

Thanet Green Party submission to the SOS - July 2021

The Thanet Green Party strongly objects to the proposal by RSP to re-open Manston Airport as a Cargo Hub, as we fear it would do severe damage to the area if implemented.

AIR POLLUTION

Aviation fuel is similar to diesel fuel, but diesel car engines have filters which remove up to 80% of particulates and inject AdBlue to mitigate against NOx pollution, not to mention silencers to reduce noise. A Boeing 747 burns roughly 1 gallon (approximately 4 litres) of fuel every second or 5 gallons of fuel per mile cruising. 1,000 lbs of fuel (150 gallons) are used in simply getting it off the ground. This is around half a year's motoring for the average car. All cars will become battery powered over the next 22 years, whilst aircraft will continue to seriously pollute the environment. 17,000 flights a year would therefore increase pollution far more than any road traffic.

The EU predicts that NOx levels will increase by 43% in 20 years and that air pollution is the biggest environmental threat. A recent Unicef report on the effect of pollution on children shows "lasting and devastating health impacts - impacts that will last their entire lives - from stunted lung growth to asthma to brain developments". A report on air pollution from China recounted that it was the cause of loss of intelligence and increased mental illness in children and damaged the intelligence of those over 64 years old. It concluded that pollution could have important consequences for students who have to take crucial entrance exams on polluted days. A recent study by Columbia University and the University of California on air pollution found that the incidence of asthma and respiratory diseases was on average 17% higher on those within 6.2 miles of an airport, and cardiac problems 9% higher, with the elderly and young being particularly at risk. Particulate matter can penetrate the body and cause asthma, bronchitis and damage the brain. However Thanet District Council does not at the moment measure PM2.5, so no baseline exists to assess against.

NOISE POLLUTION

Munich Airport in Germany was moved to a new site in 1992, and a study made into the effect of noise upon children in schools situated under the old and new airport sites. Previously, students in the latter had scored significantly higher than their peers. But, once the airport had moved, the results were reversed: "Among the perceptual and cognitive tasks, long-term memory and mastery of a difficult German word list was impaired in the aircraft noise group at the new airport, and was improved in the formerly noise exposed group at the old airport".

Numerous studies on the effects of aircraft noise have shown that noise at night disturbs sleep: causing stress hormones which can affect the immune system, the cardiovascular system, increase asthma, hypertension and strokes. The Lancet also found reading levels and comprehension fell in children when noise increased. The World Health Organisation recommends that noise at night time should not exceed 40db. The Government state that noise levels of 51db during the day and 45db at night are "noticeable and intrusive". RSP have allocated a mere £4,000 for noise insulation, destined only for houses subjected to over 63db. To put it into context, a Boeing 737 has been registered at 90db 1.6km away from landing. However a noise monitor at Clarendon House School which is 3.5km from the runway regularly measured over 90db with peaks of over 100db when Manston airport was previously operational. There are approximately 2,250 pupils in 4 schools within 3.5km of the airfield and under the flightpath, where flight heights are at or below 200m.

IMPACT ON THE AREA

Thanet is a deprived area, where the health of the population is already a problem. However, the area is improving with tourism increasing and more affluent people moving down from London.

When the airport was previously in operation, there were at least two incidents of the vortex from an aircraft removing tiles from roofs, and fuel has been witnessed being dumped over Clarendon House School. The Manston Airfield site is designated as being a Brown field site. The present owners have plans to build between 2,500 houses and 4,000 houses, and were part of the initial Draft Local Plan. However, a change in Thanet District Council has resulted in these houses now being re-allocated to prime agricultural land, and without a suitable infrastructure to support them.

There are built up areas within 1.4km and 4.3km around the flightpath with 40,000 Ramsgate residents. Including the surrounding villages, and 38,500 inhabitants in Herne Bay, there are therefore around 100,000 people who will be directly subjected to extremities of both noise and pollution.

The Sandwich and Pegwell Bay National Nature Reserve is a little over 1.5kms, with six other conservation sites within 10 kms from the runway; all of which will suffer from the damaging effects of air pollution and noise.

CONCLUSION

Over a 15 year period, three attempts have been made to make Manston a commercial success, and all have resulted in large financial losses. RiverOak in their various guises has attempted to engage both Labour and UKIP administrations in Thanet District Council in a CPO, but their plans have been rejected as being unsound. There have also been six reports by aviation experts as to the viability of Manston as an airport, all reporting that the site is unsuitable. It is therefore clear that any attempt to open the airport would fail, but by then there would be irretrievable damage inflicted upon this historic and beautiful area.