

## **Expression of Opposition to RiverOak Strategic Partnership's DCO**

### **David Drozdowski, Margate Resident**

I put it to the UK government that it is not romantic, subjective, theoretical ideas about how "This time, Manston Airport can make it" that should be considered but common sense, face value-based observations. In light of Manston Airports past failures, RSP's lack of corroboration of their lofty predictions or even experience, and Thanet District Council's economic and environmental records, it seems obvious that the MOST needed and viable proposal is not RiverOak Strategic Partnership.

If somebody prefers RiverOak Strategic Partnership's proposal, confirmation bias can then find them ways in which a new airport plan is not completely absurd or entirely unsustainable. It's not that it's an irrelevant or irrational proposal. The issue, however, is that there are many ways in which the RSP DCO is an inferior proposal for Thanet economically, environmentally, or ethically.

#### **1. Economically and Environmentally Inferior**

Even a successful airport would bring in some business and tax revenue as well as long-term jobs to Thanet, but what would bring far more income into Thanet is 3000+ homes, each household having a VERY conservative average £20,000 or more annual income, which would bring a £60,000,000+ influx of annual income to Thanet (more likely £100,000,000 or more) from wherever people move and to wherever they commute for business and employment. This would naturally create more businesses and jobs in Thanet, not to mention the thousands of houses' council tax revenue to TDC, meaning RiverOak Strategic Partnership simply has an inferior proposal economically.

The fact that TDC Councillors support RiverOak Strategic Partnership is one of the best argument against it. In addition to what others have submitted about RSP's inexperience and tendency to exaggerate the potential and morph their objectives and structure, here are a few simple decision-making examples of how TDC cannot be trusted to partner with a developer:

A. By routing Ramsgate, Broadstairs, and Margate-bound, etc. traffic around Cliffsend, even adding an expensive system of traffic lights and traffic slowing methods, TDC have demonstrated that they prefer to spend more and waste thousands of gallons of motorists' fuel every day, unnecessarily adding more air pollution to the environment, than simply to allow people to drive more directly where they want to go. This correlates with their entire disregard for the amount of unnecessary air and noise pollution that would result from another Manston Airport.

B. TDC has a long enough waiting list internally for social housing, and yet they do not put their foot down and tell London borough councils no, there is a non-negotiable 3-year residence requirement for people seeking social housing in Thanet, not even negotiable for somebody who grew up in Thanet and simply lived out of the country for a while. This is an ongoing issue based on practical decisions with no integrity associated with them, so it is not a council we can trust to adhere to their own rules, let alone to follow external guidelines.

C. TDC is contributing £2m of the total cost to Kent County Council of £26 for a parkway station that would only shave off 1 minute of commuters' journey times to London. If this may be a profitable endeavour, that is an investment decision for Southeastern Railways, not a district or county council. This district council cannot manage its own money and mind its own business well.

D. TDC is refurbishing their offices at a cost of £3m, during a time of tax rate increases, even while they have a £1.8m budget deficit. There are simple ways to handle their finances better, which they don't pursue, so they should not be entrusted with any new partnerships.

## 2. Ethically Inferior

A. Market forces have determined legally, regardless of subjective debates about the events surrounding its transition, that Stone Hill Park owns the land on which Manston Airport used to be located. In addition to the implication that what has happened privately is what serious investors consider the most needed and profitable development, private ownership of land and property, without state interference, is a cornerstone of Western civilisation. One of the easiest ethical arguments against the Developmental Consent Order is the fact that neither RSP nor TDC owns the land upon which they wish to develop. It is entirely irrelevant ethically what it used to be and what entity or individuals used to own it. In the United Kingdom, if I approached somebody and said I wanted to buy their business, car, home, or land, regardless of the amount I offer or how much community support I had, it would be up to the private owners whether any of their stuff is up for sale. Likewise, it cannot be up to local councillors or residents what the current legal landowners do with their land, and it is dangerous and weak to argue that it should be seized for an inferior proposal.

B. Thanet and indeed the UK as a whole need more homes for people more than airports. Of course arguments can be made in favour of another airport (again, by those who have already decided that's what they want and are therefore simply building arguments to support their presupposition). Arguments hardly need to be looked for in favour of homes, showing up RSP's DCO as inadequate. The Secretary of State for housing and communities has already told the leader of this council that TDC has failed to plan for and deliver the homes people need in Thanet. There are other housing developments ongoing in Thanet, as there are elsewhere, but that is what Thanet needs more of, and it is grossly unethical to favour a hopefully, possibly viable airport that would reduce people's quality of life via air and noise pollution over a definitely viable scheme that would help abate a housing crisis.