

27th March 2025

Dear Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer,

We are writing in response to claims made in your editorial for The Telegraph on Wednesday, 12th March regarding housing development in Ebbsfleet.

You stated that plans to build over 15,000 homes were blocked due to the presence of the distinguished jumping spider, suggesting that conservation efforts are unnecessarily restricting development. However, this is an oversimplification of the issue, and we would like to clarify the facts.

The vast majority of the 15,000 homes are still progressing, with thousands already built. The only area affected by wildlife concerns is part of the Swanscombe Peninsula, a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), where 1,300 homes were proposed. Contrary to your claim, the distinguished jumping spider was not found in the area earmarked for these homes but in other parts of the SSSI.

The Swanscombe Peninsula supports an extraordinary range of rare and endangered species, including over 1,700 species of invertebrates, nationally scarce botanical species such as the man orchid, and UK Red List bird species like the nightingale, grasshopper warbler, cuckoo, and breeding marsh harrier. It was designated an SSSI for its national importance in terms of plants, geology, birds, and invertebrates - a wealth of biodiversity that deserves protection.

The suggestion that conservation protections are blocking necessary housing development is misleading and unhelpful. We must stop framing nature and growth as opposing forces. Sustainable development can and should integrate environmental considerations, ensuring that new communities are liveable and ecologically sustainable.

Nature underpins economic prosperity. A currently degraded asset, which if restored, can contribute to UK nature and climate targets while improving public health, resilience, and quality of life.


Overdevelopment in this already densely built-up area would also deprive residents of much-needed green spaces, essential for both mental well-being and physical health. Beyond the impact on people, the destruction of marshland poses a serious environmental risk. These habitats are not just crucial for biodiversity, they also act as natural carbon sinks, helping to absorb CO<sub>2</sub> and improve air quality- in a borough that already suffers from some of the poorest air quality in Kent.

Kent Wildlife Trust and our NGO colleagues remain committed to working constructively with policymakers, developers, and conservationists to find balanced solutions that meet housing needs while safeguarding our natural environment. Rather than pursuing unsustainable expansion, efforts should focus on building the right homes, in the right places, to benefit the people of Dartford.

We would be delighted if you would accept our invitation to meet us on-site at the Swanscombe Peninsula to discuss how we can collaborate on a way forward that benefits both nature and the need for new homes.

We urge you to consider this broader context and support a development strategy that integrates and respects the natural environment.

Your Sincerely,



Chief Executive,  
Kent Wildlife Trust,  
Evan Bowen-Jones



Chief Executive Officer,  
The Wildlife Trusts,  
Craig Bennett



Chief Executive Officer,  
Wildlife and Countryside Link,  
Dr Richard Benwell



Save Swanscombe,  
Cllr Laura Edie,  
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Wildlife and  
Countryside

