



No Airport @ Cliffe Information and Action

Special
Airport Edition
November
2002

Informing You

Since the leak in the Financial Times in March that Cliffe was being considered as a site for a new airport we have been working with others to make sure you have been informed of the facts behind the headlines. Since March there has been :-

- two public meetings in Cliffe (arranged by the Dickens Country Protection Society (DCPS));
- one public meeting in Cliffe Woods (arranged by the NoAirport@Cliffe action group);
- one information meeting in Cliffe (arranged by Medway Council);
- a debate on the airport in Cliffe (arranged by Medway Council and broadcast live by Radio Kent);
- After much pressure the Department for Transport also brought their 'information roadshow' to Cliffe.

The Parish have issued

- an insert in the March Clarion;
- a special Airport edition of the Clarion in August/September;
- and now this further update.

Parish Councillors have also helped distribute information from RSPB, DCPS and the NoAirport@Cliffe Action Group. Special events have been held in St Helens Church and the Buttway and many local residents have been doing their bit to show support through Posters, Banners, Car Stickers and distributing more leaflets in the Parish and beyond. Parish Councillors have spoken at many of the public meetings in the parish (and elsewhere to take the message much wider), also been on local radio, television and local newspapers putting the case for NoAirport@Cliffe.

Together with other Medway and Gravesham Parish Councils, we have been an active member of the NoAirport@Cliffe Community Liaison Group and working alongside organisations such as DCPS, RSPB, NoAirport@Cliffe and others.

We have agreed a detailed response to Medway Council and the Department for Transport (summary in this Clarion)

We now need your help in the final days of the consultation, and beyond, to ensure this airport does not happen and the idea is dropped for good.

Department for Transport
Consultation ends
30th November
Have you sent
your response yet?

Have you returned your
Questionnaire ?
(advice enclosed in this Clarion)

What more can
you do ?

Encourage others
(in the Parish and outside)

Stuck for ideas ?
(This Clarion has a number of ideas
you could use)

Letter Writing Help

Cliffe Memorial Hall
Sunday 24th
November
10:30 to 15:30

(computers & printers—and
typists available to do your own
personal letter, it can then be
delivered free of charge)

If you drop your letter and/or
Questionnaire in to the Cliffe
Woods Mini-Mart or Martins
Newsagents in Cliffe before
27th November, we will even
deliver it for you!

Parish Council Response (Extracts)

Cliffe (historic context)

Cliffe goes back at least 2,000 years with evidence of Roman pottery kilns on the marshes and Bronze Age sites. It is claimed that the Magna Carta was drafted here.

By 1320 Cliffe had become such a significant town and a vital commercial port that Cooling Castle was built to protect it. It was almost completely wiped out by a massive fire in 1512. Since then the area has seen a diverse range of agriculture and industry.

Industrial use within the Parish area is fairly limited now, but there is a history of significant areas being used for chalk and clay extraction and an associated cement industry, which produced some of the finest cement in the country, used for the Eddystone, Lizard and Needles lighthouses. In the early part of the 20th century there was a large munitions factory on the marshes.

Other proposals for the Cliffe Marshes include a flying boat airport, oil refinery, power station, and a prison. Proposals that have been either withdrawn or refused permission because of the sensitive nature of the local environment.

Description of the Cliffe Option

The consultation paper explores the option of building a 2, 3, 4 or 5 runway airport directly to the east of the Cliffe marshes to include parts of Cooling, High Halstow, St. Mary Hoo marshes and taking in all of Allhallows, and half of High Halstow village, almost all of the hamlet of St. Mary Hoo and a number of isolated properties in the Cooling area. There is a suggestion that this site may be suitable for flights 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It could also operate as a major HUB airport 'collecting' passengers from smaller local and regional flights and distributing them to larger longhaul flights.

The airport would be constructed on a platform 15 to 18 metres high above the current marshes. Much of Allhallows, St Mary Hoo and High Halstow is already 20 metres or more above the marshes.

Surface transport links to the airport would all (with the exception of a future Benfleet tunnel) pass through the parish: -

ROAD

Direct road connection (3 lane dual carriageway/Motorway) from the A2 near Thong, to the airport. Connection from the A289/A2/M2 junction across the A289 (Wainscott Bypass) to a new crossing of the Thames (Lower Thames Crossing). Background papers suggest this crossing would be a tunnel. This too would be a 3 lane dual carriageway/motorway).

An all-ways junction would be created at the point where these two roads cross.

A possible tunnel under the Thames to connect to Canvey Island and Benfleet is suggested to improve access to a greater potential workforce – this would not directly affect the parish.

RAIL

A Rail connection from the new Channel Tunnel Rail Link near Thong would link to the current freight-only Hoo junction to Grain railway and then into the airport.

A further rail connection is proposed to link to the current Higham to Strood section of the North Kent Line between London, Dartford and the Medway Towns (the illustrative diagrams show this connection to be in the middle of the Higham and Strood tunnels) to the Lower Thames Crossing and into Essex.

A complex high-speed rail junction is likely to be required where these two rails cross.

Airport Issues (extracts from the Parish Council Response)

(Information from RSPB, DCPS and the NoAirport@Cliffe Action Group has been available for some time—this is an extract of the Parish Council response to give you even more ideas for your response letters)

Based on the information contained in the consultation and background papers, we see no logic in continuing with the Cliffe option and are disappointed that it was included in the first place. Many of the environmental impacts and status of much of the area in local, regional, nation and international planning and environmental protection is acknowledged in the discussion document, and no satisfactory mitigation is practical in our view.

The fear and uncertainty that this has generated has been significant. There appears to be no technical background information to explain why this was the only option for a new airport and what criteria was used to select this from a much larger search.

It is not for us to question the air passenger numbers forecast and especially to suggest other areas that should take any additional flights. But there does remain significant doubt regarding the forecast figures, with much of the recent growth appearing to be limited to low cost airlines who pay minimal charges and would not be able to pay the significant costs that a new airport and its supporting infrastructure would generate.

Not only is the Cliffe option the most expensive and delivers the least net economic benefit, but the need to recoup the financial costs would lead to a need to maximise use of the airport by generating, not managing, demand.

The document identifies the high cost of the option, but still does not include the direct costs of the Lower Thames Crossing. No consultation has even taken place on a scheme, even the initial speculation did not suggest that a twin-bore railway tunnel would be provided. The indirect costs are also not quantified. There is no indication of how the major council support services would be provided and paid for.

The noise impact on Cliffe would lead to either significant harm to the community or the total destruction of the community if it was compulsorily purchased. Noise impacts are considered to be less in the rest of our parish area, but will still lead to a significant reduction in the quality of life for our residents. If the difference between current background noise and the proposed impacts of a new airport are assessed, it will be clear that the impact will be very significant.

Noise impacts of the proposed road and rail infrastructure have not yet been included in any assessment, neither has the impact of the fifth 'crosswind' runway. In any event the suggestion that night flights would be acceptable with this option must be challenged. The rights of the individual to an undisturbed night has been established at Heathrow and other airports, this applies to the Cliffe area as well.

Air pollution caused by the road links and airport uses would add to the current levels of pollution. With prevailing winds from the west,

the Cliffe Marshes fall within the shadow of London and also have Power Stations and Oil refineries in the vicinity.

The destruction of the Cooling, High Halstow, St Mary Hoo marshes is in direct contradiction of local, regional, national and international planning and environmental guidelines. There is little confidence that an alternative location could be provided and established in the timescales required for the provision of 2 runways by 2011, if at all. It is not just the land that would have to be made unattractive to birds and other wildlife, but the inter-tidal mud flats as well.

We have been working with other agencies (e.g. RSPB, Medway and Kent County Councils) to recognise the valuable contribution that our pools and marshes provide to the region. Planning documents from the Kent Structure Plan, Medway Local Plan and Thames Gateway plans recognise the need for these areas to provide balance to the significant industrial and residential development of the wider area.

The consequences of the Cliffe option are also likely to lead to significant development pressures in the parish. We have had examples of speculative proposals in the past from developers, which were rejected in the local plan process and upheld by the inspector.

Many current services are already under pressure. The district hospital is at full capacity; there are problems recruiting local GPs. Schools are running near full capacity, with admission appeals at both the local primary school in Cliffe Woods and the secondary school at Hoo. We see nothing in the consultation or background documents to explain how the increased pressures an airport would bring, would be overcome.

The consultation paper asks three main questions:-

Should new airport capacity be provided in the South East over the next 30 years and, if so, how much? A particular issue is whether there is a case for having at least one major hub airport.

Where should any additional runway capacity be provided? A particular issue is whether or not Heathrow should be developed further

What controls, mitigation measures and compensation should be put in place to limit and manage the adverse impacts of any additional airport development on people and the natural and built environment?

The Parish would argue that demand for additional airport growth must be managed. At present, low cost airlines are using up spare capacity at a number of airports. Their ticket prices do not seem to match the need to support and manage the airport and the associated infrastructure required. If additional capacity is provided, competition will be strong amongst South East, other

regional airports and major airports in Europe for passengers which could artificially inflate demand.

A number of UK airports already operate as hub airports to different degrees. Heathrow remains a major hub and Gatwick also operates in a similar, but reduced way. Hub activities should continue at these sites. It is likely that air travellers are likely to want to see the development of more direct flights rather than hub operations. The time that needs to be allowed for connecting flights would seem to suggest that reliable, fast and consistent rail travel would provide a good alternative to regional flights and provide knock on benefits to other non-airport travellers as well.

Additional runway capacity needs to be provided as a last resort and there needs to be demand management. Priority must be given to the upgrade of rail links to the current airports and encourage use of these connections rather than regional flights. There is still the potential to make better use of existing facilities.

Planned extensions to Heathrow (Terminal 5) are already in the pipeline. Again, demand management will be required to make best use of and prioritisation of current runways.

There must be a significant investment in better rail connections between airports. If they were improved to make them as speedy and reliable as possible, inter-airport connections would be much more viable, demand could be spread more effectively across airports in the region and there would be a reduction in the need for coach and car travel along the congested M25.

Residents around airports and on the immediate take-off and landing paths, deserve adequate monitoring and enforcement of environmental legislation. The adverse effects of an airport must be adequately managed at source and more investment is required into reducing air quality and noise reduction impacts.

Areas directly affected by new airports or significant expansion (measured as the difference between current and projected nuisance) deserve both financial and physical compensation (e.g. double/triple glazing). Levels of noise nuisance (> 100dBa for significant periods or > 69dBa 18hreq) may require the compulsory purchase of whole village/estates – piecemeal acquisition would lead to major problems for remaining residents. The impact of surface access will also need to be considered.

Suggestions that there are practical mitigation measures for significant bird populations and the supporting landscape, including plants, insects and other wildlife are not proven, and is only practical for smaller scale problems. Even if it is possible to create a new habitat, diverting the current bird population will be difficult, if not impossible. The mudflats of the Thames estuary are the primary reason for the birds and the affects of destroying this habitat would be much larger than just provision of land. Therefore only practical and proven mitigation should be carried out in advance of any development.

Cliffe & Cliffe Woods Parish Council

Clerk : Mr Chris McLoughlin
19 Spenlow Drive
Walderslade
Chatham
Kent
ME5 9JT

Phone: 01634—862689

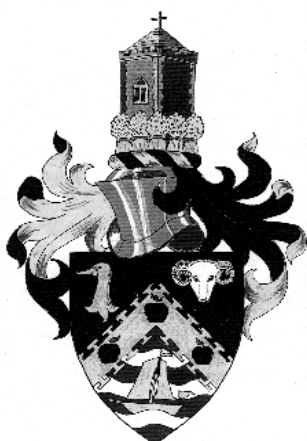
Email

chris@mcloughlin9.freemove.co.uk

Harbour Empowerment Order

The Parish have raised an objection to this as we do not have enough details on the affect it would have on the marshes and local roads. An inquiry will be held in January 2003.

We do not want to see this slipped while concentrate on the airport.



Cliffe & Cliffe Woods Parish Councillors

Cliffe Village Ward

Thelma Enticknap	220487
Freda Frost	220687
Derek Green	220240
Bob Haughey	221813
Keith Scarfe	221852
Bryan Mooney	222142
Ray Letheren	222224
Jasper Wright	220184

Cliffe Woods Ward

Rob Davis	221288
Dianne Foreman	221193
Chris Fribbins	220932
Ken Kentell	221434
Lesley Parker	220503
Three vacancies	

Writing Your Letters

This Clarion gives you some ideas that you could use, you will also have your own perspective on the Cliffe option. Remember :-

- Make it personal—It is your reply. More consideration will be given to individual letters, rather than mass-produced letters—even if signed.
- Ask Questions—If you feel there are gaps in the information supplied, ask. You should get a reply

Send to Future Development of Air Transport—South East, Department for Transport, Zone 1/28C, FREEPOST LON 17806, London, SW1P 4YS
(you do not even need a stamp)

Also reply by e-mail via the WEB site www.airconsult.gov.uk

Consider sending a copy of your response to :-

Medway MP—Mr Robert Marshall Andrews, QC MP, Moat House, 1 Castle Hill, Rochester, Kent, ME1 1QQ—Email marshallandrewsr@parliament.uk

Medway Today/ Messenger—Letters, FREEPOST, SEA0334, Chatham, Kent, ME4 4BR
Email: medwaytoday@thekmgroup.co.uk

Medway News/Standard—12 New Road, Chatham, Kent, ME4 6AT
Email: newsdesk.medway@kentregionalnewspapers.co.uk

The Questionnaire

If you still have your copy of the official Questionnaire, use it!

It is recommended that you do not attempt to answer the questions and they can lead you to argue for a new airport in the South East. Instead fill in your details in Q20 and complete the section at the back “Further Comments” and return to the address given

Ever thought about being a Parish Councillor ? (You cannot say that nothing happens in this Parish)

The Parish Council is the most local level of elected local government. It has a limited income of about £16,000 per year paid by the residents of Cliffe and Cliffe Woods through the local Council Tax. It owns and manages the Recreation Ground and Allotments in Cliffe and the Car Park in Cliffe Woods. It is consulted by many authorities regarding issues such as local planning applications and regional planning , AIRPORTS and HARBOURS. It liases with many bodies such as Medway Council, the Police and other Parish Councils to represent the local view.

There is one part-time paid officer ‘The Clerk’ and other part-time staff are used to help keep the Recreation Ground, The Buttway and Cliffe Woods Car Park tidy and to do other odd jobs around the Parish (volunteers for this work are always appreciated).

There are 16 councillors, 8 representing the Cliffe Village Ward and 8 representing Cliffe Woods. Elections are held (if there are more than 8 nominations for a ward) every 4 years – the next elections will be held on 1st May 2003 (alongside elections to the Medway Unitary Authority). Members are elected for a four-year term, and vacancies that occur during the term are filled by bye election or co-option.

At present there are 3 vacancies in the Cliffe Woods Ward (term of office will run until May next year). You do not have to live in Cliffe Woods to apply, but it would help. All we ask is that you take an active interest in the Parish and contribute your knowledge and experience.

The Parish Council meets once a month (normally the first Thursday) in Cliffe or Cliffe Woods and there are also Committees that meet to discuss specific issues during the month. Contact any of the Parish Councillors listed or the Parish Clerk for more information.

Community Transport Action

Following the survey of Cliffe and Cliffe Woods residents earlier this year, things are starting to happen. Medway Council have applied to the Government for Rural Bus Challenge funding to introduce some new services to our area :-

- Morning and Evening Bus services to Higham Station – to connect with both Charing Cross and Cannon Street trains. If evening trains are delayed, the bus will wait.
The Parish has also contacted Connex to see if improvements can be made to the station to provide a bus turnaround and waiting facility in an improved car park (There are plans to close the Rail Tunnel for an extended period to allow complete re-lining so this would also be used by buses from Strood Station).
- An Evening/Night service to Strood and Medway Valley Park to link with Bingo, the Cinema and the Night Club (the last bus would return at about 3am).

With the Airport issues dominating, we have not been able to do much work to progress our own local Community Transport scheme, but funding is being considered (It might be able to bid to run these new services on a commercial basis). When the airport consultation period ends, we will be establishing a Community Transport Committee of Parish Councillors and other interested residents to move this forward.
(Contact Cllr. Chris Fribbins)