



Sent via email to:

michael.gove.mp@parliament.uk

cc: Sir Roger Gale MP

cc: Craig Mackinlay MP

11 September 2023

Dear Secretary of State,

Thanet Local Plan - grade one and two agricultural land

The former Conservative leader of this council, Ash Ashbee, wrote to you on March 14th this year regarding the lack of effective protection in national planning policy for grade one and two agricultural land, particularly in the context of the country's growing need for food security. The council is not aware that a reply was ever received to this letter.

The council and its Labour group, then in opposition, both contributed to the consultation on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework asking that protections for agricultural land be strengthened. It is the current Thanet administration's view that the need to protect such land should constitute clear grounds to refuse development applications and be taken into account in decisions to allocate land for housing in future iterations of the district's Local Plan.

I am writing to affirm that the council's position has not changed as a consequence of the May local elections, even though it now has a Labour majority. I have discussed this matter both with local residents' groups and with our two Conservative MPs and we are all of the view that Thanet's exceptionally high quality agricultural land requires such protection going forward.

Our planning committee has previously attempted to protect our agricultural land from development. However, due to government guidelines that do not recognise the importance of agricultural land, our decisions have been overturned at appeal. The last appeal cost Thanet District Council over £65,000, and we were still not permitted to protect our agricultural land.

As Secretary of State, you have the right to determine planning applications, and your decisions are not subject to appeal. We are requesting that you exercise your statutory right to determine any future appeals regarding agricultural site developments in Thanet, especially in relation to opportunistic applications on land not allocated for housing in our local plan, to allow us to protect this land for generations to come and for future national use in terms of food security.

Cllr Rick Everitt
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I would respectfully request that a reply is provided to this letter, addressing the above requests and former Cllr Ashbee's letter of March 14th in order that residents and councillors are better able to understand the government's position, and whether it will choose to protect agricultural land in practice, as this is a very important issue for many Thanet residents, and indeed nationally. Thank you for your attention.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rick Everitt", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cllr Rick Everitt
Leader of the Council