

486. In support of its objections regarding radar, the Airport has outlined future development proposals. They comprise: (i) an intention to cater for 300,000 passengers per annum in the short term. A £5m programme of works is currently underway to strengthen the runway, extend the parking apron, demolish certain buildings and install new lighting etc. (ii) a desire to cater for up to 1.95m passengers per annum in the medium term (by 2014), creating some 7,800 jobs. Planning applications are to be made, on completion of an ES, for extension of the existing runway, new terminal buildings and other related works. A scoping opinion has been issued by Shepway District Council and an Airport Master Plan has been prepared by consultants Parsons Brinckerhoff to guide development. (iii) an aspiration for further substantial expansion in the longer term to accommodate some 6m passengers per annum by 2021. [215, 216, 335]

487. By 2014 the Airport aims to cater for intra-European passenger traffic (50-70 seat aircraft) and holiday charter traffic (100-140 seat aircraft), similar to that currently using Cardiff, Leeds and Prestwick Airports. During 2001 LAA gained a new investment partner, and a further £15m has been set aside for the next development phase. It is anticipated that a replacement terminal building will be in place by the summer of 2006 and that radar will be installed and operational within a similar time frame. LAA says that no aspiring regional commercial airport can hope to be successful without radar to allow a faster and more expeditious approach control and to permit the handling of commercial aircraft regardless of weather. [335]

488. LAA's expansion plans are ambitious and the time scale set for delivery of the first 2 stages relatively short. NRL claims that the Master Plan proposals are not only very challenging but unrealistic in the light of political, regulatory, environmental and other hurdles. The Government's White Paper on the 'Future of Air Transport' recognises that Lydd Airport, along with Southend, Manston and others, could play a valuable role in meeting local demand and could contribute to regional economic development. Support for the Airport's development is given in principle, subject to relevant environmental considerations. The White Paper offers no greater encouragement than that. The explanatory text of the adopted Structure Plan indicates that Lydd could increase its throughput to 2m passengers by 2010, and supports increased aviation activity at Lydd and Manston in terms of general aviation and specialised markets. The emerging Structure Plan contains no reference to 2m passengers. It does, however, refer to general aviation and passenger traffic and to scheduled and charter business, and could be amended. I agree with NRL that the Joint Policy Statement presented to the inquiry by KCC/SDC does not show enthusiastic support for the overall level of expansion sought by LAA. [61, 210, 211]

489. Whatever level of expansion is proposed, it is likely to be subject to significant environmental constraints and conditions, as evidenced by the planning permission granted in 1992 for a runway extension and abandonment of a renewal application in 1997. Sensitivities to ecological and noise impacts have become even more acute since then. Other constraints relate to the requirements of the EIA Regulations, their interaction with 'permitted development' rights, and proximity of the Lydd and Hythe Firing Ranges which impact on the proposed ILS procedures. [205, 212, 217]

490. On the other hand, it has been shown that the alleged emissions savings on account of the Airport's geographical position close to the continent are not as great