



From: GALE, Roger [REDACTED] >
Sent: 28 October 2021 14:28
To: DFT Ministers [REDACTED]
Cc: GALE, Roger [REDACTED]
Subject: Manston Airport - Attention The Minister of State
Importance: High

Dear Andrew

Thank you for your e-mail of 21st October and attachment.

As you know I have been campaigning for many years, as the constituency MP, for Manston Airport to reopen . Manston has a century-long legacy as an airfield and as a functioning airport and there are potentially thousands of much needed high-skill jobs that will be created in one of the most deprived areas of the country when the airport is re-built and re-opened and flights recommence..

I read the Arup draft report into `need` that was commissioned by your department and published on 21 October with dismay and disbelief. It contains many errors, not least the omission of a whole chapter on climate change! Its superficial treatment of air freight reveals a lack of knowledge of that sector and in particular it mischaracterises the applicant's case and ignores the significant amount of freight trucked to and from mainland European airports. The `assessment` repeats figures made by airport opponents, even when these have been shown to be wrong in the applicant's first redetermination consultation response, while appearing to doubt the applicant's case without any supporting original evidence. Elected representatives at Parliamentary, County and District levels were not consulted during Arup`s `assessment` .

The report's conclusions are generally either unsupported assertions or based upon an unquestioning regurgitated adoption of opponents' submissions. Those whose second-hand opinions have been cited include the author of a hostile report

prepared to serve the needs of the then-owner of the airfield, Stone Hill Park, and a wholly unrepresentative tiny local 'action group'. The views of Manston airport's active supporters, who are well-informed and number many hundreds, receive no heed. Most importantly, the Arup draft entirely ignores several aspects of need such as those relating to economic benefit that you set out in your original and well-founded decision letter. To conclude that 'there have been no significant or material changes to policy or the quantitative need case for the proposed development since July 2019' when the world, and the UK's place in it, has changed out of all recognition since that date, beggars belief.

Perhaps the most depressing part of the report is its lack of ambition and its assumption that the future of air freight will be similar to the ten years before the pandemic, that GDP is going to fall and that the demand for air freight will consequently reduce - talking down the UK in that way must be anathema to us all. This project, which is entirely in line with Government Transport policy, Global Britain aspirations and 'Levelling Up' targets will in fact realise the opportunities that a truly global Britain in possession of trade deals with a large number of distant countries will bring and offers the prospect of contributing to an increase in GDP. Instead, the report ignores the needs of a rapidly-changing air freight industry and the hundreds of millions of pounds worth of investment available to bring the project to a successful fruition. Are we really saying that the 'consultants' are right and that Manston's hard-nosed financial backers are wrong? If RiverOak are able and prepared to bring in private investors to fund the full extent of this project with no recourse to Government support or borrowing and if those investors are prepared to take the accompanying commercial risks then surely that is precisely the kind of endeavour that should be enthusiastically supported by this Government.

The idea that a Conservative government would stifle innovation and prevent exciting new players from entering a market such as this one in favour of existing long-standing interests (which the evidence shows are more interested in passengers than freight and should not be relied on to meet freight demand anyway) quite frankly goes against everything that politically we stand for. I was in the House when the airports were privatised in 1986 and that initiative was taken to encourage competition, innovation and efficiency. Here is a golden opportunity to allow to go ahead a project that will exhibit all three of these criteria (not least competition with freight airports in mainland Europe that currently effectively serve the UK, when this traffic could and should be handled in Britain).

As the Inspector in the Stansted expansion appeal concluded, 'there is no requirement flowing from national aviation policy for individual planning applications for development at MBU airports, such as Stansted, to demonstrate need for their proposed development or for associated additional flights and passenger movements'. While Manston was excepted by a footnote, that was sensibly done to avoid appearing to interfere with the Manston project. The same conclusion does, however, apply to Manston Airport. The Airports National Policy Statement mentions need (in paragraph 1.48) but applies it equally to planning applications for airport expansion such as Stansted and DCOs such as Manston. Consent should surely depend on the project's benefits outweighing any adverse impact and that is clearly demonstrated in the case of Manston?

Finally, and under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act, I would be grateful if I could be provided (before 19th November) with the terms of reference afforded to Arup by the Department. Extraordinarily, these were omitted from the draft report as were the identities of those who prepared the draft together with an indication of their areas of expertise, which I also request. I wish to be able to compare this information with that provided by those offering evidence in the DCO application who identified themselves and their own qualifications.

In the light of all of the above I am frankly surprised that the draft Arup report was released for comment at all and I believe that it should be disregarded when redetermining the application.

With good wishes

Roger

(Sir Roger Gale MP)

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