

Notes on the Extraordinary TDC Cabinet Meeting 2/3/23 Agenda Item 4

Future Delivery Port Ramsgate, Public Document Pack

For RRA 6/3/23

There are deficiencies in the advice offered to Cabinet in making their plans for the future of Port Ramsgate. Here is evidence:

1. Misreported and biased reporting of consultation:

Extract from Public Document Pack:

1.2 The council has completed a significant amount of research and evidence gathering, including stakeholder engagement over the recent years to understand the future opportunity for the Port of Ramsgate. In 2019 the council commissioned WSP to complete a high level study, which was published in January 2020 and is included as a background paper to this report. Through the Local Plan, the council has been through a robust process of evidence gathering and examination, before adopting the Local Plan. The Plan clearly supports the use of the commercial port for cross channel services. The information from the Local Plan and WSP's report were used to support the evidence in developing the proposals for the Ramsgate Levelling Up Fund bid, which was supported and funded by central government and includes more than £9m allocated to projects at the port. It is worth noting that other planning uses on the commercial Port would currently be contrary to the adopted Local Plan. It is also worth noting that through stakeholder engagement in the development of the Levelling Up Fund bid there was a strong community perspective that the Port operating in a commercial way is fundamental to the future and regeneration of the town (background papers). (p19)

Comments on the above:

The first highlighted statement is incorrect. The WSP report is not motioned in the Future Ramsgate TIP of 20 Jan 2022 and only referenced in the technical appendix without comment. There is no continuity of analysis, leading to the exclusion of options. Infrata in their report state (p13):

"Whilst the report provides some guidance as to the best options to pursue based on known options in a qualitative and quantitative manner, it is important that all possible options need to be exhausted before providing a final conclusion."

Regarding the second highlighted section above, the assertion of strong community support comes from Ramsgate Future Town Investment Plan, Jan 2022 (p28). This report states that (in a survey of 822 respondents) one of the top three first choice options was "investment to support the regeneration of the Port of Ramsgate (39%)". The nature of the investment was not specified in the question and Port of Ramsgate was used to describe an area, not the desired key function.

So it is misleading to claim from that proof of: “strong community perspective that the Port operating in a commercial way [is fundamental]”.

The survey evidence submitted by RRA to the consultation on the LUF bid included survey data (from 692 respondents in the autumn of 2020) contradictory to the assertion of strong community support. When asked specifically if Ro-Ro should be included in future developments, 55% of respondents said that they were either undecided or against Ro-Ro. See charts at the end below.

We can find no reference to sufficiently detailed evidence of survey data cited by TDC in background papers or anywhere else for that matter.

2. The demand forecasts by Infrata assume a change in trend which is not justified by the data.

On page 4 of the Infrata report (annexed to the Public Document Pack) demand for ferry services is forecast to bounce back some 120% between 2021 and 2022.

Lorry traffic through The Port of Dover (according to their own website) is down 23% since 2017 by 2022, on a steadily downward trend including 2022. Passenger numbers are even more reduced (44%), with a recent blip attributable to the relaxation of Covid restrictions. It is reported that ferry companies right now plan cutting sailings from Dover due to excess capacity.

In this context calling a significant turnaround in the trend for future demand is suspect without compelling evidence, which is conspicuous by its absence.

The only possible business basis for forecasting a future of Ro-Ro in Ramsgate is for unattended freight. The reason being that growth in that area comes from cutting the cost and difficulty of passing drivers between the EU and the UK. The business logic of that advantage is dependent on continued difficulties in trading with Europe. This is suspect. Evidence from Westminster indicates that is likely to change in the near future, as we seek to mend our fences with Europe.

3. Combining Brett expansion with LUF projects in Agenda Item 4 is inadmissible:

On page 18 of the Public Document Pack it is stated that:

“briefing documents on Commercial port operations that result from this project will not require an environmental impact assessment (EIA). Construction works undertaken in conjunction with the project will be screened for the requirement for an EIA.”

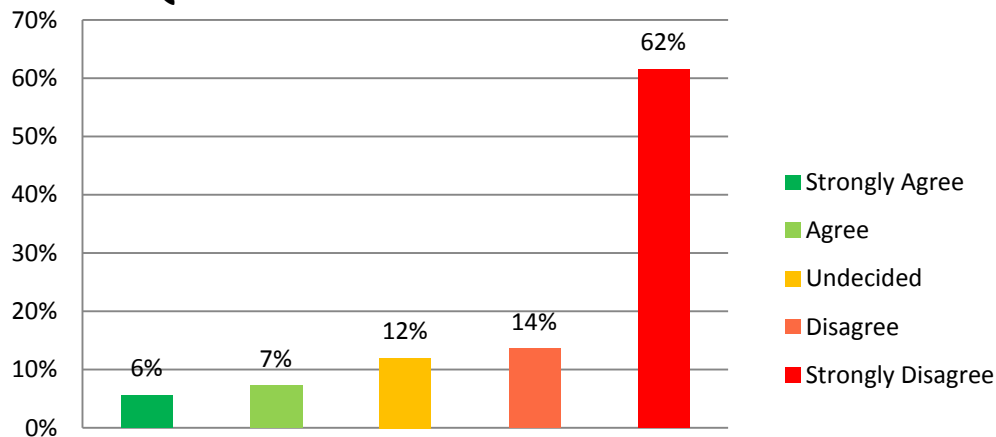
If the above results in shielding Brett expansion (by one third in terms of area) from environmental scrutiny, that should be corrected by reversal.

Especially as, in her closing remarks in the Cabinet meeting of 2/3/23, Leader Cllr. Ashbee stated that we cannot be “precious” about Port Ramsgate. Cllr Ashbee asserted the port to be a national asset, the exploitation of which must be viewed in that wider context rather

than what is good for Ramsgate. Specifically Cllr Ashbee observed that land based aggregate is in short supply and we need to bring it in from the sea, through Ramsgate. That will entail washing the aggregate. That must be scrutinised, given the environmental context of loss of amenity to a great town and damage to an important and fragile adjacent environment.

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Q4: Include Brett and Concrete



Q6: Include Ro-Ro

