

With the sale of the land previously owned by SHP to RSP currently underway, there has been a resurgence of the unpleasantness previously experienced by those of us objecting to the Applicant's plans for a new cargo hub on the site of the former Manston airport.

You may remember my daughter Harriet's submissions (you will recall that she taped a video recording for the Examining Authority, at the Oddfellows Hall hearings earlier in the proceedings).

Harriet is learning-disabled to a significant degree and suffers [REDACTED], an unpleasant life-long auto-immune condition which can make her day to day life very difficult at times.

Harriet is extremely intelligent and well-read. She is a remarkable young lady who copes very well with her many problems.

She is learning to be independent, and the comfort and privacy of her little flat on the High Street in Ramsgate, just around the corner from Chatham House School, represents safety and comfort in a difficult life.

She has been taunted when out in public and, on more than one occasion, actively bullied.

Harriet regularly posts on Facebook, as do her friends. It is an important and easy forum for people with learning difficulties who seek out and enjoy social interaction at a distance, when face to face interaction can be stressful and sometimes intimidating.

She is adamant in her opposition to the airport and the disruption it will cause her and all of Ramsgate.

Yesterday she posted on Facebook a news article relating to the sale, stating that she hoped it didn't mean the airport would now go ahead.

Almost immediately, she was targeted by supporters of the airport, who told her she should move, if she didn't like the idea of the airport.

Harriet removed her post, because none of those who commented was a Facebook friend of hers, but the damage had already been done.

Her condition makes it inevitable that she takes things at face value, and the oppressive nature of these comments worried her and hurt her deeply.

They would be offensive to anyone. We have all had to put up with them, if we dare to raise our heads above the Manston parapet on social media; it is only when they are directed at someone vulnerable that we come to realise how unpleasant they really are.

This approach has been, and continues to be, fed by the promise of seemingly endless jobs for local people at the airport. The belief that Thanet's ills will all be reversed by the development of this cargo hub is, I believe, at the root of the level of support for the Applicant's plans.

The Applicant has delighted in obscure language when any negatives, such as night flights, are under examination, stretching the elasticity of the English language to extremes in an effort to hide the true effect of the QC count for which they have applied.

However, with the support of the local MPs, they have promised the impossible when it comes to local jobs, and people believe them. The understanding that "local" means "within a 90 mile radius" is not clarified. Neither is "catalytic jobs" or other similar "puff" phrases.

Instead people have been encouraged both by the Applicant and the local MPs to believe that anyone who was stupid enough to move to an area near an airport cannot now complain if that airport (marked "permanently closed" on local searches since 2014) re-opens to the detriment of their health and well-being, their finances, their life-plans and their children's education.

No effort has been made by the Applicant to clarify the impact or to promise to lessen it. In fact quite the reverse, with inadequate noise contours and out of date statistics.

No effort has been made by the Applicant or the local MPs to engage with their constituents in an honest and straightforward manner.

Instead the politics of division and derision have been positively encouraged. The language used is threatening and unpleasant, as Harriet has now found to her cost.

As an opponent of the application, I have been and am still vociferous in my criticism of the Applicant and its ways. I believe Mr Freudmann is a sociopath who has ceased to have any concern for those affected by his actions.

I do not, however, routinely insult his supporters. I believe they have been badly misled and that this is continuing to happen. But this is through no fault of their own. They have been made promises and they believe them because they want to believe them. This is human nature.

It is a pity that such a poor application ever proceeded to Examination, because the divisions it has caused will not end with the end of the Examination and will continue to damage this already underprivileged corner of England for many years to come.

I trust that very sound and very clear reasons will be given at the end of the process after the Secretary of State for Transport has deliberated and made his or her decision, so that we can all understand and have it made clear, in simple terms, which argument has won the day, and why.