

For the consideration of Colchester Borough Council and Others

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

relating to

**Benefits the proposed Horkesley Park Heritage and Conservation Centre will
provide subject to grant of planning permission for Application No. 090231**

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From: Kate Bunting, Bunting & Sons Partner
Ref: HP/M/Benefits 411.1
Date: 5 April 2011

Introduction

This Supplementary Information Document (SID), relates to Benefits the proposed Horkesley Park Heritage and Conservation Centre (Horkesley Park - the Scheme) will provide, subject to grant of Planning Application No. 090231 (the Application). It has been compiled by Bunting & Sons (the Applicant) in order to bring together information previously submitted at different times to Colchester Borough Council (CBC).

The Horkesley Park proposals to create a quality visitor centre for tourism and local people alike in the Borough of Colchester have been established following extensive public engagement and consultation and the whole Scheme has been thoroughly assessed by a far reaching and comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment, and other studies in order to amass factual data and other information to identify, evaluate and report on the Scheme's impacts, sustainability and compatibility with Planning Policy.

The opportunity for Colchester to have "*A Celebration of the English Countryside*" linking with the Stour Valley, of which a part is in the Borough, has been provided by the Applicant heavily investing in the Scheme and having it subjected to rigorous testing and assessments, the findings of which show a substantial and wide range of potential benefits with no significant adverse effects.

Tangible environmental benefits, economic benefits, social benefits and educational benefits have been clearly identified, as well as other benefits such as the contributions the Scheme would make to:

the status of Colchester as a leading prestigious cultural centre and tourism destination; and

in helping to pull back the critically endangered Suffolk Horse breed (the Suffolk Punch) from close to extinction.

Benefits Horkesley Park will provide

The primary aim of Horkesley Park is to create a focus within the Borough of Colchester, and one of the best parts of the Essex landscape, devoted to the many facets of the English Countryside – a quality visitor centre attraction for tourism and local people alike, with particular emphasis on East Anglian "rural life;" agriculture and food; art and culture; the countryside and conservation; "living heritage"; gardens and wider facets of horticulture; and sustainable technology.

The Scheme's perspective will be past, present and future. It will feature factors which have influenced the appearance and character of the countryside in the past and which continue to touch the lives of people everywhere.

Horkesley Park will be relevant to contemporary issues, particularly affecting people who live and work in the countryside, and/or wish to visit it in a sustainable way. It will help to address the need for: conservation and management; safeguarding our rural heritage; diversification; local employment and income; new initiatives and sustainable development; accommodating the rapidly expanding urban populations and economically vibrant and socially balanced rural communities. Horkesley Park will provide benefits in all these areas.

Principal benefits of Horkesley Park:

- Leisure and Tourism facility providing for the growth of both population and tourism (page 2)
- Sustainable jobs in the rural economy (page 4)
- The countryside – more accessible for all (page 5)
- Improved sustainable transport in the countryside (page 6)
- Education for a wide range of ages and interests (page 6)

Further benefits of Horkesley Park:

- Rural regeneration (page 8)
- Contributions to Colchester's vision to become a Prestigious Regional Centre (page 9)
- Conserving the countryside (page 9)
- Safeguarding rural heritage (page 10)
- Enhancing habitats to create greater bio-diversity (page 10)
- Helping to safeguard the future of the Suffolk Horse breed (the Suffolk Punch) (page 10)

- Sustainability – helping Colchester become a greener place (page 11)
- Apprenticeship Schemes (page 11)
- Cultural links to assist in the development of international trade (page 11)
- Celebration of art of the region (page 12)
- Visual impact improvements (page 12)
- Private investment (page 13)

All of the above principal and further benefits are set out hereafter

- **Leisure and Tourism facility providing for the growth of both population and tourism**

Colchester is reported to be the fastest growing town in England and its population is expected to increase by over a quarter during the 20 year period 2001-2021 and about a third of that growth will be accommodated in the expanding housing stock being built in the north of the town between the Intercity Railway Line and the A12 Trunk Road. This expansion is expected to gear up substantially following completion in 2012 of the final phase of the Northern Approaches Road, linking the new A12 Junction 28 with the A134.

The foregoing is all in close proximity to the Horkesley Park site, just 2.5 miles north of the A134 underpass of the A12, the periphery of the town centre outskirts.

As an acknowledged Key Centre for Development and Change, Colchester has substantially increased responsibilities. High on the list of these responsibilities is the requirement to satisfy the need for new recreational development for the Borough's residents.

Access to Horkesley Park, a leisure and tourism 41.41 hectare (117.16 acre) facility of regional significance, including an extensive Country Park, heritage farming areas and gardens, will make a very positive contribution to a need in respect of Colchester's expanding population for recreational outlets close to the main housing growth and regeneration areas. This will provide major benefits.

Horkesley Park will be open all year-round for local people and visitors alike. It will provide high quality facilities – educational, cultural, recreational and countryside leisure. In supplying this and more, Horkesley Park will attract visitors on a continuous basis and this will increase off-peak and low season visits to the wider area, as well as providing for local people continuously, and sustaining year-round employment. During high season peaks, when “honey pot” tourism facilities and local services usually come under enormous strain by being overcrowded, Horkesley Park will help to relieve pressure by providing an additional destination to visit. This will particularly benefit the existing popular “honey pot” tourism locations, such as Dedham and Flatford.

Well separated from the main “honey pots” in the Dedham Vale and Stour Valley a little to the east (given that the Horkesley Park site is located alongside the A134 approximately mid way between Flatford/the Stour Estuary and the market town of Sudbury), Horkesley Park is ideally placed to relate to and promote a much larger part of the Stour Valley than just Dedham and Flatford. This, for example, enables features about Thomas Gainsborough to be included, which will be a particularly interesting dimension as his works made a great impression upon the younger John Constable.

Horkesley Park, with its “working countryside”, “living heritage”, art of the region and views across the Stour Valley, will be a unique centre relating to the Stour Valley, and as such it will provide a new focal point and destination for visitors to the area.

Horkesley Park will also provide a much-needed supplement to, and partner for, the limited number of existing tourism venues in the Stour Valley, including “Constable country”. In regional perception studies, “Constable country” has widespread appeal for visitors, attracting many to the area. As the tourism industry develops due to the many strategies, initiatives and directives to get it to do so, not least the plans of the Government to help tourism achieve its potential as a central part of Britain's growth strategy, the number of visitors to the area will increase considerably.

Horkesley Park, in “Constable country”, will assist in providing for the foregoing whilst at the same time helping with the requirements and aspirations of many local people who want to see/have traditional farming; more trees; additional and improved footpaths; additional and improved cycle paths; cycle hire facilities; traffic management; improved and extended public transport; more information about the area; open safe “green space” and recreational facilities, all of which are included to varying degrees in the Horkesley Park proposals.

Horkesley Park, including elements of International, National, Regional and Local significance, will provide a rich variety of experiences for visitors, and create real economic and social benefits for the Borough of Colchester, and the wider region. In the process, it will make a major contribution to many needs, incorporating the need to develop sustainable tourism which embraces and promotes the green agenda.

In the Government Tourism Policy issued on 4 March 2011 it states: “*A thriving tourism industry creates beautiful places to visit all round the country, which also improves the quality of life for everyone who lives near them as well*”.

The tourism industry is an extremely important and expanding industry, which Horkesley Park will assist Colchester (as a “Prestigious Regional Centre”) to champion and strongly develop for the benefit of the Borough and the wider area.

Recognising that tourism is particularly vital to the rural economy of the Stour Valley and the surrounding area, where many shops, pubs, post offices and other facilities and amenities are going out of business and closing at an alarmingly fast rate, leading businesses, private sector organisations and public sector bodies in North East Essex and South Suffolk have joined forces and resolved that “*The Stour Valley should be extensively promoted as being fully open for visitors and for business, and to remove any obstacles that may still exist to prevent this from happening*”. There is great concern that unless something is done urgently to encourage tourism and more visitor spend in the area the adverse impact that would otherwise occur will be irreversible. Horkesley Park will help to increase year round tourism complementing that which Colchester is able to offer. This will result in a greater number of visitors staying overnight, and that will increase spend in the area for the benefit of many local businesses.

“*Tourism is one of Britain’s most important industries*” (John Penrose MP, Minister for Tourism and Heritage). Vital to the UK economy, tourism accounts for almost £90bn direct spend each year (£115bn when the supply chain is included) and providing nearly 1.5 million jobs directly and even more employment indirectly (figures from Deloitte – The Economic Contribution of the Visitor Economy: UK and the nations – 2010).

The Government’s Tourism Policy goal is to grow the sector, “*Even though tourism is a large and important sector of our economy already, it has plenty of untapped potential too. It offers one of the fastest and most efficient ways to deliver rapid growth*” John Penrose MP.

For Colchester to have a greater share of the expanding tourism market there is an urgent need to create in the Borough several impressive additional sustainable year-round high quality attractions and facilities of significant/substantial interest, appeal and capacity. Horkesley Park will be a major benefit to the Borough of Colchester in this regard and will be a considerable help to it gaining a greater share of the expanding tourism market.

○ **Sustainable jobs in the rural economy**

Horkesley Park will be an important generator in the Borough of ongoing rural employment, creating once fully operational, at least 270 jobs (155 Full Time Equivalent on-site and 45 Full Time Equivalent off-site), after “multiplier, leakage and displacement effects” are taken into account.

Horkesley Park will also provide jobs for as many local people as possible during the redevelopment, regeneration, creation, construction and fit-out pre-operational phases.

Horkesley Park will have a local employment plan with a focus on the recruitment of local people, commitment to training and other measures. There will be a comprehensive and sustainable Travel Plan, which will include and provide incentives to encourage staff to travel to and from work by sustainable means.

Bunting & Sons is Colchester's oldest family owned and run ongoing business which, since it was established, has been in continuous operation for almost 200 years. As one of the largest employers in the area, Bunting & Sons has a lot of experience in employing people in virtually all of the elements which make up Horkesley Park.

Bunting & Sons has also considerable experience in working overseas and establishing and running numerous horticultural businesses and horticultural related businesses, in several countries. These overseas businesses were subsequently sold but the experience and knowledge gained from them, as well as Bunting & Sons local enterprises, are applied to the Horkesley Park Scheme.

The creation of any sustainable jobs for the benefit of the rural economy is important but to create 270 jobs (200 FTE) by a local long-established highly experienced business is particularly significant.

- **The Countryside – more accessible for all**

The Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Management Plan 2004-2009 stated: *“most of the countryside in the valley is privately owned and farmed, so the majority of people have to access the area using rural roads, the public rights of way and the river.”* In 2011 this is still the case.

There is undoubtedly a dearth of accessible countryside and open space available for recreation and leisure in and around the Dedham Vale and Stour Valley and finding a way of redressing this deficiency is an important challenge.

Outside the main centres of Dedham, East Bergholt and Flatford, whilst there is a network of public rights of way, there are very few extensive areas of open space or private land accessible to the general public. Opportunities off the Highway and public rights of way for sitting/relaxing in safe open spaces in the countryside, picnicking, etc., are limited. In the Dedham Vale and Stour Valley there are occasional roadside seats, but few country parks, official picnic sites, accessible viewpoints and official car parks.

The Horkesley Park Country Park and Heritage Farming Areas of over 41 hectares (100 acres) of unspoilt countryside will open up access to what is currently a private area of the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley region with lovely views across the Stour Valley. The Country Park will help to fulfil many of the aspirations and aims identified in the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Management Plan 2010-2015 and its Vision to 2025.

The provision of Horkesley Park will help to compensate for the current limitations imposed on access to the open countryside. Horkesley Park will present one of the few opportunities for the general public to roam within extensive tracts in the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley area. A Landscape Scheme will be implemented and a long term management plan will ensure that the whole of Horkesley Park is appropriately maintained. In doing this Suffolk Punches will be extensively used. This and other benefits of the proposals will play a major part in the quiet enjoyment of the area.

Over 50,000 indigenous, and where possible locally sourced, trees, shrubs and hedges will be planted and maintained to create a landscape structure that conserves and enhances the landscape character of the Stour Valley, including the Dedham Vale AONB.

The enhancement of the landscape within both the extensive Country Park and the Gardens of Horkesley Park will make a major contribution to the traditional character and beauty of the area.

The Horkesley Park proposals are for the existing glasshouses, industrial type buildings and other structures to all be demolished and cleared, and for the new above ground level build (of less than half the footprint of the existing) to be confined to the previously developed land which is not in the AONB. This developed land is alongside extensive adjoining tracts of countryside and areas of woodland of Horkesley Park within the AONB, to which the public will gain access for the first time.

Horkesley Park will provide the additional benefits of having throughout the whole site excellent access and facilities for people with disabilities – ensuring the countryside is accessible for all.

- **Improved sustainable transport in the countryside**

Public transport services provided in the countryside are often limited and infrequent. Much of the village of Great Horkesley and beyond is no exception.

Horkesley Park will improve accessibility to and from the northern part of Great Horkesley and elsewhere, by means other than by car. This is detailed in a comprehensive Travel Plan and supporting items.

The Travel Plan, secured by an s106 Agreement, conditions and other legally binding mechanisms, will deliver a wide range of investments in sustainable transport. These include a regular public bus service between Horkesley Park and Colchester Town Centre, via North Station, at 15 minute intervals during the Centre's normal opening times to the general public, and during the periods before and after opening, to extend the services for staff.

In addition there will be a hopper bus (towing a cycle transporting trailer) service, linking Horkesley Park to other tourism destinations within the Stour Valley, such as Dedham Village, and a daily shuttle bus service for staff. There will also be a wide range of new facilities and initiatives for walkers and cyclists. Cumulatively, these proposals will constitute a major package of green transportation measures, which will exploit the existing good accessibility to the site from Colchester, the A12 and the A134 in particular.

These measures of improved and extended public transport services, etc., will benefit local people as well as visitors.

- **Education for a wide range of ages and interests**

Horkesley Park will feature a mix of countryside elements, from farming and fine art to gardens and renewable energy, brought together in “*a celebration of the English countryside*”. It will provide in a vibrant and exciting way a range of educational facilities and programmes for children and adults, as well as access to much informal education. Extensive programmes and facilities in respect of this will be provided for schools and colleges to link as many as possible of the Horkesley Park elements with their syllabuses.

This will help to ensure future generations are familiar with the countryside, understand the role of the countryside as a source of food, culture and pleasure, and appreciate the need for the conservation of rural resources.

Horkesley Park will provide a focus for learning and the accumulation of understanding the countryside – past, present and future. In particular, it will give emphasis on food production, from field to table; the contrasts between historic and modern farming practices; and the current debate and roles of intensive and organic farming... issues which can be presented more directly and effectively on a rural site and within a “rural classroom”. There are many unrealised opportunities to capture the imagination of the young and hopefully imbue a lifelong commitment to the countryside and to rural conservation.

The Education Officer(s)/School Coordinator(s) of Horkesley Park will arrange a variety of visits, activities and demonstrations that will dovetail with the curricula of schools and colleges. A range of educational resources – teachers’ notes, work sheets, etc will be developed to facilitate and enhance the learning experience.

In collaborating with schools and colleges Horkesley Park will provide important additions and furtherance to that which they provide to their pupils during their enrolment and courses. This will provide a variety of benefits. Research conducted by the “Year of Food and Farming” indicates that:

- One in five children never visit the countryside – that means that more than one million children across the country have absolutely no contact with the land
- A fifth of children say they have never picked and then eaten fruit
- Children in England aged between 11 and 15 now spend 55 per cent of their waking lives watching television and computers. That is equivalent to about 53 hours a week in front of a screen – a rise of 40 per cent over the last ten years
- Children without any experience of rural life are twice as likely to admit they do not know where their food comes from...

Research shows that there is a direct relationship between the amount of contact children have with the countryside and their “agricultural literacy” to their overall awareness and understanding of the food chain. There is compelling evidence that the most effective way of making children truly understand these issues and to shape their tastes and food choices is to literally give them the bigger picture, physically re-connecting them with the landscape. Compelling evidence suggests that this is the best – and most enjoyable way – of giving children an appetite and passion for food.

Even more encouraging, a growing body of evidence is now linking child contact with nature/exposure to the countryside with significant physical, mental, behavioural and intellectual benefits. Confronted by the ever increasing number of children whose connection with what they eat has been severely dislocated, it is unsurprising this has left them with a very warped view of the food chain. Without connection with the countryside and food production there, children’s experience with food will inevitably and increasingly begin at the end point – with what they see in a supermarket.

Studies show that direct contact with the countryside and farm has enormous, measurable advantages for children's relationship with food. Improved agricultural literacy is an important weapon in the fight against obesity.

Further, encouraging findings indicate that contact with the countryside is linked with a variety of benefits quite unrelated to food. It appears there is a critical period of "green" development in children when they derive benefits from rural contact. Some of these benefits include:

- Children with symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) are better able to concentrate after contact with nature.
- Children with views of and contact with nature score higher on tests of concentration and self-discipline.
- Exposure to natural environments improves children's cognitive development by improving their awareness, reasoning and observational skills.
- Schools with outdoor education programmes show better performance on standardised measures of academic achievement in reading, writing, maths, science and social studies. Classroom behaviour shows improvement as well.
- A study, by Waliczek and others, of 120,000 children has found that gardening increases their self-esteem and reduces the degree of stress they experience.
- Nature buffers the impact of life's stresses on children and helps them deal with adversity. The greater the amount of nature exposure, the greater the benefits.

Simply put, children benefit from more visits to the countryside, more "growing" experiences and greater involvement in cooking or preparing food.

The Horkesley Park school children's vegetable growing areas, the cooks' school and other elements of the Scheme will enable schools in the Colchester Borough and further afield to include safe and well-balanced external educational programmes to be woven into every part of the curriculum – whether it be maths, art, business or environmental studies.

Horkesley Park will encourage more people to access, learn about/be involved in, heritage, conservation, art of the region, local crafts, gardens, traditional skills, food and non-intensive farming, to name but a few. The educational opportunities for adults as well as children will encourage life long learning.

▪ **Rural regeneration**

Horkesley Park will be a catalyst for sustainable regeneration of the surrounding countryside by positively addressing the key elements of conservation, heritage and culture. In addition to the significant economic benefits for local businesses generated by Horkesley Park promotions, on and off-site spending of visitors, increased local incomes and local sourcing of goods and services will help stimulate the local and regional economy as a whole.

Wherever possible, Horkesley Park will source services and supplies locally to help the local economy and will support local producers by providing them with a showcase for their wares. A critical mass of quality producers will help reinforce the local brand for the area.

The Horkesley Park Scheme accords with Government policy operating at a national level in relation to promoting and developing the rural economy, especially tourism and the sustainable development of appropriate rural employment whilst continuing to afford protection of the countryside.

The creation of sustainable communities, where jobs, homes and environment are closely interlinked, is the core national, regional and local planning objective. The Horkesley Park proposals will meet this objective by providing and facilitating significant employment in the local and wider community. This provides major benefits.

▪ **Contributions to Colchester's vision to become a Prestigious Regional Centre**

Horkesley Park will help the promotion of Colchester and the Region as a major centre for culture and sustainable tourism, and will complement other attractions within the Borough and further afield. This will help Colchester become a destination for longer stay tourism and bring more visitors to the region as a whole.

Horkesley Park has a variety of inter-linking elements appealing to a wide audience. These attractor elements will draw people to the Borough of Colchester and the wider region.

▪ **Conserving the countryside**

41 hectares (100 acres) of land at Horkesley Park will be Country Park and heritage farming areas, with multiple use including parkland pastures; grazing; wildflower meadows; animal husbandry; traditional non-intensive farming; school children's vegetable growing areas and informal leisure. The Country Park will create one of the largest areas of continuous species-rich grassland within the Stour Valley and surrounding region. This will be of benefit to people as well as the environment and habitats.

The multiple use of this area for both recreation and animal husbandry, etc., will be achieved with insignificant adverse impact. Management techniques will be implemented to allow a level of public access that is compatible with ecological and landscape considerations.

Tree and hedge planting schemes and the management and conservation of extensive areas of farmland, parkland and the Country Park will positively enhance the AONB. The habitat creation and conservation work will have a very positive impact in line with national policy objectives.

Horkesley Park will protect, conserve and enhance its landscape and biodiversity, and in doing so encourage and inform visitors to do the same wherever they can elsewhere. Horkesley Park will supply on an ongoing basis interpretation, training and education in this regard, and will provide a sustainable key "gateway" to the Stour Valley, both physically and intellectually.

- **Safeguarding rural heritage**

Horkesley Park will celebrate the region – not only its scenic qualities but also its rich agricultural, cultural and social history through exhibitions and working demonstrations.

Horkesley Park will help to keep alive the “living heritage” of the region and, to enable it, also the traditional skills relating, for example, to Suffolk Punch heavy horses, restoration work and other country crafts.

Major exhibition space will be devoted to the region’s farming through the ages and will show the important role heavy horses played in industry and transportation and how the landscape has been shaped by farming with horse power. It will also demonstrate the effective and important role of travellers working on the land. A studio will be devoted to passing on information about local dialects, country songs, tales and folklore.

Horkesley Park will be committed to preserving the oral, musical, literary and rural heritage of the countryside for future generations.

- **Enhancing habitats to create greater bio-diversity**

Horkesley Park will create new habitats and enhance existing ones, supporting a greater level of bio-diversity and increase the complexity and connectivity of habitat linkages through the establishment of new species-rich grassland, woodland, scrub, hedgerows and the restoration of ponds as well as the establishment of “heritage crops” and livestock husbandry.

Over 50,000 indigenous trees, shrubs and hedging plants will be planted and maintained as natural landscape. The ancient ponds will be restored and maintained and the existing irrigation reservoirs will be naturalised, enabling fly fishing lessons and informal recreation to be enjoyed in places not currently accessible to the general public. Many conservation projects will also be created, including swampland, reptile and bee-keeping projects.

These measures will be beneficial for visitors, the environment and wildlife alike.

- **Helping to safeguard the future of the Suffolk Horse breed (the Suffolk Punch)**

Horkesley Park will create and operate a Suffolk Punch Breeding Centre sufficient in size and capability to significantly increase the population of the Suffolk Horse and by so doing help pull back the breed from near extinction. It will also ensure the continuation of the traditional skills and knowledge essential to support East Anglia’s only indigenous heavy horse breed.

Horkesley Park will provide information and encouragement to others to keep, breed, show and work Suffolk Punches. The working purpose of the heavy horses will be demonstrated on a daily basis throughout Horkesley Park by the Suffolk Punches carrying out traditional working roles, undertaking a variety of tasks - from conveying visitors around the grounds to heritage farming and maintenance of the site and parkland.

□ **Sustainability – helping Colchester become a greener place**

Horkesley Park’s renewable energy centre, with plant room, exhibition areas and viewing gallery will be open to visitors. Horkesley Park will offer a practical demonstration of sustainability encouraging visitors to consider their impact on the environment through stimulating information about energy, climate change, water and travel.

Horkesley Park will be truly sustainable and not only will the design far surpass Government recommendations but the unique “eco centre” will raise awareness of key environmental issues and provide information on ways visitors can implement sustainable measures in their own lives. In this regard Horkesley Park will be a working demonstration and unique education facility.

□ **Apprenticeship Schemes**

Horkesley Park will provide apprenticeships and other training opportunities, in particular, in heavy horse management, general restoration work, landscape gardening, general horticulture, land management, nature conservancy, arts and crafts, catering and tourism.

Links will be forged with local schools, colleges, universities and other educational establishments to provide training and work experience in a wide range of different fields.

Bunting & Sons currently employs several apprentices who are receiving on-site training to obtain NVQ qualifications.

□ **Cultural links to assist in the development of international trade**

The Chinese Garden incorporated in Horkesley Park, at the request of senior members of Essex County Council, will help strengthen cultural links, and in turn trade, between China and the UK, particularly the Province of Jiangsu and the county of Essex, which are twinned.

The authentic Chinese Garden of quality designed by leading experts in China, and costing in the region of £2m, will be a major cultural attraction, the like of which does not exist in the UK.

During the Georgian period the first Chinese Gardens were introduced into England but as very little of them have survived it is exciting and fitting to have one at The Chantry which is also of the Georgian period. Bunting & Sons has spent time in China working with the Chinese garden designers and bearing in mind Bunting & Sons’ operations in the Far East and its horticultural businesses which have spanned almost 200 years, the Chinese garden in Horkesley Park will serve as a shining example of people getting together and exchanging ideas, as well as an intermingling of the representatives of the two cultures.

To many Chinese people a Chinese garden is fundamental to their culture and deeply important to their whole way of life.

The “meeting of the cultures” is important to the understanding of “foreign mentalities” and the Chinese garden will represent a cultural transfer in the best sense of the word. On the one hand it will be proof of the cosmopolitan attitude prevalent in Essex and of the inter-cultural co-operation which is possible at all levels, and, on the other hand, the garden will stand as a symbol for both a deep desire for mutual international understanding and for the enduring friendship between the UK and China. As such it will be a major asset for the County of Essex and in particular, the Borough of Colchester.

□ **Celebration of art of the region**

The Chantry incorporated in Horkesley Park as a new fine art gallery will be devoted to the works of John Constable and his contemporaries, and also a wide range of other leading East Anglian artists, past and present, particularly those having strong connections with the Stour Valley, so that their works can be seen together in a suitable period property and setting, overlooking the Stour Valley and beyond, where many of the works were created or inspired.

Horkesley Park will provide unique opportunities to foster an appreciation of Constables and other works by East Anglian artists. Apart from relatively limited facilities at Flatford, there are very few year-round, all weather facilities in “Constable Country” to inform, absorb, and stimulate visitors about the life and times of John Constable, his contemporaries and others in context of the heritage of the Stour Valley area, which in many cases inspired their paintings. Horkesley Park will help to address this providing facilities, exhibitions and access into the Stour Valley landscape.

□ **Visual impact improvements**

All of the existing buildings on The Nurseries Site (predominantly large dilapidating tomato glasshouse blocks, industrial type buildings and other structures) will be demolished and cleared to make way for the proposed Horkesley Park new buildings. The ground level footprint of the new build is less than half the ground level footprint of the existing buildings. The redevelopment and regeneration proposals make good use of The Nursery Site, all of which is outside the AONB.

The new Horkesley Park buildings will be much more aesthetically pleasing than the current redundant tomato glasshouse blocks, industrial type buildings and other structures (including industrial oil tanks and chimneys) and sympathetic to the surroundings, demonstrating harmony between natural and built environment.

Much careful thought has been given to the design of the new buildings to ensure they are each unique, sustainable, interesting and educational, and suitable for their purpose whilst at the same time being in sympathy with their surroundings. The new buildings will all be exemplar buildings which in themselves will be part of the whole visitor experience.

The Application for The Park and Farmland, and The Chantry is for change of use into the Country Park and Fine Art Gallery respectively - opening up access to private property.

□ **Private investment**

All of the aforementioned benefits will be provided without any draw on the public purse as Horkesley Park will be privately funded.

General

Heritage, conservation and sustainability is at the heart of the proposals for Horkesley Park. The vision for Horkesley Park is to be an outstanding visitor centre devoted to many facets of the English countryside, for the enjoyment and benefit of local people as well as visitors to the areas. With particular emphasis given to “living heritage” and East Anglian rural life – past, present and future – the aspiration is not only to conserve but also to entertain, engage and inform.

All the elements and features of Horkesley Park will be inter-related and will be delivered as a whole to provide a visitor experience which will have broad market appeal, maintain demand and ensure an all year round attraction. This commitment to delivering the whole experience will be included in a s106 Agreement and be a condition/obligation of planning permission being granted.