ancillary works and infrastructure provision

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SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE OF MR JOHN ALEXANDER FOR AND ON  
BEHALF OF THE NAYLAND WITH WISSINGTON CONSERVATION  
SOCIETY

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Appeal Reference: APP/A1530/A/13/2195924

Council Reference: 120965

Our Reference: JA/22.08.13

Date of Inquiry: 1 – 4 October, 8 – 11 October and 15 – 18  
October 2013 (12 days)

1       The Nayland with Wissington Conservation Society stands by its previous objections to this appeal but as many of the points raised by the Society are now covered by other objectors the Society confines its comments to the issue of harm caused by this application to the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (“the AONB”) and to the areas adjacent thereto. The issue of harm arises from paragraphs 115 and 116 of the NPPF and from Colchester Borough Council Development Policies numbers DP9, DP10 and DP 22.

2       The Society has identified two areas of harm if the scheme is implemented, namely (a) the impact of increased traffic upon villages such as Nayland, and upon the delightful and tranquil country lanes which play an integral part in the enjoyment of the AONB and (b) the impact of increased visitor numbers upon the villages of the AONB, in particular the village of Nayland.

3       The increased vehicular traffic flows will cause harm to the AONB in three ways. Firstly visitors travelling to and from the Appeal Site using unapproved routes; secondly visitors exploring by car the narrow lanes of the AONB following their visit to the Appeal Site, and thirdly visitors specifically driving from the Appeal Site to other significant tourist locations within the AONB e.g. Dedham and Flatford Mill using the narrow country lanes as their route.

4       Dealing firstly with access to and from the Appeal Site the Society has produced evidence that the use of Satellite Navigation devices will severely undermine all efforts to keep visitor traffic on the main access roads of the A12 and A134. Many of the currently recommended routes will use narrow country lanes and villages such as Nayland in particular will suffer. The peace and tranquility for which this AONB is justly celebrated will be lost.

5       The possibility of visitor traffic being confined to main roads as a result of the connection of the A134 with the A12 via the proposed Northern Approach Road appears to be contrary to Satellite Navigation principles, which recommend the shortest and most direct route.

6       Secondly there is the issue of visitors exploring the AONB following their visit to the Appeal Site. The Planning Committee report estimates that one third of visitors are likely to do so, potentially as many as 105,000 visitors each year. My statement shows a map of the area identifying the narrow country lanes which surround the Appeal Site which are entirely unsuited to even moderate traffic use.

7       Thirdly there is the issue of visitors to the Appeal Site driving directly to the other “Hot Spots” within the AONB such as Dedham and Flatford Mill. The Society has produced evidence showing that Satellite navigation devices will use narrow country lanes to reach these destinations and Nayland in particular will suffer considerably.

8       The Society also draws the Inquiry’s attention to the impact of significant numbers of visitors upon the village of Nayland. This medieval village is the largest and nearest village to the Appeal Site within the AONB. In the Grade 1 listed St. James Church there is an original painting by John Constable and the village has strong links with Constable’s family. The village cannot sustain any significant number of visitors. There are no public conveniences and no public car park and every through route is at some stage limited to a single vehicle width.

9       In conclusion if permission is granted for this development, the harm to the villages and lanes of the AONB will be disastrous. The unsustainable location of the Appeal Site will draw significant traffic, and visitors will, in all likelihood, seek to enjoy the Vale, and use the narrow lanes and roads. The tranquility of the Dedham Vale and Nayland in particular, will be destroyed by the Stour Valley Visitor Centre, if permission were to be granted and the harm to the Vale will be irreparable. Ironically, the Stour Valley Visitor Centre would destroy the very countryside, which it claims to celebrate.

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