

Personal Statement

We have lived on [REDACTED] for 35 years, the airport was then RAF Manston. We had no issues with the RAF until the 1990's when began a gradual running down of the RAF base and the increase of commercial cargo, in 1998 the base was sold in its entirety for commercial use to the Wiggins Group. No planning permission was ever obtained and it operated on a 106 agreement (of uninterrupted use).

During that time until the closure of the airport in May 2014, our whole family (5 adults) had endured cargo planes (that were banned from all UK airports), emergency landings, pilot training (constant taking off and landing all day from British Airways and KLM), unbearable noise, keeping windows closed (in the height of summer months), pollution causing migraines and sleep deprivation, planes landing at unscheduled times (usually in the early hours of the morning, for example 3am). As we were now under the flight path for landings and take offs, with no public consultation, and at the end of the planes' descent before it hit the runway, from the upstairs windows you could wave to the pilot in the cockpit, they were that low over our houses.

What RSP are proposing would be a total devastation to our lives, our homes, our health and the area that we live in, Ramsgate. This proposal if granted, compared to what we've endured over the years, would be catastrophic.

We would also like to complain about the short period of time of 28 days to submit our comments to the secretary of state for the re-determination of the DCO.

An extension was requested but denied. The secretary of state had a year to come to his decision that resulted in it being quashed in court. We had 28 days to respond on a complex decision.

National Infrastructure Project

RSP are claiming that a re-opened Manston for commercial cargo operations would be of benefit to Thanet and indeed the whole of the UK. This is extremely questionable considering Manston is 73 miles from London, 30 miles from the closest motorway (the beginning of the M2), 42 miles to the nearest point of the M20 and approximately 58 miles to the start of the M25, and even longer to the Dartford tunnel. Manston is not strategically placed for transportation of cargo to all destinations in the UK.

RSP claim that they can make Manston financially viable and successful, this coming from Tony Freudmann, the front man for this company, who has presided over Manston's failure to turn a profit from 1994 until 2005 after which he was dismissed from the Wiggins Group/Planestation.

The COVID pandemic has had an impact on the aviation sector in both cargo and passenger, financially. All the main airports in the UK will be fighting to survive and it will take a number of years before, if at all, they will return to pre-covid figures.

They will all have to adapt to the new Net Zero target and that requires money.

RSP's vision for Manston as a National Infrastructure Project pre-covid was unrealistic, it is now unviable!

The Secretary of State needs take the recommendation of the Planning Inspectorate that it didn't qualify as a National Infrastructure Project due to need, as there was adequate further provision at the UK's existing airports should cargo movement increase in the future.

Benefits of the Proposed Development

RSPs proposals for the former airport will have a huge negative impact on both the economic and environment front for Thanet. This massive 600-acre brownfield site was recommended by officers in the draft local plan for allocation for housing and mixed use development and rejected by the now new council. At a time when councils are strapped for cash the tax receipts would be of huge benefit to Thanet District Council and the area as a whole.

The local plan has since been adopted and the brownfield site has been temporarily allocated for aviation use pending the result of the DCO.

The houses that were due to be built on the site have now been re-allocated to green belt land. We, the residents of Thanet need good quality homes and jobs, the council needs money from the ratepayers, not an airport with limited jobs and polluting planes damaging health and the environment.

We would also like to bring to the Secretary of State's attention the Vattenfall extension of the Thanet Offshore Wind Farm application which was rejected on June 2 2020, due to it not being in accordance with EN-3 policies relevant to shipping and ports as it does not reduce the increased navigational risk of ALARP.

The Government listened to the planning inspectorate to not grant consent on this application due to the risk to the shipping industry. Even though it would have gone some way to improving the climate and would've benefited Thanet in becoming self sufficient in green energy and creating jobs, but decided to ignore the Planning Inspectorate's recommendation to refuse consent on the Manston DCO saying there was no justification to approve a new cargo airport due to need, the climate and the risk to Ramsgate.

Funding

The total absence of a credible financial case from RSP is extremely worrying. They have repeatedly side-stepped questions regarding their financing of the project, a point that the planning inspectorate raised, twice, and Thanet District Council when RSP, previously called Riveroak tried to acquire the site by partnering with TDC via a CPO and failed to do so, twice! We have now had 4 independent reports saying that aviation is not viable at Manston and 3 of those 4 reports directly challenge the Azimuth findings.

There is also a question of concern regarding their compensation scheme for blight. They have said that a 1000 properties will be affected by their proposals and therefore compensation will be offered to those properties only, they seem to have omitted all the properties on Nethercourt Estate directly under the flight path and the town of Ramsgate with its population of tens of thousands of people.

Safety and Pollution

RSP claim that there is uncertainty regarding the health effects of NO2. NO2 pollution has already been linked to the premature deaths of over 23,000 people in the UK per annum, children are particularly vulnerable. The WHO classified NO2 as a human Carcinogen linked to lung cancer, asthma and cardiovascular illnesses.

For those of us directly under the flight path this is hugely worrying, and for Ramsgate as a whole disastrous! In a civilised society surely the health and well being of both its people and children must be paramount.

RSP have very cleverly proposed 10,000 – 17,000 flights per annum, which is below the 18,000 threshold set by ATM which requires a public safety zone. This is totally disgraceful and unacceptable as comparably sized airports in the UK have this public safety zone in place regardless of air traffic movement.

Climate

With Covid and the Climate emergency being very dominant and important headlines today, many aspects of our lives have come into question.

Aviation has borne the brunt of this in both cargo and passenger. Covid brought a halt to international travel and people felt the benefit of this in breathing in cleaner air and the whole world saw a decrease in pollution levels.

Pre-covid, Thanet District Council voted to pass a Climate Emergency motion and the Government voted to bring in measures to bring Co2 emissions to Net Zero by 2050. Which resulted in the UK now enshrining in law to slash emissions by 78% by 2035 and the sixth carbon budget will incorporate the UK's share of international aviation and shipping emissions for the first time.

We are being told we must change the way we live or face climate devastation, which we are already feeling the impact of, due to earlier hot summers and either warmer and wetter winters. Having electric cars, travel less, use British made goods, less imports and no gas boilers are some of the adjustments we will have to make.

How can we justify the building of a new cargo airport in the wake of climate devastation, when Aviation is one of the most damaging contributors to the climate. The Government should be seeking alternatives to airfreight by using rail and sea, these two sectors are already looking at and contributing to the Net Zero target. There is no viable plan anywhere to turn Airports green and it will be extremely costly to make all planes electric.

RSP mentioned that a newly reopened Manston will be a totally green airport, but have provided no concrete evidence to support this. They have said they will contribute to this "green airport" by transporting the cargo from the planes to London by using electric barges from the now redundant Ramsgate Port (which only serves shipping via the Channel) via the Thames estuary to London, but have provided no evidence of costs, feasibility, how the port would be adapted for this as it has only had roll on roll off ferries, surely Sheerness is better suited for this, like Manston, Ramsgate port is not strategically placed for an operation of this size, or how this will help to reduce pollution levels from the cargo planes? This will only provide reduced pollution on the roads.

Conclusion

In the 7 years that Manston has been closed, our health has improved, our sleep is undisturbed at night and our worries over public safety from these cargo planes thundering over our houses day and night has diminished. Ramsgate has seen a boom in tourism, more companies are investing in the area and families are choosing to move to Ramsgate. If RSP see their proposals come to fruition, Ramsgate and its residents, to put it bluntly, will cease to exist!

Since the Secretary of State approved the DCO on the 9th July 2020, it was challenged with a judicial review on the legality of the decision to approve it against his own Planning Inspectorate advice, it resulted in the Secretary of State pulling the decision in December 2020 and subsequently being quashed by a high court judge on 15th February 2021 due to not processing adequate justification. It's unbelievable that we are revisiting this again, when the stated benefits and need by RSP for the DCO of Manston Airport has declined due to Brexit, our free trade agreement with the EU, the impact of Covid and the Climate leading to reducing our carbon footprint by producing and manufacturing more home grown goods, which the British Government has advocated.

Submission by

Mr Francis & Mrs Yvonne McNamara

