

For the attention of Shafkat Khan

Re: Planning applications for London Ashford Airport, Lydd, Romney Marsh, Kent, currently before Shepway District Council for decision

Y06/1647/SH ERECTION OF A TERMINAL BUILDING (CAPABLE OF PROCESSING 500,000 PASSENGERS PER ANNUM) AND 637 CAR PARKING SPACES

Y06/1648/SH CONSTRUCTION OF A 249 METRE RUNWAY TOGETHER WITH AN ADDITIONAL 150 METRE STARTER EXTENSION

Dear Shafkat Kahn

I am writing to request that the Secretary of State calls in these planning applications for her own determination following a Public Inquiry.

I believe the issues raised by this application have a regional and national importance, which are beyond the matters that Shepway District Council could properly consider.

In particular, there is an ongoing national and international debate over the future of aviation and its effect on global warming. With flights set to double to 2020, aviation is the fastest growing source of climate changing greenhouse gas emissions.

With the Stern Report making the economic case for reducing carbon dioxide emissions and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change about to release its latest report, pressure is mounting to limit airport expansion, not increase its capacity.

Most importantly, as far as these planning applications are concerned, is the regional strategic planning guide – the South East Plan – which is currently at the Examination in Public stage. East Kent and Ashford issues are to be discussed at meetings in Maidstone February 6th to 15th.

The Plan acknowledges the tension between the Aviation White Paper and the national Sustainable Development Strategy.

As far as major airports in the South East are concerned, the Plan does not support capacity increases at Gatwick or Heathrow. In speaking of regional airports in 1.28 (pp 100) the Plan states;

“The Aviation White Paper highlighted the important role that regional airports can play in providing access to air services that reduces the pressure on the international

hub airports. This emphasis is strongly supported by the Assembly, and, indeed, it believes the Government should have given more overall emphasis to the potential of regional airports. In addition to the potential previously identified for Southampton Airport, the potential of Kent International (Manston) Airport to fulfil a significant role as a regional airport is now acknowledged, but other airports in the region are not considered to have strategic potential.”

I have further concerns, which are of a more local nature but nonetheless important, particularly including;

- the environmental impacts of 500,000 passengers using the poor local transport infrastructure
- the runway extension and extra flights will increase the aircraft noise disturbance and air pollution for residents in Greatstone and Lydd-on-Sea. The extended runway will be 500 metres from the Greatstone Primary School.
- the negative impact on local tourism
- the adverse effect on local wildlife locations at the Dungeness to Pett Levels Special Protection Area (SPA) designated for its internationally important bird populations and Dungeness Special Area of Conservation (SAC), designated for its great crested newt populations and rare shingle habitat. These designations represent the highest level of legal wildlife habitat protection available in Britain.
- bird strikes - The large numbers of birds in the area make Dungeness a high bird strike risk area. Around 90,000 gulls are known to roost near to the airport on Romney sands. Therefore, the airport will have to implement bird hazard management measures, which could include scaring birds away from parts of the SPA.

It is clear that expansion at Lydd airport does not form part of the South East Plan’s strategic overview of transport within the region, and to enable proper consideration of this and other strategic issues the application would be better determined by the Secretary of State, informed by both the results of the Plan’s Examination in Public and a Public Inquiry.

Yours sincerely

Dr Caroline Lucas
Green MEP, South East England
Suite 58 The Hop Exchange
24 Southwark Street
London SE1 1TY

Tel 020 7407 6281
carolinelucas@greenmeps.org.uk