

The key requirement that should be expected of any investment project is that it achieves the outputs expected of it. I agree with the Planning Inspectorate and ARUP that the likelihood of achieving what RSP expect to achieve is unlikely and that the proposal to reopen Manston as an airport is therefore doomed to failure.

I understand the wish of the many who have written that there is significant deprivation within Thanet and that better and more interesting jobs are needed in the area. That makes a project like the reopening of Manston airport sound very attractive. Unfortunately, the likelihood of the airport proposal delivering those jobs is remote.

Why am I so certain about that? If you look at the location of warehousing and industrial production in the UK, the greatest number of businesses in these categories are to be found in the Midlands.

Given that Manston has direct land contact only to the south, and there's not much land to the south, and west, why would any exporter want to direct his merchandise through an airport based at the extreme southeast of the UK? The road infrastructure from East Kent in any case is entirely inadequate to cope with significant numbers of lorries trying to get to the Midlands. Faced with higher UK transport costs from their greater ability to fit into just-in-time schedules, what chance of viability can Manston airport really have?

RSP has simply assumed that by having an airport that could focus on freighter aircraft, they could gain a high level of market share, while ignoring the fact that at present airlines have large volumes of belly hold freight space available on planes that land nearer to the main UK warehouses. The submitted business plan takes no account of reality and suggests that the directors of the company have little knowledge of the requirements for a profitable airport operation. This is hardly surprising when the achievements of the proposed airport director are considered. These do not suggest much evidence of good and successful management at either the Manston site or other sites in Germany or Italy, where he has worked previously.

I am convinced that should the reopening of Manston airport be allowed, the project would fail, and that failure would exacerbate concerns about the availability of good jobs in the locality. This is not the kind of outcome that builds Thanet back better! Nor does the plan contribute anything in relation to improving pollution levels in the UK. To improve the present pollution levels there needs to be a reduction in pollution outputs and an increase in tree planting to absorb carbon dioxide already in the atmosphere. The idea that the expansion of aircraft use coupled with offsetting that pollution against tree planting can have no effect on reducing pollution, since the net pollution level from these two activities remains the same.

Instead of using the site for a polluting airport that would generate no economic benefit, or for housing, it would make much more sense to take advantage of the high-quality natural light in the area, that is already utilised by Thanet Earth for its tomato, cucumber and pepper business. The site seems ideal for factory farms that could produce other normally imported crops year-round. Instead of relying on imports, the required products could be grown in factories on the Manston site, while

generating electricity from solar panels on the factory roofs. Import substitution, not only in the agricultural sector, thus could provide an excellent way of avoiding the imports that RSP seeks to bring in via the suggested airport and a more certain way of generating the quality jobs that Thanet requires.

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