Shepway Core Strategy Examination

Lydd Airport decision

The Inspector has invited comments on the potential implications for the Core Strategy following the recent decision to grant planning permission for the expansion of Lydd Airport. CPRE Protect Kent’s views on this are as follows.

The future of Lydd airport is considered in paragraphs 5.115 – 5.117 of the submission Core Strategy. These paragraphs essentially explain the situation prevailing at the time they were written, i.e. pending the decision by the Secretaries of State on the planning applications for expansion. Now that the decisions have been made, the paragraphs will need to be up-dated accordingly to describe the expansion plans now agreed. In so doing, CPRE Protect Kent considers that the reference to saved Local Plan Policy TR15 should be removed, and the Policy itself should not be further retained as it has now served its purpose.

The applications now approved meet the aspirations of the airport for at least the next 20 years, so it is highly unlikely that further expansion of the airport will be sought within the remaining time period of the Plan. If further expansion of the airport is contemplated in the future this should be a matter for the future review of the Core Strategy to consider, rather than it to be decided under an old local plan policy that will become increasingly out-of-date.

It is the case that the Government is in the process of reviewing aviation policy, with the Independent Airports Commission tasked with submitting an interim report to Government by the end of 2013 on options for maintaining the UK’s status as an international hub for aviation and immediate actions to improve the use of existing runway capacity in the next 5 years. The Commission’s final report is to be submitted by summer 2015 assessing the environmental, economic and social costs and benefits of various solutions to increase airport capacity. The Government’s new aviation policy will follow thereafter.
This new aviation policy will provide the context for potential further expansion at Lydd, and this is likely to be in place during the early part of the Core Strategy period. Given this, to continue to retain saved Local Plan Policy TR15 would, in effect, give open ended support for continued expansion of the airport but in the context of national policy that would have been superseded. This would be entirely inappropriate and would deprive local people the opportunity to be engaged in discussion about the principle of further expansion at Lydd in the context on new Government policy. The whole issue of further expansion (if it is an issue) should, therefore, most properly be dealt with when the Core Strategy is reviewed. We, therefore, can see no reason to continue to retain Policy TR15.

The Inspector should be aware that it is likely that a challenge to the Secretaries of State decision will be made. The deadline for the submission of any challenge is 22 May.

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