



## Department for Transport

Steve Brine MP  
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From the Parliamentary  
Under Secretary of State  
**Robert Courts MP**

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Our Ref: MC/343648

25 May 2021

Dear Steve,

Thank you for your email of 17 May, enclosing correspondence from your constituent, Anthony Nowak of [REDACTED] about how the Government plans to safeguard airfields.

The Government's vision is for the UK to be seen as the best place in the world for General Aviation (GA) as a flourishing, wealth-generating and job-producing sector of the economy. GA is worth up to nearly £4billion to the UK economy, supporting nearly 40,000 jobs and includes activities such as sports and leisure, maintenance and manufacturing, training and search and rescue. To support this vision, I laid a Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) in the House of Commons on 27 April reinforcing the importance and value of GA and our network of airfields. Please find the statement in full at: [www.tinyurl.com/GA-WMS-27-April](http://www.tinyurl.com/GA-WMS-27-April).

To support airfields, the Department launched the Airfield Development Advisory Fund (ADAF) to provide bespoke and tailored advice to GA airfields and associated businesses to help them grow, thrive and upskill. In addition, the CAA's Airfields Advisory Team (AAT) provide operational support and advice to both licensed and unlicensed airfields.

I note your constituent makes reference to planning applications potentially impacting on airfields and I am grateful that you recognise that as the Secretary of State adopts a quasi-judicial role in the planning system, and as such it would not be appropriate for me to comment on the merits of any individual planning application. However, you may be aware that the current National Planning Policy Framework already requires Local Planning Authorities to recognise the importance of maintaining a national network of general aviation airfields, and their need to adapt and change over time – taking into account their economic value in serving business, leisure, training and emergency service needs, and the government's General Aviation Strategy – in taking decision on planning applications that could impact on airfields.

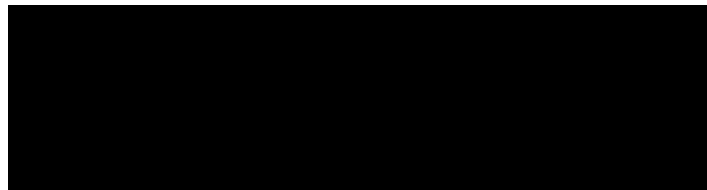
Clearly, it will be for the local planning authority to determine any planning application in accordance with the local plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise including policies outlined in the NPPF. However, I would advise that any concerns you or your constituent have regarding any current or future planning application should be directed to the local planning authority for consideration during the determination process.

I would add that any statements made in this letter stating the Government's vision for General Aviation are entirely without prejudice to any current or future planning applications that may impact on GA interests. Such applications will be judged on their own merits by the Local Planning Authority and this letter should not be treated as an endorsement of any specific planning application.

You may also be interested to know that officials are working with Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government on future planning reform and to produce better guidance to local authorities to ensure that the benefits and interests of GA are carefully considered in the drive for new developments.

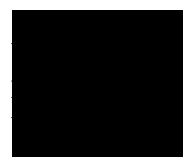
I trust the above outlines the Government's priority for GA and reassures your constituent that every effort is being undertaken to ensure our airfields are supported and protected.

Yours sincerely,



**ROBERT COURTS MP**

**MINISTER FOR AVIATION, MARITIME AND SECURITY**



02 July 2021

Attn: Secretary of State, The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP

Subject: The planned reopening of Manston Airport

I wish to make a few points as to why I support the re-opening of Manston airport.

Not only will the airport/airfield, when ramping up to full operating status, and after, when a fully commissioned international airport, offer much needed employment opportunities in Kent, the re-opening will also retain a valuable airport as part of the UK's National transport infrastructure.

It is the Government's stated objective to, and I quote from:  
(<https://generalaviationappg.uk/updated-national-planning-policy-framework/>):

“(Government) recognise the importance of maintaining a national network of general aviation facilities – taking into account their economic value in serving business, leisure, training and emergency service needs, and the Government's General Aviation Strategy”.

Although Manston is primarily planned on being reopened as an International aviation freight and passenger hub, it will still be an airfield that can cater for General Aviation. The economic benefits that General Aviation alone can bring to the local area are quite significant.

According to government research, the General Aviation sector alone directly contributes £3bn to the UK economy every year, and employs over 38,000 people in high-tech science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) jobs. It enables the wider £60.6bn UK aviation sector to exist.

This, coupled with the business and employment opportunities that an international airport will bring, can only be a good thing for the county of Kent.

The awful COVID19 pandemic has affected passenger air travel significantly, but air freight has continued at almost normal levels. Respected aviation industry observers feel that air travel will return to almost normal levels within the next 2-4 years, so the pandemic shouldn't be used as a reason to not allow Manston to reopen and flourish. If anything, the pandemic is just small “blip” in time regarding proposed upgrades and additions to the UK's National transport infrastructure.

Life will eventually return to normal, pre-pandemic, activities including a rebound in international travel etc.

Further, the recent issues of Dover port becoming temporarily closed due to BREXIT transition issues highlights the problems when a single, significant, main port of entry becomes unavailable. Having an airfreight terminal in the county surely is a good thing to help mitigate against port closures and blockades?

Lastly, I attach a letter from Robert Courts MP, Minister for Aviation, Maritime and Security, regarding the Government's vision for the General Aviation sector.

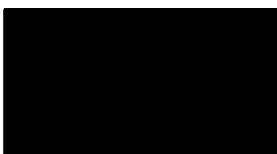
The reply isn't in connection with Manston but I was asking how Government can, in general terms, safeguard airfields, which are often seen as "easy targets" for developers for housing and non-aviation industry as airfields are still classed as "brownfield sites".

The Government's vision seems quite clear to me, and is welcome, but I can't see any evidence of planning policy change that makes airfields/airports protected National Transport infrastructure.

I welcome an eventual change in planning policies that clearly will protect airfields from non-aviation development, and is in support of the Government's vision.

Finally, I urge you to allow Manston airfield/airport to reopen and flourish as a new airfield/airport.

Yours sincerely



Antony Nowak

