

Comment & Letters

Constable gallery claim is ridiculous

IF the potential damage to the Dedham Vale AONB and the surrounding area were not so very serious, Kate Bunting's comments about their 'Constable Gallery' would be laughable.

The last Constable sold on the open market was *The Lock* in July 2012 and it went for £22.4million.

The starting price of Constable's major works at auction is £25million and upwards to £50million.

There are no paintings held by public galleries, museums or institutions that can be "lent" to the Bunting's commercial enterprise. There is one painting held by Nayland Church, but one Constable doesn't make an exhibition.

The problem is that unless the paintings on show are impressive, people simply will not come and these are the works that travel the globe for exhibitions that are planned at least five years in advance.

If, in the unlikely event that they are lent at least four paintings from a private collection, the Chantry will need to have a massive amount of work done to meet the needs of the insurers.

As most of the privately owned Constables are held abroad, unless the Buntings or their curator are "on bond" (i.e. known to HMRC), there is a three-year waiting list for this to be granted.

It is imperative the council confirms these costs have been accounted for and indeed included in the business plan that has been held from public scrutiny.

Perhaps Miss Bunting would care to name the paintings?

It is a nice idea, though, and the proper place for a permanent exhibition of this 18th century genius, is an established art space closer to multi-transport links within an urban location. Colchester Council's very own Firstsite would seem to be ideal?

**Frederick Grosch
Great Braxted**

Trust custodians of our countryside

I REFER to your article in last Friday's edition, where Will Pavry is quoted as saying that many other organisations oppose the application for the Stour Valley Visitor Centre at Horkesley Park, not just the Stour Valley Action Group.

These include the Dedham Vale Society, The National Trust, CPRE Essex, the Colne Stour Countryside Association, the Nayland with Wissington Conservation Society, the Dedham Vale AONB & Stour Valley Joint Advisory Committee, the Suffolk Preservation Society & many Parish councils.

It is time the applicant acknowledged these objection from highly respected independent groups and stopped targeting the Stour Valley Action Group as the thorn in their side. To say that "the Stour Valley Action Group has such jaundiced views" is blinkered as to the real level of objection from highly considered individuals representing all these organisations, who have presented the council with well researched reasons for rejecting this development.

Even the council's planning policy department has recommended refusal, as have their own professional experts. The council should trust the views of those genuine custodians of the countryside without turning it into a hugely questionable, unviable, unsustainable commercial venture.

**Katie Romer-Lee, Daisy Green
Groton, Suffolk**