

## Heritage Statement

Neighbourhood Development Planning encourages communities to influence and map the future of their area. It can be a forceful tool in forming part of the statutory development plan (local plan) for the area. It enables appropriate future developments to enhance the environmental, social, and economic needs and possibilities of the area through the identification of assets which need protecting, and the areas which need changing.

The Localism Act 2011 and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) March 2012 (updated June 2019) underline the importance of planning at both the local and neighbourhood level.

A Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) and its Heritage Policies highlight the significance of, and the need to protect, historical assets which have shaped an area, and in the case of Westgate-on-Sea created, through historical development identified by the architecture and use of the land, a highly attractive draw to the Isle of Thanet as a whole, which is currently considered to be a deprived area, despite its attractive coastline and open countryside.

Westgate-on-Sea takes its name from the medieval Westgate Manor and before the 1700s was a simple farming community at the mouth of the Thames Estuary. The farming heritage and its present-day contribution to food production is seriously under threat by building developments. The open spaces of rich agricultural land are, surprisingly, unprotected by legislation despite their considerable contribution to national food production and with climate change in developed countries; the potential to enhance our contribution to national food production with an increased ability to produce a greater variety of crops, grown and distributed directly, so reducing carbon emissions and supporting the global goal of a cleaner environment.

During the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century with the advent of the railway, wealthy construction developers recognised the benefits of sea water bathing and the fresh air of Westgate-on-Sea and created a private estate to provide vacation homes for the aristocracy and upper middle classes of London. Part of the construction process required accommodation for the skilled workers who created the architectural designs commissioned by the city dwellers. Today a large proportion of our heritage is evidenced by the artisan cottages on the south side of the town, many display features which even the best of present-day skilled craftsmen struggle to reproduce, hence their invaluable contribution to both the history and the historic character of the town. A fine example of this 'character' can be seen along the high street with its terraced shops and canopied walkways.

In addition, and beneath the agricultural land in the south-west corner between Westgate-on-Sea and Birchington lies a significant archaeological site, Quex Settlements. An archaeological site provides evidence of past human activity and contributes to the history of place and people, Historic England consider this Settlement substantially important source of knowledge on Roman innovation and lifestyle and have placed it on their at-risk register.

To provide focus for the extensive and important heritage of Westgate-on-Sea a local list has been drawn up.

The importance of heritage cannot be underestimated, it provides a window into the past on lifestyle, habitat and behaviours which have shaped how we live in the present. Thanet's local plan Policy HE03 on Heritage Assets makes it clear that local heritage assets will be identified in a 'local list' as part of the Heritage Strategy.

The local list for Westgate-on-Sea is an extensive selection of the best examples of meaningful buildings and features within the town. It is a publicly accessible guide to the historic landscape of a

locality, providing appropriate information to aid planning decisions within the historic environment. It supports conservation, whilst effecting changes and developments which positively impact on the asset's significance both in the present and for the future.

Westgate-on-Sea has the potential to continue to provide fresh air and open spaces for the wellbeing of all who live in and visit the area. The town is an enduring example of English architecture in a seaside setting with the added benefits of being backed by fertile and productive agricultural land. The potential for Westgate-on-Sea and the surrounding area to become a nationally recognised area of significant heritage and of wellbeing as opposed to being deprived, undervalued, and oversaturated by modern development rather than planned growth.