

9th July 2021

Unique Reference: 20013938

Dear Sir/Madam

I read with dismay that once again, the residents of Ramsgate have been called upon to comment on 'what has changed' since 2019 in order for the SoS to make a decision whether to grant RSP permission to build a freight hub at the Manston site, an old airfield that has failed to succeed as a commercial business on three occasions, closing just over 7 years ago. I was relieved and agreed with the Planning Inspectorate's original decision to refuse the DCO and I still feel this is the correct stance. I would also like to state that like many residents in our town, I will support any further JR challenges if required in order to make sure our area is not blighted with the consequences of a poor government decision to allow this development to proceed.

As a B & B owner and resident of Ramsgate, I have not read any compelling evidence of need for this Development Consent Order to be approved, either nationally or locally since the submission was made by RSP.

There has however been significant changes within the air industry since the RSP submission which surely negates the need even further particularly when you consider;

- current operating airports vying for trade which they certainly won't want to share with a 'new kid on the block' that's situated in geographically-challenged Thanet,
- the approval of Heathrow's expansion and
- the Climate Emergency announcements and pledges both nationally and locally (a recent carbon budget stated that there can be no more than a 25% air traffic increase between 2018 and 2050 to meet net zero requirements which I believe has already been allocated to existing airports)

I would go as far to say that the very idea of granting permission for a freight airport right now (or ever!) is the antithesis of how to respond to a Climate Emergency. It is not going to support what we as a nation and a district signed up for when you consider the carbon footprint reduction we are trying to achieve, the flora, wildlife and marine life we are trying to protect and not least, the health of our planet and the health of the residents of Ramsgate and Herne Bay which will be most affected in the short and long term if this development is given the green light. I often wonder what David Attenborough or Greta Thunberg would think about this plan!

Thanet certainly needs jobs but having read the suite of documents presented by RSP, I see no real promise for meaningful work opportunities and when you consider that the last passenger airline closed with less than 150 staff, many of whom worked part time at minimum wage, I cannot fathom how RSP's indicative employment figures are calculated, especially when you consider how automation is increasingly favoured over human input, particularly in the freight airline industry. I do feel that this needs to be thoroughly scrutinised and RSP need to justify their, in my opinion, questionable figures for direct employment, let alone indirect.

The irony isn't lost on me that whilst Thanet District Council is submitting bids to develop a state-of-the-art green energy hub and training centre at our port along with boosts to our tourism industry at the harbour we are at the same time, having to submit objections for a freight hub! This incredibly important bid also includes a training boutique hotel and restaurants, coupled with links for a training kitchen in Newington and the town centre, both of which are considered Lower Super Output Areas. These potentially life changing opportunities applied for in our Levelling Up Fund bid offer meaningful employment with a real chance for progression and making a difference to the area and potentially the planet. Imagine, Ramsgate's new green energy centre could be the site where world-changing

innovations are designed! I doubt this would happen if we have a freight hub and they live locally as sleep is an essential ingredient for brain function! Both the harbour and port are under the most likely flight path so why would the government consider siting an air and noise-polluting industry just a few kilometres away from a heavily populated area with a fast growing tourism sector that has the potential for a green energy innovation centre and is trying its best to rise from the doldrums of coastal deprivation? There is no need to destroy this already struggling area any further with a contradiction as great as a freight airline, an area that the government has deemed a Category One area (most in need of 'levelling-up').

We have been lucky enough to have recently been awarded some government funding to support the future of our High Street (£2.7 million is a lot to us and we will make the most of it with 2 great schemes to develop an artists' studio hub in the heart of our town centre for our flourishing creative sector and improvements to the pedestrian areas and highway to encourage people into our town centre from our very popular Royal Harbour). This money will help strengthen the gradually changing fortunes of our town and it would be a great shame if we are thrown backwards again if the wrong decision is made here.

Whilst our geography hasn't changed, it is worth reiterating that there is no need to build a commercial airline in a geographical location that is almost out on a limb and is still surrounded by water on 3 sides, still has relatively poor connections for road transport (no motorway) and still would be a considerable journey in often rough seas if cargo was transported by sea (there is a good reason why the 2 largest offshore wind farms in the UK are located around the Isle of Thanet, namely because it can be extremely windy and often too precarious for boats to venture out in). Again, although there has been no real change since 2019, the people of Ramsgate and Herne Bay still deserve a right to sleep and with the threat of consistent disruptions from late night and early morning 'shoulder' flights, let alone the potential night flights (in order to achieve 17000 ATMs, how else can this target be met other than to allow night flights?), this will be catastrophic to our physical and mental wellbeing. There is also no need to further reduce the below average educational attainments of our younger residents by subjecting them to potentially dozens of daily interruptions as descending planes fly over many of our schools that have the misfortune of being under the flight paths.

There is no need to further risk the health of an already poor area which has a lower mortality rate than the national average and a higher rate of many chronic conditions including heart and lung disease.

There is a need to create job opportunities that the people of Thanet and beyond could be proud of and aspire to at school and with further education and training. There is a need to continue to develop our burgeoning tourist and leisure industry which already employs nearly 9000 people within a 10 mile radius and contributes over £319 million to the economy, with growth of over £40million in the 2 years prior to April 2020. This need can be significantly addressed in a successful Levelling-up Funding bid but equally, these foundations we are trying to build upon could be demolished irreparably if this DCO is approved.

This submission may not be the most technical or eloquent but at least you have got this far and not had to read the words Brexit or Covid! Please take heed of the independent advisors and planning inspectors who can offer the evidence to help make the right choice which is that there is no need for a new freight hub in Thanet or indeed, the UK.

Yours faithfully

Rebekah Smith

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