

Dear Resident of Sutton Parish

Sutton Parish Council (SPC) are unable to hold public meetings in the normal way but we still have a responsibility to keep residents informed of events which could affect life in the Parish. This letter is about the latest planning decisions at Manston Airport. It seems that most people are unaware of the potential impact to our Parish so consequently we are posting this letter to every house within the Parish boundary.

Manston Airport has been closed for some time with housing development being the future of the site. The owner of the majority of the site was Stone Hill Park (SHP). Their plan was to develop the site with a mixture of housing and alternative uses. Another company called Riveroak Strategic Partners (RSP) proposed to reopen the airport (although they did not own the airport) mainly for freight flights and applied for a Development Consent Order (DCO) process for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP). Riveroak carried out a consultation late last year which was about air traffic routes in and out of the airport. SPC objected to the proposed routes which were not very specific at that time. In July 2020 after 117 days the Planning Inspectorate came out against the airport plans but the Secretary of State overruled the examining panel and granted the DCO. On the last day of the enquiry, SHP sold the airport to RSP and withdrew their objections. Within a matter of days RSP have produced another consultation document which narrows down the approach and departure routes. Unfortunately all 3 departure routes to the south will be directly over our Parish. Due to an air traffic requirement it is necessary for these aircraft to join airways at Dover VOR (which is sited at St Margarets) at 7000 ft. RSP have already admitted that for some older freighters it is not possible for them to be at 7000 ft in time to join the airway but it does point to the fact that the aircraft will be on full power and consequently emitting a substantial amount of noise and pollution on climb out.

The map printed overleaf was produced by RSP and indicates that the aircraft will be between 4000 and 5000 feet as they pass over the Parish. Currently controlled airspace over our Parish starts at 6500 ft although most commercial aircraft flying over us are above 10000 ft and nowhere near full power.

The information we have so far from RSP is that they intend to have 72 departures a day between 06.00 and 23.00. If they were evenly spaced out that would amount to one flight every 14 minutes. Because of the orientation of the runway at Manston and the prevailing wind there are likely to be south westerly departures the majority of the time. To minimise track miles it is likely that most departures would take the southerly route.

It is difficult to say exactly how noisy these aircraft would be but normally freight aircraft tend to be retired modified passenger aircraft with old engines (which are generally much noisier than modern ones) and also fully loaded to maximise returns.

One of the concerns about freight is that it all of it will have to be moved by road after unloading at Manston and the road infrastructure is extremely poor.

Sutton Parish Council will continue to respond to the consultations but in truth there appears to be very little we can do as the government have earmarked this as a national infrastructure project. Of course the economic landscape has changed significantly in recent months and it could be dropped.

There is also the possibility that it could be subjected to a Judicial Review. We understand that a social media campaign has raised the money for such a process. The timetable has not been fixed but we expect more details in the next couple of months. SPC will update via the Parish Web Site as we get more details. In the mean time SPC will respond to the consultation promoting the northerly departure route (not shown on the attached map) as we did previously.

