

Westgate-on-Sea Town Council

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Westgate-on-Sea

Kent CT8 8RF

01843 836182



Sir Roger Gale MP  
The Old Forge  
215 Canterbury Road  
Birchington  
Kent  
CT7 9AH

Dear Sir Roger,

**AGRICULTURAL LAND v DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL - REFERENCE OL/TH/20/1400**

Westgate-on-Sea Town Council members thank you for your continued support for a change in the law to protect some of the best and most diverse agricultural land in the country.

We applaud your efforts to secure a moratorium on the development plans for *The Gallops* at Westgate-on-Sea and the development plans for Birchington and Herne Bay, indeed for Kent as a whole.

Anyone who has been involved with the housing allocations for Thanet, first rolled out in 2015, will know the flaws in the proposals and in addition to this we now have the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, Brexit and accelerated climate warming: all of which point to the need for us, as a nation, to strive to become self-sufficient with food production.

Our town council is collaborating with neighbouring parish and town councils to provide a louder voice to central government. A government which appears to be distanced from the realities of future demands on UK farmers and food production.

We understand there are numerous MPs aware of the unwise decision to concrete over top-quality agricultural land, due to the current one-size-fits-all policy for housing development quotas, which is so inappropriate for the unique area of Thanet, with its silt rich soil.

All our members wish to convey to you that we are, as are our neighbouring first-tier councils, in full support of the protection for some of the best and most diverse agricultural land in the country. At Westgate-on-Sea we are keen to know how we can support the parliamentary lobby for a change to the laws on the development of agricultural land.

Thanet has the potential to play a significant role in the production of food over the coming decades. It cannot be right that central government should take such a detrimental and short-sighted view and plan to create 'London-on-Sea' presumably as a quick and profitable quick-fix for the present time, with no thought for the future and the long-term implications of such an ill-considered policy.

As you have recognised, we do not have the means to support hundreds of families from the capital. We are a deprived area, reliant on an economy predominantly fed by our attraction as a tourist destination and as a quiet retirement area.

The nation needs to retain its best and most diverse agricultural land, it needs to protect its environment and provide for those who are vulnerable. Thanet needs protecting and we ask how we

can contribute to the efforts alongside our MPs who recognise the need for a more aware approach for housing allocations and planning proposals. You have long pointed out there are many brown field sites, although not as profitable, they are just as suitable if not more so than the 'bolt on plans' of large developers, who have no connection or understanding of our area. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that if housing needs to be allocated to farmland, lower quality land should be sought. However, this statement does not protect Thanet's agricultural land where there is ONLY top-grade agricultural land. In order to address this anomaly, there need to be immediate changes to the NPPF.

We would like to support this change in the law in any way we can. First-tier local councils are knowledgeable, have a strong collective force, and are united in the need to save one of Thanet's most valuable assets – its considerable ability to support food production both locally and nationally.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Cornford', written in a cursive style.

Cllr Joanna Cornford

Chairman

**On behalf of WESTGATE ON SEA TOWN COUNCIL**