

Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP  
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government  
Department for Communities and Local Government  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London  
SW1E 5DU

31 October 2012

Dear Secretary of State,

**RE: ARLINGTON HOUSE, MARGATE**

In my Portas Review to the Prime Minister, I gave 28 recommendations which, if implemented, will go a long way to revitalizing many of our high streets.

The Government's response to my review included running a trial of my recommendations in pilot towns. Margate is one of these Portas Pilots and I have spent a great deal of time in the town.

Recently, I was made aware of a proposed development, to build a Tesco Superstore on the seafront in Margate, and feel compelled to write to you, as the Minister with overall responsibility for this area of policy.

A common concern raised by a number of the Portas Pilot towns was the pressure and competition posed by out-of-town and edge-of-town supermarkets. I have spent a good quantity of time in Margate over the summer and it is clear to me that any out-of-town, or edge-of-town supermarket proposal will seriously undermine the town centre regeneration efforts.

In the present economic climate consumers are increasingly having to make choices where and how they shop, a new supermarket can dominate a locality a draw footfall away from town centres. The indirect, cumulative, and knock-on effects of large edge-of-town or out-of-town supermarkets are not being taken seriously enough by decision makers, even though it is understood that such impacts are required to be taken into account by planning authorities.

I was pleased that the Government recognised a presumption in favour of town centre development in the National Planning Policy Framework, but in the Portas Review, I recommended 'exceptional sign-off' for all new out-of-town developments. My recommendation was based on a real concern that local councils have neither funds, nor the legal clout to stop undesirable out-of-town developments from progressing.

In Margate I am now witnessing the realisation of these fears.

The stage is set for long-term regeneration in this Kentish Coastal Town. My work in the town through its status as a Portas Pilot Town, and the continued efforts of the Town Team, and very active and dedicated local community have created a real buzz in Margate. The number of empty shops has gone down from 28 to 15 since we started our work.

On top of this, investment in the newly opened Turner Contemporary Art Gallery has paved the way for Margate to return to its former glory as a tourist destination; receiving over half a million visitors in the first year compared to the forecast of 156,000.

Your recent confirmation of the compulsory purchase of Dreamland Amusement Park, the Grade II listed building was very welcome and will continue this process to reinvigorate visitor interest. The town's regeneration team are dynamic and passionate about regenerating an attractive and historic town centre.