

RH Jaffa

#### Matter 4. Spatial Strategy (Policies SP12, SP21, HO1, HO10, HO11 and HO18)

##### Issue 1. Settlement Hierarchy and Housing Distribution.

Q1. Does the Plan set out a hierarchy of settlements where new development will be directed towards? If so, is it clear to decision makers, developers and local communities?

My answer to this question would be that it does not. The reason for this is clear, in a leaflet currently being delivered by the Conservatives in Thanet. It illustrates a six point plan for Thanet. Point 6 is headed: Protect the Manston Airport site and build homes in the right places. "We're honoring our pledge to protect the Manston Airport site whilst making sure that the new homes are built in the right areas, with the roads, schools and health care facilities they need."

Clearly protecting the Manston Airport Site is a politically motivated move that is not founded on a realistic social and economic assessment of what is needed in the area or what is possible. Every attempt to make the airport profitable has resulted in failure. Expert consultants have said that it cannot be rescued. Even so politicians refuse to accept the reality. They continue to mothball the airport and because of this they have to come up with a TDC Local Plan which looks for ways to build the required land without touching the airport. Alongside this they say that up to 10,000 jobs will be created if the airport 'flies' again. All this is nonsense. The result of this is keenly to be felt in historic areas like Reading Street where shoddy development is to be allowed, destroying communities and historic areas that could attract tourists for generations to come if they were left alone, but are now hostage to the ego of politicians who cannot admit they are wrong.

Q2. How have the main urban areas of Margate, Ramsgate, Broadstairs and Westwood been defined? Do they represent a single urban area where the majority of new development is concentrated?

I do not see evidence that they have. Again everything is skewed to keep the Manston Airport site itself from housing development. Yet if you look at the settlements, Margate, Ramsgate and Broadstairs are the historic areas of Thanet, where historic buildings, their views and views of them as well as coastal amenities should be nurtured and protected. Westwood, with its housing and Retail Park and Manston certainly do not have a history in the same way and could, with the proper planning and design, create larger, integrated and sustainable communities given the go ahead, imagination and adequate resourcing. Why destroy rather than create? That is what will happen that for a short term gain – to protect the airport – TDC planners are recklessly putting Thanet's historic settlements, buildings and heritage assets at risk, something that once it is destroyed can never be reclaimed.

Q6. Is the distribution of development consistent with the Framework's Core Planning Principles, which, amongst other things, seeks to actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling and focus significant development in locations which are, or can be, made sustainable?

Based on our experience in Reading Street, I would say they are not. Most, if not all, of the data relied upon by planning officer is supplied by developers and their consultants. Some is also supplied by Kent County Council and outside bodies. Often such information is incorrect. Never do the TDC planning officers check this information. Also, information is rarely updated. In a fast moving world the parallel universe of planning seems to take past results as indicative of the present if not the future. I will give you a few examples from Reading Street to illustrate what I believe to be a significant issue locally and probably nationally.

Throughout documents from the developer and his consultants for plans on 30 houses they proposed on the Credit Union site, there was reference to a difference in height between the development land and the land on which Convent Cottages had been built. The developers said that the cottages were 0.8m lower than the site. Residents believed it was much more. The council's planning officers stuck with the 0.8m figure but as far as I am aware made no attempt to verify this. In my view it is lazy to accept everything that a developer is telling them without verifying it; most people would suggest that either mistakes can be made or that it is in the financial interests of the developer and his or her consultants to create a rosy picture of what they are planning. A group of residents produced our own measurement of approximately 1.6m.

In the Appeal Decision, Inspector S M Holden noted in point 19. "From what I saw on my site visit, the difference in levels appeared to be closer to the 1.6m suggested by local residents than the 0.8m suggested by the appellants."

This is not the only issue. Kent County Council (who are responsible authority re traffic) constantly under estimate traffic issues in the village which will worsen with any development. I am told they rarely visit Reading Street, relying on outdated traffic flows given them by the developer and when they do look at the central road through the village (which is also called Reading Street) they do so on Google Earth. This is why they have been known to say that the street could be widened! Local residents know this is impossible because the road is narrow and the many Listed Buildings are very close to the road. There is no footpath which runs on both sides of the road for its full length and parked cars create a problem, because many of the houses have no off street parking. Such residents and visitors are forced to park on the narrow road.

It should be a duty on council planners to verify statements made by developers. Surveys of traffic flows and traffic incidents should be constantly up dated. In the narrow street of Reading Street, one householder has had her wall knocked down seven times by cars ploughing into it. Still KCC say there are no traffic problems in Reading Street. Now residents fear an influx of tourists parking in Reading Street to go to the beach nearby, as Joss Bay. Thanet District Council plan to charge visitors to park in the road leading down to the beach and we fear those who do not want to pay will flood the village with their cars this summer.

Finally, on this point, I would argue that the Credit Union development proposed will not be sustainable in the sense of making the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling. The site is actually two sites with an unadopted road and no street lighting; with two exits, one in Convent Road and the other in Reading Street. The two roads into the site do not connect. According to Inspector S M Holden in the Appeal Decision document point 13: "Furthermore, the pedestrian link through the site would appear to serve little purpose other than attempting to connect two very different forms of development. In reality there would be inadequate functional, visual or social links

between the two areas, making it difficult to integrate them with each other or with the surrounding area.”

In addition, we currently have only one bus service from near the development land and this is under threat. We did have a village shop and post office, but the owner has turned part of that into a private dwelling that he is attempting to sell. He wants to do the same to the other part of the property but TDC have rejected his proposal on the ground this is a community asset. We have tried to make contact to see if we can have a community shop but so far he has not wanted to speak to us. So, clearly the people who might live on this estate will, in the majority of cases, have to use their car to go shopping or into other parts of Thanet and beyond.