

Constable countryside on the market for £1.75m

Andrea Collitt

CAMPAIGNERS have called for the National Trust to buy 231 acres of land in Constable Country on sale for £1.75million.

The land, owned by Hall Farm, in Stratford St Mary, features in many of John Constable's works, including one of his most famous, the Dedham Vale.

The site includes 142 acres of water meadows and lowland grass, 90 acres of arable farmland and fishing rights along 1,200m of the River Stour.

Robert Erith, president of the Dedham Vale Society, said he had already

been in contact with the National Trust to inform it the land is up for sale.

He said: "The land on the Essex side was given by my family to the National Trust in the early Fifties and it would be a very nice thing if the National Trust were to own the Suffolk side as well.

"Whether they have the budget and so forth, I don't know. There is very little any landowner could do with it apart from keeping it natural, because it is in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and associated with John Constable, who painted in that part of the country.

"There are a lot of poten-

tial buyers who would be likely to appreciate the sensitivity of the landscape, but if the National Trust were to buy it, it would belong to the nation."

The land is being marketed by Robinson and Hall.

Chris Leney, partner in the firm, said: "Sales of land of this nature and size in the Dedham Vale have been very rare in the past 20 or so years.

"With the added attraction of the land featuring in four or five of Constable's paintings, we anticipate receiving a significant amount of interest.

"We have two or three potential types of buyers.

"We have farmer buyers,



Site: Where the land is located

who might buy it to graze cattle, investor buyers who would see it as an investment for pension funds or other funding, and the third sort, because of its location, who will be interested in Constable himself and the history. Americans seem to have a lot of inter-

est in Constable.

"We have sold a lot to them over the years around there."

At present, the land is used for arable crops and grazing cattle.

The owners of Hall Farm were unavailable to comment.