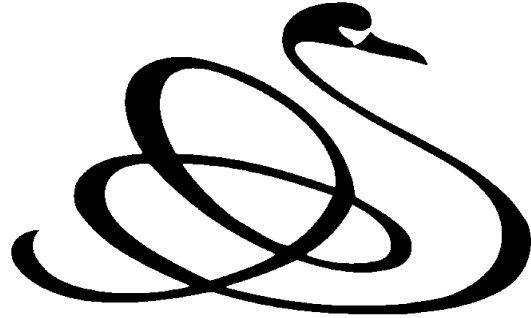


West Midlands Regional Assembly – Regional Planning Body

This report has been prepared on behalf of the West Midlands Regional Assembly, the Regional Planning Body, as technical advice to inform the Regional Spatial Strategy Revision process. It is one of a suite of technical reports commissioned to inform the development of spatial policy as part of Phase Two of the Revision of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy.

Every effort has been made to verify and check the contents of this report including all figures and tables. However the West Midlands Regional Assembly can not accept any responsibility for errors or inaccuracies.

Further information and details of the West Midlands Regional Strategy and the Revision process can be found on our web site www.wmra.gov.uk



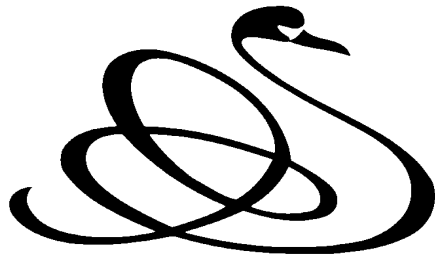
York Aviation

**WEST MIDLANDS
REGIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**COVENTRY AIRPORT AIRSPACE
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE REGIONAL SPATIAL
STRATEGY**

Final Report

August 2006



York Aviation

Originated by: Niall Gunn

Dated: 24th August 2006

Reviewed by: Louise Congdon

Dated: 25th August 2006

WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY- REGIONAL PLANNING BODY

This report has been prepared on behalf of the West Midlands Regional Assembly, the Regional Planning Body, as technical advice to inform the Regional Spatial Strategy Revision process. It is one of a suite of technical reports commissioned to inform the development of spatial policy as part of Phase Two Revision on West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy.

**WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
REF: RA42-0406**

**COVENTRY AIRPORT AIRSPACE
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY**

Contents

	<u>Page</u>
1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 BACKGROUND TO THE WMIAL APPEAL	4
3 THE FUTURE OF AIR TRANSPORT WHITE PAPER CONTEXT	8
4 THE REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY (RSS)	12
5 AIRSPACE ISSUES	16
6 REVIEW OF RSS POLICIES	37

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 York Aviation was appointed in May 2006 by the West Midlands Regional Assembly (WMRA), as the Regional Planning Body (RPB), to provide advice relating to the airspace evidence provided to the Coventry (otherwise known as West Midlands International) Airport Public Inquiry. Specifically, the tasks were as follows:

Stage 1

- to examine the material tabled at the Inquiry by all parties, including Birmingham International Airport (BIA), West Midlands International Airport Ltd (WMIAL), the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and National Air Traffic Services (NATS) regarding airspace issues and the associated presentation of cases by expert witnesses; and
- to advise the RPB as to the implications from this evidence for the management of airspace and its impact on the delivery of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) – if any.

Stage 2

- to advise the RPB on any implications that the Stage 1 work might have for the RSS Phase 2 Revision process, within which the potential role of airports in the Region will be examined.
- 1.2 During Stage 1, advice was given on the emerging air space issues during the course of the Public Inquiry, which finished on 31st July 2006. This Report summarises our advice in relation to whether the evidence on air space presented at the Public Inquiry gives rise to any issues which have implications for the delivery of the current RSS policies and for the role of airports in the Region within the context of the RSS Phase 2 Revision process.

- 1.3 In preparing this Report, we have drawn on our experience of air space issues in general and have also drawn on work previously undertaken for WMRA and Advantage West Midlands on the Regional Economic Impact of Airports in the West Midlands in 2005. This Study included an analysis of the possible economic implications if an airspace conflict proved to exist between Coventry Airport and Birmingham International Airport. It did not, however, take a view on whether such a conflict did arise, pending completion of the air space studies which have more recently been presented to the Public Inquiry.
- 1.4 We were appointed to undertake this commission after the commencement of the Public Inquiry into the appeal by WMIAL for the construction of a passenger terminal, aircraft apron, car parking and improved surface access at Coventry Airport. We have confined our advice to issues related to the potential air space conflict between Coventry and Birmingham Airports, evidence on which was heard during May, June and July 2006.
- 1.5 In undertaking this assignment for WMRA, our approach has been:
- to examine the material tabled at the Inquiry by all parties, including Birmingham International Airport Ltd (BIAL), West Midlands International Airport Ltd (WMIAL), the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and National Air Traffic Services (NATS) regarding airspace issues and the associated presentation of cases by expert witnesses;
 - to attend all the Inquiry sessions covering the airspace evidence;
 - to advise WMRA on matters relating to the airspace evidence presented to the Inquiry for their Closing Submission;
 - to prepare this Report for WMRA on the implications, drawn from this evidence, for the management of airspace and its impact on the delivery of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and any consequent revisions required to the RSS.

Structure of the Report

1.6 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- in **Section 2**, we outline the **Background to the Appeal by WMIAL** for developments at Coventry Airport and the key airspace issues that have raised concerns;
- in **Section 3**, we set out the roles defined in the **Future of Air Transport** White Paper, (FATWP) with respect to airports in the West Midlands;
- in **Section 4**, we set out the **Relevant Policies from the RSS** that relate to aviation and developments at Coventry Airport;
- in **Section 5**, we discuss the **Key Airspace Issues raised at the Inquiry** and the potential outcomes;
- in **Section 6**, in view of these potential decisions we offer our **Advice to WMRA** regarding the implications for their relevant RSS policies.

2 BACKGROUND TO THE WMIAL APPEAL

- 2.1 Coventry Airport initiated low fare scheduled services in 2004; operated by the low fare airline Thomsonfly, part of the TUI organisation. The Airport was also owned by the TUI group at that time, having purchased it from Air Atlantique in 2004. The Airport handled 718,845 terminal passengers in 2005¹, up from 462,317 in 2004.
- 2.2 The Airport was sold by TUI in early 2006 to a joint-venture company, called CAFCO Coventry, created by UK-Irish property development specialist Howard Holdings and UK-US firm Covergence-AFCO.
- 2.3 In late 2003, an Interim Passenger Facility (IPF) was constructed by Coventry Airport to serve the Thomsonfly operation and in April 2004 Warwick District Council served an Enforcement Notice on this facility, which had not been the subject of a planning application having been constructed under the Airport's GPDO powers. The IPF has a maximum annual capacity of the order of 1 million passengers per annum (mppa) (subsequently limited by condition to 0.98 mppa).
- 2.4 The Enforcement Notice was appealed by Coventry Airport in May 2004. The appeal was heard at a Public Inquiry between February and July 2005. On 4th July 2005, Warwick District Council accepted the details of a mitigation package offered by Coventry Airport, which addressed the Council's objection. This conclusion was reported prior to the close of the Inquiry. In April 2006, the First Secretary of State and Secretary of State for Transport upheld the appeal, awarding WMIAL planning approval for the IPF. This decision was announced after the commencement of the Public Inquiry into the construction of a new passenger terminal at Coventry Airport.

¹ CAA Airport Statistics 2005.

2.5 In 2003, a separate planning application had been submitted for the development of a permanent passenger terminal at Coventry Airport, capable of handling 2 mppa. Planning permission for this development was refused by Warwick District Council. A revised application was subsequently submitted for a passenger terminal with a greater floor area, extended aircraft parking, increased car parking provision and improved surface access to provide satisfactory standards of service for the handling of aircraft and passengers. As part of the planning application, Coventry Airport offered to cap the throughput of the Airport at 2 mppa, by means of a condition to be imposed on the development. The appeal into the refusal of planning permission for this new passenger terminal has been the subject of the current Public Inquiry.

2.6 The matters upon which the Secretary of State wished to be advised were:

Issue 1: Airspace Capacity + national/regional air transport policies

To what extent, having regard to airspace capacity, would development at Coventry Airport conflict with national policies, as set out in the Air Transport White Paper, “The Future of Air Transport”, and regional policies which aim to develop and expand Birmingham Airport as the West Midlands principal international airport;

Issue 2: Relationship with Regional Spatial Strategy + Airports policies

To what extent should the proposals at Coventry Airport be regarded as prejudicial to the review of the airports policies set out in Regional Spatial Strategy (formerly Regional Planning guidance) for the West Midlands to be undertaken against the framework set out in the governments Air Transport White Paper, “The Future of Air Transport”;

Issue 3: Relationship to expansion proposals for Birmingham International Airport

To what extent should the proposals at Coventry Airport be regarded as prejudicial to the completion of the Master Planning of expansion proposals at Birmingham International Airport in line with their High Level Statement of Intent and requirements of the Air Transport White Paper, “The Future of Air Transport”;

Issue 4: Relationship to national transport policies and regional planning guidance with regard to car parking and availability of public transport

To what extent are the proposals at Coventry Airport in accordance with policies in PPG13 and Regional Planning Guidance Policy T11 on car parking and the availability of public transport to serve the airport;

Issue 5: Relationship to policies in the local development plan and relevance of other material considerations

Whether the proposed development is in accordance with the policies and proposals of the local development plan for the area and if not whether there are any other material considerations which would justify a departure from the plan;

Issue 6: Consistency with key planning policies contained in PPG13: Transport

To what extent would granting planning permission for the proposals at Coventry Airport be consistent with the key national planning policies contained in PPG13: Transport, in particular with regard to:

- a) Objectives to integrate sustainable development;*
- b) To reduce the need to travel, especially by car, via accessibility in terms of a multi-modal choice*
- c) The impact of traffic on roads in the area, including surface accessibility; and*
- d) car parking provision;*

Issue 7: Consistency with policies contained in PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas and PPG9: Nature Conservation;

Issue 8: Environmental Impact of the proposal and consistency with planning policies contained in PPS23: Planning and Pollution Control and PPG24: Planning and Noise

The environmental impact of the proposed development, including the extent to which any aircraft noise and air pollution issues are consistent with national planning policies contained in PPS23: Planning and Pollution Control and PPG24: Planning and Noise;

Issue 9: If permission is appropriate, what appropriate conditions and agreements, including any proposed by the parties, are sufficient to mitigate any harmful effects of the proposed development;

Issue 10: Prematurity/Potential airspace conflict between BIA and Coventry Airport

Whether it would be premature to grant planning permission for a passenger terminal with a capacity of two million passengers per annum at Coventry Airport in advance of completion of the exercise to model potential airspace conflicts between Birmingham International Airport and Coventry Airport;

Issue 11: The possible declaration of a Public Safety Zone in respect of Coventry Airport by the Department of Transport, and its implications for the appeal proposal; and

Issue 12: Any other matters which the Inspector considers relevant.

2.7 In setting out its case to the Public Inquiry, WMIAL acknowledged the existence of potential airspace conflicts caused by flights at Coventry Airport which could impact operations at Birmingham Airport, but believes that these issues can be resolved through the implementation of a number of mitigation measures. BIAL is, however, an objector to the development of the 2 mppa passenger terminal at Coventry Airport on the grounds of this air space conflict. We outline in **Section 5**, the arguments of the two principal parties. In addition, evidence on airspace issues was also given by the Civil Aviation Authority, Directorate of Air Space Policy (CAA) and by National Air Traffic Services (NATS) on behalf of BIAL. The airspace issue was also touched upon in closing submissions by a number of other parties, including WMRA, although no specific evidence was adduced.

2.8 In addition to airspace, the Public Inquiry has also been dealt with 'sustainability' issues, in particular in connection with public transport and general surface access requirements at Coventry Airport. Whilst we have not been requested to advise on these matters directly by WMRA, the issues do become material to the revision of the RSS, as we cover in **Section 6**.

3 THE FUTURE OF AIR TRANSPORT WHITE PAPER CONTEXT

- 3.1 In December 2003, the Department for Transport published the Future of Air Transport White Paper. This provides a strategic framework for the development of air transport in the UK for the period to 2030.
- 3.2 With regard to the West Midlands, the White Paper sets out a clear role for Birmingham International Airport, but is less specific about the long term potential for the other airports within the Region. The White Paper notes that the Government's analysis was that additional runway capacity would be required in the Midlands' Region (East and West) by 2030 and, having considered a number of options including the use of the smaller airports to relieve pressure of demand on the main airports at Birmingham and Nottingham East Midlands, the White Paper concluded; *"Our preferred location for a new runway to meet future growth in passenger demand in the Midlands is at Birmingham"*.²
- 3.3 It was noted that: "In response to the consultation, there was strong support among the aviation industry, economic development and business stakeholders in the West Midlands for the development of a second runway at Birmingham International Airport."³
- 3.4 Accordingly, the White Paper noted that the Government estimated that a new runway might be needed by 2016 but it was for the airport operator to bring forward a planning application in line with its commercial judgement as to viability. Development of a second runway is to be conditional on addressing noise and other impacts, including surface access issues.

² Para 9.5

³ Para 9.15

- 3.5 With regard to the role of Coventry Airport, the White Paper gives only general guidance:

“Coventry Airport currently serves a specialist role within the region, catering for business aviation, air mail and some freight, and can continue to perform this role within existing constraints. There is a current planning application for a terminal development at the airport. However, in the light of our conclusions on capacity elsewhere in the Midlands, and having regard to potential surface access, environmental and airspace constraints, we would not envisage any significant further development being appropriate beyond the level of passenger throughput in the current application.”⁴

- 3.6 Whether this statement ‘authorised’ or otherwise the development of Coventry up to a capacity of 2 mppa (the assumed capacity of the terminal which was the subject of the original 2003 application) has been the subject of some debate at both Public Inquiries. Guidance on how the White Paper should be interpreted is given in the Secretary of State’s Decision Letter in respect of the IPF⁵ as follows:

“The White Paper: The Future of Air Transport, published in December 2003, identifies the Midlands as having two principal passenger airports: Birmingham International Airport and East Midlands Airport, and sets out the envisaged role of Coventry Airport. For the reasons in [the Inspector’s Report], the Secretaries of State agree with the Inspector that the White Paper offers no specific support for a passenger terminal of any size at Coventry Airport. They have had regard to the fact that the White Paper acknowledges the importance of airports for the development of local and regional economies, and their potential for attracting inward investment to a region. They note that encouragement is also given to the growth of regional airports to serve regional and local demand, subject to environmental constraints, and to making the best use of existing infrastructure”.

⁴ Para 9.31

⁵ Secretary of State’s Decision Letter 6th April 2006

- 3.7 Airspace was not a substantial issue at the IPF Inquiry so the Decision in favour of allowing the development was taken on the basis of the balance of socio-economic advantages over the adverse implications of the proposal. The development was ruled to be in accordance with the Development Plan.
- 3.8 The IPF Decision gives little guidance as to how the application for a new passenger terminal should be viewed leaving the critical issue, in policy terms, as the extent to which Coventry's expansion might impact on Birmingham International Airport and therefore compromise the ability of that Airport to deliver the additional runway capacity needed in the Midlands in the longer term.
- 3.9 Birmingham International Airport is the longstanding regional gateway airport. In 2005, it handled 9.3 million terminal passengers⁶, an increase of 6% over the number of passengers handled in 2004. The Airport serves a wide range of domestic and European destinations with scheduled services, a growing number of global destinations with scheduled services and provides a range of long and short haul international charter services.
- 3.10 On 31st October 2005, Birmingham International Airport published its new Draft Master Plan 'Towards 2030: Planning a Sustainable Future for Air Transport in the Midlands', triggering an extensive consultation process. The deadline for responses was 31st March 2006. A key purpose of the Master Plan, once finalised, was that it should inform the statutory development plan process, consistent with the expectation within the White Paper that master plans would inform the preparation of Local Development Frameworks. The relationship between BIAL's Master Plan and the RSS is a matter which will need to be considered by the RPB once the final Master Plan is published.
- 3.11 The Draft Master Plan envisages growth to around 22 mppa by 2020 and 33 mppa by 2030. This growth would be facilitated by an extension to the existing runway, in a south easterly direction, and the construction of a new, short runway (of around 2 kilometres in length) parallel and to the south west of the existing runway. This option is consistent with the support given to the construction of a new short runway at Birmingham within the Future of Air Transport White Paper.

⁶ CAA Airport Statistics 2005.

- 3.12 Birmingham's Draft Master Plan registers concern at the impact of further development at Coventry Airport on the airspace capacity at Birmingham International Airport, stating:

"A number of planning applications have been submitted to Warwick District Council (the local planning authority for Coventry Airport) over the last two years for the development of passenger terminal facilities at Coventry Airport. The Airport Company has objected to any proposals that could increase passenger activity and the associated air traffic movements in excess of 1 million passengers per annum because of the impact on future airspace capacity at Birmingham International Airport."

"The Airport Company has investigated potential ways in which the impact of increasing passenger activity at Coventry Airport on Birmingham International Airport's airspace capacity could be mitigated. However, to date, it has not been possible to identify any practical means to eliminate the critical interface of the flight paths from the two airports."⁷

- 3.13 Birmingham International Airport has appeared at the Inquiry to oppose the planned expansion of Coventry Airport beyond 1 mppa. The effect on the airspace from this expansion of activity must be viewed in this context. BIAL have stated in evidence at the Inquiry that the level of operations at Coventry Airport necessary to support 1 mppa are acceptable and by inference their objection must be based purely on the impact that additional flights at Coventry as a consequence of a doubling of its annual throughput to 2 mppa might have on Birmingham Airport operations. We examine this issue in **Section 5**.

- 3.14 It should be noted that the Government is intending to issue a report on progress in implementing the Future of Air Transport White Paper towards the end of 2006. In terms of informing the RSS review process, this may give further guidance in terms of the relative roles of Coventry and Birmingham Airports, following the IPF Decision. It should be noted that no decision is expected regarding the current application until at least the middle of 2007.

⁷ Birmingham International Airport Draft Master Plan, paras 8.10 and 8.11

4 THE REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY (RSS)

- 4.1 The Regional Spatial Strategy (formerly RPG11) was published in June 2004, based on consultations and an examination in public held in 2002/3. In view of the timescale, the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) was not able to take on board the outcome of the Government's consideration of its policy towards the expansion of airports as set out in the Future of Air Transport White Paper, referred to above and published in December 2003.

Current Policy

- 4.2 Current RSS policy towards airports is set out in Policy T11⁸ as follows:

A. Birmingham International Airport (BIA) will continue to be developed as the West Midlands' principal international airport with appropriate facilities in order to increase the extent to which it serves a wider range of global destinations to meet the Region's needs.

B. The planning permission for expansion of BIA has a target to achieve a public transport mode share of 20% (passengers, employees and visitors) by 2005 or 10 mppa whichever is the later.

C. To accommodate future significant levels of growth additional passenger terminal facilities would be required. Also, to serve more distant international destinations an extension to the main runway would be required. Development plans in Solihull and neighbouring authorities should include policies to provide for the assessment of proposals for the expansion of the airport to meet the demand. Criteria for development proposals should include the requirement that they be subject to rigorous environmental assessment and must demonstrate:

i) that both economic benefits and harmful environmental impacts have been assessed, in line with the principles of sustainable development;

ii) that unavoidable harm be reduced through mitigation; and

iii) where harm cannot be avoided or mitigated, it should be compensated for.

⁸ RSS (RPG11) Chapter 9 Transport and Accessibility – pages 120 to 121

D. Satisfactory provision should also be required for improved surface access including:

i) improvements where necessary to the M42; and

ii) an increase in the percentage public transport mode share for passengers, employees and visitors – supported as necessary by improved public transport services.

E. Consideration should also be given to the provision of remote check-in and or parking facility to serve BIA and the need for bus-based Park & Ride facilities to serve BIA/NEC.

F. Coventry Airport, as primarily a freight airport, provides a complementary service to those at BIA. Development plans for Warwick District and neighbouring authorities should include policies for the assessment of proposals for the expansion of Coventry Airport. Criteria should require the approach to environmental assessment and impacts set out for BIA above; and any proposals for use of Coventry Airport by charter or scheduled passenger flights should be subject to the availability of public transport to serve the airport.

G. The further development of other airports and airfields in the Region providing complementary services to those at BIA, will be supported providing that proposals can be justified following rigorous environmental assessment; mitigation or compensation can be provided for unavoidable, harmful environmental impacts; and any proposals for charter or scheduled passenger services are subject to the availability of public transport.

H. Local transport plans and the Airport Surface Access Strategies should aim to ensure that improvements to strategic and local transport networks and interchanges are provided in order to ensure continued access by all modes to airports is maintained. Within these plans and strategies, challenging targets should be set to encourage a greater percentage of trips, by passengers, visitors and staff, by more sustainable modes.

I. The Region should also work with other regions to develop improved public transport access to other key airports beyond the Region, as appropriate.”

- 4.3 The RSS recognises that Birmingham Airport, centrally located within the Region and in close proximity to the rail and motorway network, presents an opportunity to provide for more of the Region's air transport needs compared to other airports within the Region, hence bring benefit to the West Midlands' economy. Policies A to E deal specifically with Birmingham Airport, providing a clear framework within which it can develop, accompanied by public transport modal share targets.
- 4.4 In addition to recognising and supporting the role of Birmingham Airport as the pre-eminent airport for the Region, the RSS also embraces the contribution that other airports in the Region, including Coventry, can make. The RSS also recognises the needs of general aviation across the Region. However, the RSS recognises that air transport has a major impact on the environment and that any development should be designed to minimise environmental impacts and ensure that access by public transport is maximised.
- 4.5 Only Policy F deals specifically with Coventry Airport, although Policy H does refer to the need for challenging targets to be set regarding increasing the use of public transport at all the Region's airports. This has been the subject of some debate at the recent Public Inquiry in terms of how the RSS public transport criterion should be interpreted in relation to the sustainability of development at Coventry. Consideration of this issue is outside the scope of this Report but it is clear that Policy F will need to be amended to reflect the development of scheduled services at Coventry Airport and the approval to the IPF and may need to be further adapted to reflect the potential outcome of the current appeal.

The RSS Revision

- 4.6 In approving the RSS (RPG11) in June 2004 the Secretary of State identified a number of policy issues that needed to be addressed in a future revision including RSS Policy T11, Airports. The review of the policy on airports is included in the first list of priority areas for review, with proposals to be developed during 2006, for submission to the Secretary of State in 2007⁹. In particular, Phase 2 of this review is intended to incorporate the land use and surface access implications arising from the Future of Air Transport White Paper¹⁰.
- 4.7 In this context, it will be important for the review of the RSS to take full account of the realistic development potential of Coventry Airport and any implications for the scale and timing of development at Birmingham Airport. The potential air space conflict between the two airports has been identified as the single greatest area of possible impact, if operations at one airport serve to restrict operations at the other. Clearly this needs to be caveated by the need to have regard to other issues, including environmental matters, which may serve to limit airport growth.
- 4.8 It is important to recognise that the fundamental requirement for the revision to the RSS is that it should incorporate the policy framework set out in the Future of Air Transport White Paper. Indeed, there is emerging evidence that where regional planning bodies have sought to interpret or deviate from the policies set out in the White Paper, this can be overturned by the Panel following the Examination in Public¹¹. In this context, the continuing uncertainty regarding the precise level of support for the development of passenger facilities at Coventry Airport is unhelpful, leaving the matter open to interpretation.

⁹ RSS Revision Process, West Midlands Regional Assembly.

¹⁰ RPG11, para. 9.7.

¹¹ The recent Panel Report into the East England Plan (June 2006) replaced proposed text on airports which sought to qualify policies set out within FATWP by the precise White Paper text.

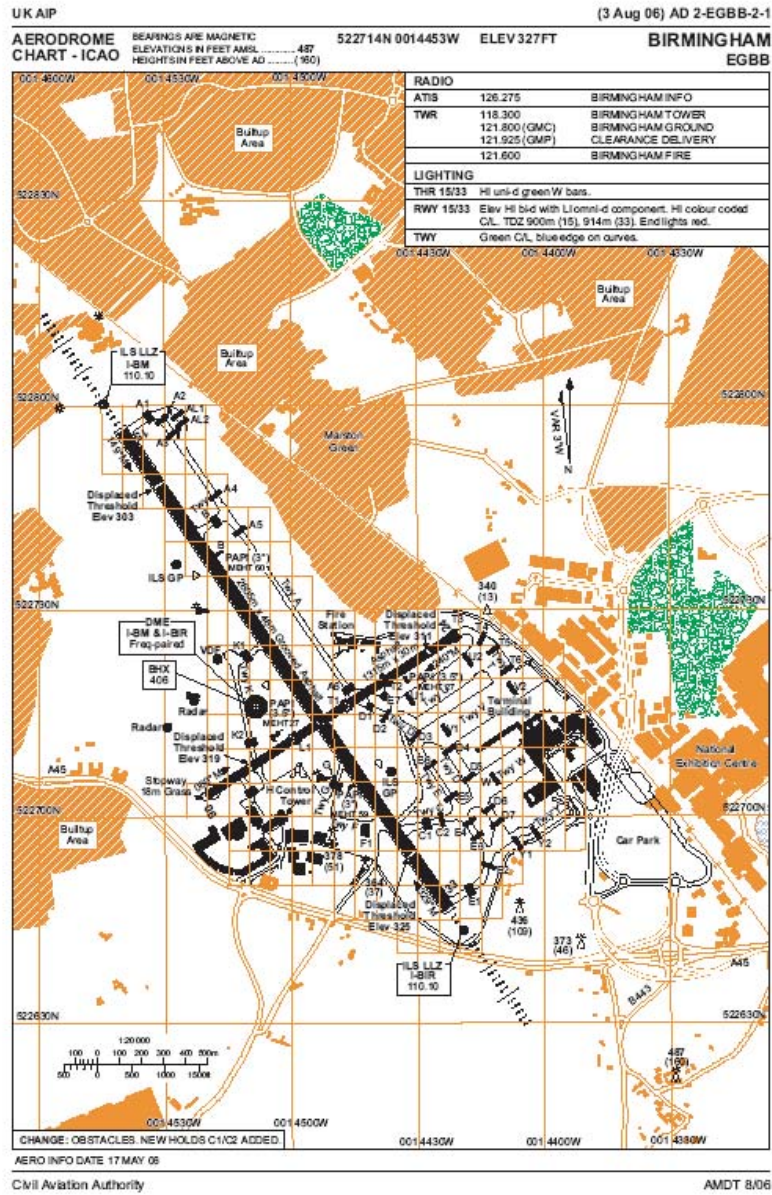
5 AIRSPACE ISSUES

Operational Interaction between Birmingham and Coventry

- 5.1 Both Birmingham and Coventry Airports are geographically in close proximity. This in itself might not create an interaction between their operations but for the alignment of their runways. In **Figure 5.1**, we illustrate the layout of Birmingham Airport with its two existing runways. It is the longer Runway 15/33¹² that is used most of the time, with the shorter second cross runway being used tactically by certain aircraft types when conditions permit. We understand that the cross runway will be closed in the short to medium term. The main Runway 15/33 is aligned in a south-east to north-west orientation. The layout of Coventry Airport is illustrated in **Figure 5.2**, which shows the single Runway 05/23 orientated in a south-west to north-east direction.
- 5.2 The direction in which each runway is used for landings and takeoffs varies with wind direction, as aircraft normally land into wind in other than very light wind conditions. The most commonly used runway direction at Birmingham is Runway 33 which means that aircraft approach the Airport from the south-east and depart to the north-west. The most commonly used runway direction at Coventry is Runway 23; that is landing from the north-east and departing to the south-west.
- 5.3 These preferred modes of operation at each airport often occur simultaneously and create an airspace conflict between the Birmingham and Coventry Airport operations due to the proximity of the airports and the different alignment of the two main runways. This is illustrated in **Figure 5.3** where the flight paths to/from these two runways intersect approximately 11 miles from Birmingham Airport and 6 miles from Coventry Airport.

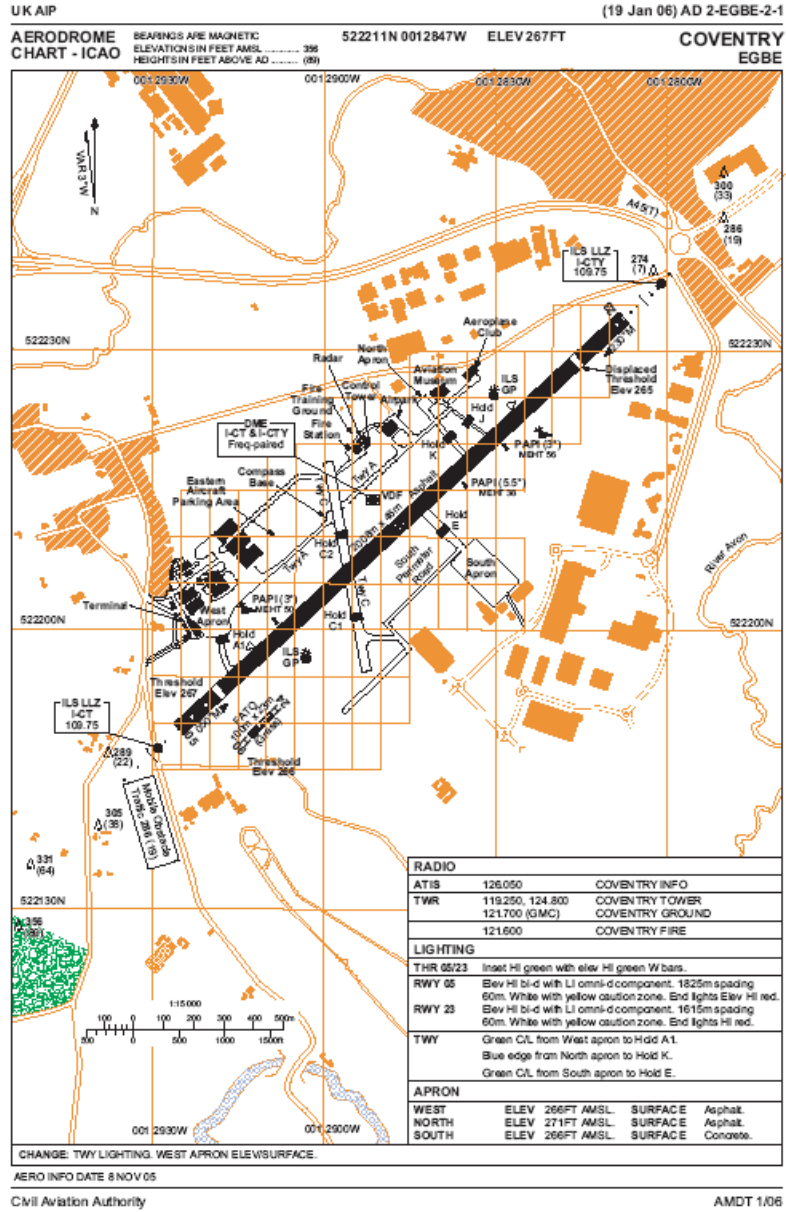
¹² Runways are referenced by their compass direction – Runway 33 means the heading is 330°

Figure 5.1: Layout of Birmingham Airport



Source: Birmingham Airport AIP courtesy of NATS

Figure 5.2: Layout of Coventry Airport



Source: Coventry Airport AIP courtesy of NATS

- 5.5 However, it is the most common conflict of Runway 33 arrivals at Birmingham and Runway 23 departures from Coventry that has been central to proceedings at the Inquiry. As this conflict reflects the most common mode of operation at both airports then any effect on capacity at either airport from increased delays will be most prevalent from this particular mode of operation. It is this mode of operation which will have a material impact on the capacity at Birmingham Airport which can be declared for scheduling purposes. We focus on this particular conflict in the remainder of this Report as this was the basis upon which all the evidence was presented and scrutinised at the Inquiry.
- 5.6 The location where the flight paths from these two runways intersect as shown in Figure 5.3 is called the Critical Interface Point (CIP). As a consequence, aircraft departing from Coventry and aircraft arriving at Birmingham must be spaced so as to achieve vertical or horizontal separation. This gives rise to increased air traffic controller workload and a potential increase in delay to aircraft due to the need to maintain separations.
- 5.7 In addition, there are also more general air traffic control issues where flight paths to and from the two airports intersect. A particular cause of potential delay results from arrivals at Coventry being required to use the same 'Grove' stack¹³ as arrivals at Birmingham, resulting in a potential increase in delays to arriving aircraft at both airports.
- 5.8 Coventry Airport is located outside of the Birmingham Airport control zone and as such is in what is called 'uncontrolled airspace'. This is not uncommon for many smaller and less busy airports and aerodromes throughout the country and is not an unsafe scenario. Standard procedures and air traffic controls are in place to ensure that all activity is handled safely. What this does mean is that in order to maintain safe separations in these circumstances there will be some limits on the numbers of flights within this overall area at any one time.

¹³ A stack is an area of airspace where at busy times arriving flights can be allocated at a particular altitude and instructed to fly in a circular pattern until there is space in the arrival stream available at the destination airport.

- 5.9 It should be noted that air traffic control procedures require airspace to be open to all comers on a first come first served basis, so flight movements to/from one airport should not take precedence over those to/from the other airport. At present, these conflicting issues of flight demands at both airports are being handled tactically as they arise, which is acceptable at current movement rates. Birmingham Airport's position at the Inquiry considers that to manage the impact in future, movement rates at one or both airports would potentially have to be limited. Coventry Airport does not share this view.

Birmingham Airport Position

- 5.10 BIAL has objected to the development of a larger terminal at Coventry on the grounds that an increase in departure flights from Coventry as a consequence of an expansion to 2 mppa will result in a higher frequency of interactions with Birmingham Airport arrivals at the CIP.
- 5.11 This increased frequency of conflict will raise delays overall and in particular prevent Birmingham Airport reaching 48 movements per hour on its main Runway 15/33, resulting in a loss of traffic against its future forecast so undermining the ability for BIAL to bring forward the development of a second runway in line with White Paper policies. The second runway would be located parallel, staggered and to the south-west of the current main runway 15/33. Reduced throughput on the current main runway will slow growth and reduce the revenue at Birmingham, so undermining the viability of the development of a second runway.
- 5.12 BIAL are particularly concerned at the impact on arrivals in the peak morning period and in particular during the 07:00 to 07:59 hour. It considers that delays during this time will render reliability in the delivery of a punctual operation uncertain, raise average delays to all traffic, arrivals and departures, to levels that will be unacceptable to its airline customers resulting in a potential loss of traffic and failure for new services to start up. Of particular concern is the impediment there would be to the introduction of growth in long haul scheduled services which will often be seeking an arrival slot during this particular time of the day.

Coventry Airport Position

- 5.13 WMIAL does not believe that the projected increase in departure activity from Coventry Airport will adversely raise delays at Birmingham significantly higher than they would be in any event. It believes that, as Birmingham Airport's own growth pushes the level of flights towards the mid to high 40s per hour on its main Runway 15/33, delays will inevitably rise and indeed that much of the current delay that Birmingham has is from the interaction between its own arrival and departure demands on this runway.
- 5.14 A number of mitigation measures are proposed by WMIAL that will benefit activity associated with both airports including reducing the frequency and nature of the conflict at the CIP between Runway 23 Departures at Coventry and Runway 33 Arrivals at Birmingham. These measures include:
- the introduction of a new NPR¹⁴ for departures from Runway 23 at Coventry. This will result in departing flights first climbing to an altitude of 500ft and then turning southwards and then south-eastwards on a trajectory that will take them away from the arriving flights heading for Runway 33 at Birmingham. This will then avoid flights crossing each other at the CIP;
 - the establishment of CAS¹⁵ around Coventry Airport that will enable greater accuracy of air traffic management and hence a higher overall flow of flights within the Birmingham and Coventry Airport area.
- 5.15 WMIAL has already undertaken a consultation exercise regarding the new NPR with the intention of introducing it as soon as is practicable. It also intends to follow the required processes to establish CAS at Coventry. WMIAL have also stated that the introduction of a parallel taxiway at Coventry Airport will improve the flow of aircraft using its runway.

¹⁴ NPR – Noise Preferential Route; a flight path that is used to route departing aircraft in a particular direction. NPRs are often introduced at airports to mitigate the impact of noise on the ground and also to overcome airspace conflicts.

¹⁵ CAS – Controlled Airspace.

5.16 WMIAL also believe that BIAL will inevitably need to improve its own taxiway system serving its main Runway 15/33 and the rate of departures that take off from Runway 33 if it is to achieve the high rate of 48 movements per hour from this runway. At the Inquiry, BIAL has stated that no modifications to the departure routes from Runway 33 will be required and no indication was given that taxiways would be improved.

Views of DAP and NATS

5.17 At the Inquiry both the Civil Aviation Authority - Directorate of Airspace Policy (DAP) and NATS stated that the current operations associated with the CIP at Birmingham and Coventry Airport do not present any safety concerns. Indeed, even with an increase in the level of traffic at either/both airports in the busiest hours, DAP and NATS confirmed that this view would not change as current air traffic procedures will ensure that safe separation standards are applied. Both BIAL and WMIAL share this same position and we would also concur with this view.

5.18 The critical issue is whether the increase in traffic levels raises delays at one or both airports to levels that are unsustainable. Whilst neither the DAP or NATS were convinced that delay levels would reach unacceptable levels at Birmingham in particular, they also pointed out that their role is not to advance the business revenues of either BIAL or WMIAL but to ensure that flying activities at both airports are undertaken safely and as efficiently as the application of these safety standards will allow.

Modelling

- 5.19 In preparation for the airspace proceedings at the Inquiry, an airspace modelling exercise was planned to be undertaken jointly by BIAL and WMIAL to establish what level of delay might be generated by the increase in traffic levels departing from Coventry Airport on the activity at Birmingham Airport in particular. A modelling exercise in this context is the use of specialist computer software programmes to simulate traffic flows in and out of both airports, applying agreed standards of separations, numbers and types of flights, the routes that they will fly and the runways that both will use. Whilst impossible to replicate the real world accurately, these types of modelling exercises are common within the aviation industry as a way of analysing complex runway and airspace issues including the ability to introduce higher levels of traffic than currently being experienced and so replicating the effect of future forecast increases in flying activity.
- 5.20 The joint modelling exercise between BIAL and WMIAL commenced during the early part of 2005 and NATS were commissioned to undertake this study using their RAMS computer simulation tool; a tool that generates a mathematical set of results from the inputs including the levels of delay that, in this case, either Birmingham or Coventry Airports might expect to receive given the mix of traffic being applied and the operational parameters being modelled.
- 5.21 During 2005, whilst BIAL and WMIAL reached agreement on many of the inputs to be used such as aircraft separation distances, etc, they did not reach agreement on the actual scenarios to be tested. Indeed, WMIAL accused BIAL of progressing the RAMS study independently without a full involvement in the evolution of the model and its results by WMIAL.
- 5.22 Towards the end of 2005, WMIAL commissioned their own independent modelling study undertaken by Aviation Solutions and ATAC using a different tool, SIMMOD PRO. This used many of the same agreed inputs that the BIAL-led RAMS study had used but applied a different set of scenarios.

- 5.23 The consequence of these events has resulted in the Inspector being presented with results from two different modelling exercises that have produced differing results, contrasting scenarios and methodologies and inevitably geared towards promoting the respective arguments being put forward at the Inquiry by BIAL and WMIAL in the way the results have been reported and discussed.
- 5.24 BIAL sought to use the RAMS study results to demonstrate that an increase in departures from Runway 23 at Coventry will increase the delays to the Birmingham Airport Runway 33 arrivals to levels that will be unsustainable and so damage the BIAL growth prospects and business case for its proposed second runway.
- 5.25 WMIAL sought to use the SIMMOD Pro study to demonstrate the opposite; that the increases in Coventry Airport activity would not raise delays to unacceptable levels and that the introduction of mitigating measures such as the new NPR and CAS at Coventry would largely eliminate any such increases in delay. The BIAL RAMS study had not, according to WMIAL, accounted for these potential mitigating measures. WMIAL, in fact, commissioned its own RAMS scenario with NATS to demonstrate the benefit of the NPR in an effort to present results from a similar source to help promote this view.
- 5.26 Considerable time was spent at the Inquiry by both BIAL and WMIAL investigating the processes of what had/had not happened, who knew what, who had been involved, why so and so had not been informed, etc, etc. In short much effort was expended on attempting to undermine the opponent party rather than explore coherently the real merits of the results that each contrasting set of modelling studies had generated. There was little common ground between BIAL and WMIAL in respect of the interpretation of the modelling outputs.

York Aviation View

- 5.27 We have read the evidence presented to the Inquiry on airspace issues and listened to all the proceedings during the airspace sessions at the Inquiry and comment as follows.
- 5.28 Clearly the close proximity of the two airports and the interaction at the CIP of current operations does create additional work load for the ATC services and some delay to operations. These delays are being experienced at both airports. However, activities at each airport – as with all airports - generate delays of their own in any event which is a direct consequence of arriving and departing flights sharing the same runway. One flight will often be held up until the other flight has finished using the runway.
- 5.29 Safety is not in question. Whatever levels of traffic generated by each airport, the management of this activity will always be undertaken safely and this can be achieved by continuing with the current set of air traffic procedures in place at both airports. What will certainly occur is an increase in delays at both airports as traffic levels rise, at Birmingham in particular, and at Coventry if it wins this appeal and is allowed to grow ultimately to 2 mppa.
- 5.30 The question to be answered by this Inquiry is how much of the increase in delay at Birmingham is caused by a growth in activity at Coventry and whether this increase in delay will in fact prevent Birmingham achieving 48 movements per hour on its main Runway 15/33 and will this failure to reach 48 movements critically damage the business case for its proposed second Runway. In order to understand the materiality of delay, we first explain how slot allocation takes place at busier airports, such as Birmingham.

Slot Allocation

5.31 Birmingham Airport is presently a 'schedules facilitated' airport under EU Slot Allocation Regulations and it is not yet a coordinated airport¹⁶, meaning that airlines are not required to formally hold and adhere to slot times. Airlines are required to notify a designated coordinator, in this case Airport Coordination Ltd, of their intention to operate and at what time, and to cooperate with the Coordinator in rescheduling movements which cannot be handled within the runway, apron or terminal capacity limits set by Birmingham Airport. Once the Airport becomes coordinated, as it inevitably will as it moves towards full use of capacity on the single runway and probably remain coordinated even with the second runway in place, the formal declaration of runway capacity for scheduling purposes¹⁷ will need to take the acceptable level of delays to airlines into account¹⁸. To the extent that operations at Coventry increased delays at Birmingham Airport, this would impact on the declared runway scheduling rate. This would normally be calculated on the basis of the most common pattern of runway use, i.e. 33 arrivals at Birmingham interacting with 23 departures from Coventry, taking into account the possible delays with other combinations of runway use.

5.32 Coventry Airport is not formally coordinated in terms of airlines needing to be allocated a definitive time slot to operate. De facto, coordination of aircraft movements is carried out by the airport operator to ensure that the planned Thomsonfly operations can be accommodated within the limits of available terminal and/or apron capacity. It is presumed that the same procedures would continue to apply in future. To the extent that aircraft using Coventry are delayed as a result of the airspace conflict is a commercial judgement by Thomsonfly, as to the point at which they cease to be commercially viable because of passenger reaction to delays or increased operating costs. Generally, airlines internationally work on the basis that an acceptable average level of delay over the peak period is of the order of 5 minutes, so recurrent delays in excess of 5 minutes could make Coventry, or Birmingham, less attractive airports to operate from all other things being equal.

¹⁶ EU Slot Allocation Regulation 95/93 and amending Regulation 793/2004

¹⁷ At present, Birmingham Airport is "schedules facilitated" which is advisory coordination rather than mandatory under EU regulations

¹⁸ Typically 5 minutes on average across an hour

5.33 Birmingham Airport's current runway capacity is presently profiled to give a maximum hourly available capacity of 40 movements per hour, with periods operating at a lower capacity to allow any accumulated delays to be dissipated. This capacity is not yet fully used but, significantly, the separately declared arrivals or departure capacities, particularly over shorter scheduling periods of 15 minutes within each hour, are fully taken up in several cases. This arises because Birmingham's current runway capacity of 40 movements per hour operating in a mixed (arrivals and departures) mode is only optimised when there is an equal mix of arrivals and departures in any period, which is seldom the case in terms of the pattern of demand at a regional airport, albeit a large one, like Birmingham. Thus, although runway capacity may appear not to be fully used over a given hour, theoretically leaving room for Coventry movements, critical arrivals or departure capacity may be fully taken up such that extra movements at Coventry can have a direct effect.

5.34 As Birmingham Airport seeks to exploit the capacity potential of its single runway up to an estimated maximum of 48 movements per hour, also on a profiled basis, it is almost inevitable that the Airport will need to move up to 'coordinated' status under EU Regulations. At coordinated airports, airlines are legally required to hold time slots for their operations and are subject to 'use it or lose it' rules as well as potentially penalties for operating outside of coordinated slot times. Coordinated status implies a much tighter control on operations. Achieving a runway movement rate up to 48 movements per hour at Birmingham is critical to the Airport accommodating White Paper growth forecasts up until the point where the second runway is commercially justified.

5.35 Along with coordinated status, there will be a much more formal process by which the available capacity at the Airport is declared as airlines potentially will be turned away from operating if these formal capacity limits are breached. Runway capacity declaration at this level will need to be made having regard to the level of regular peak period delays that the airlines will tolerate. To the extent that airlines are willing to accept the risk of delays incurred at an airport increasing, the declared runway movement rate can be increased. It is anticipated that in order to get the peak movement rate up from 40 movements per hour to 48 movements per hour, airlines at Birmingham will be asked to accept 10 minutes average peak period delay on arrival or departure¹⁹. Any additional delays caused by allowing for movements to and from Coventry would result in a lower runway capacity declaration having to be made as average delays in excess of 10 minutes would not be tolerable in the industry. Growth of movements at Coventry will, if the airspace conflict cannot be resolved by additional controlled airspace and operating procedures, result in Birmingham Airport being unable to exploit its single runway up to the 48 movements per hour planned prior to constructing a second runway and would have wider commercial ramifications on the commercial viability of development at the Airport in this interim period.

5.36 It is anticipated that Birmingham's two runway configuration will also operate in mixed mode at up to 83 movements per hour on the two runways combined. Clearly, when the runway first opens, it will not be operating at full capacity as demand will build up more incrementally. Assuming that modifications are made to the Midlands airspace to accommodate the second runway, there would theoretically be spare capacity for Coventry movements at that time, although the conflict due to the intersection of flight paths would still exist. It is likely that additional arrival stacks would be required to accommodate the enhanced movement rate to the two runways. Again, this would give some scope for accommodating Coventry movements.

5.37 However, in the longer term, use of the two runways would build up to the point where movements at Coventry could potentially constrain the capacity which could be declared from Birmingham's two runways. The effects will increase over time as traffic using the two airports increases.

¹⁹ This implies some flights being delayed substantially in excess.

- 5.38 To the extent that operations at Coventry result in airlines having difficulty obtaining arrival or departure slots at their required times at Birmingham, this will impact mostly on the operation of services to new destinations. Under current slot rules, airlines holding slots are entitled to retain them, so long as they meet 'use it or lose it' rules. Airlines currently operating to an airport have some flexibility to reassign slots to different routes but the combined effect of the system makes it more likely that airlines will continue to operate peak period slots on existing routes with known profitability rather than take the risk of opening up a new destination. Although current slot allocation rules give some priority to new entrant airlines, so opening up options for new routes, this only applies when there are slots available. Revisions to the slot allocation system are under discussion in the EU, which could result in a change to a market based mechanism whereby slots at busy times are sold to those willing to pay most for them. Such a system would, again, tend to make it more likely that airlines would concentrate services on the most popular routes where they can attain highest profitability, often those with strong outbound leisure flows.
- 5.39 In summary, increases in delay will have a material impact on the capacity of Birmingham Airport operating with one or two runways. Whilst commercial considerations are not matters for the planning system, it is legitimate for the RPB to give consideration to whether any constraints on capacity at Birmingham would damage its ability to serve as the major airport for the Region and sustain the wider range of direct services needed to support growth of the regional economy.

Mitigation Measures

- 5.40 We will first comment on the proposed mitigating measures that WMIAL have proposed. CAS will certainly improve the efficiency of airspace management and enable greater accuracy in the timing of activities at both airports. Birmingham Airport is already within CAS so the introduction of the same around Coventry will improve the flows. This, in itself, will not mitigate all delay, regardless of its source, simply that the instances and levels of delay incurred will probably be reduced and so assisting with any longer term increases in throughput which either airport might generate.

- 5.41 The new NPR proposed by WMIAL for Coventry Airport, if implemented successfully in the manner that WMIAL intend, will result in Runway 23 departures from Coventry not actually entering the CIP. However, it is not yet certain that Birmingham Runway 33 arrivals will be able to function independently of this Coventry activity without there being still a need for some additional separation to be applied between successive Birmingham arrivals. It should, nevertheless, reduce the occurrences and magnitude of delays experienced by Birmingham arrivals.
- 5.42 Regarding improvements to the taxiway systems at each airport; WMIAL has indicated that it intends to introduce a full length parallel taxiway at Coventry to reduce runway delay. Whilst such a taxiway would indeed help to reduce runway occupancy, it would not normally be something that an airport with the relatively modest levels of hourly movements that Coventry will generate, even at 2 mppa, would invest in. In contrast, an airport that intends to push its main runway rate up to the mid/high 40s will invest in additional taxiway infrastructure in order to reduce runway occupancy as much as is practicable for its arriving and departing traffic. Despite the lack of commitment to this by BIAL at the Inquiry, we would expect that such investments will be made prior to the construction of a second runway in order to maximise the potential of the existing main runway.
- 5.43 The environmental restrictions that BIAL is faced with regarding the departure route from Runway 33 at Birmingham may indeed prevent additional or realigned departures routes to easily be delivered. However, there will need to be improvement in the rate that departing flights can be released from this runway if the high 40s are to be achieved. If this is not to be achieved by new or modified departure routes, as BIAL have stated at this Inquiry, then there must by some reduction in the 2 minute departure/arrival separation instead.

Modelling Results

- 5.44 Turning now to the modelling exercise, the results of the modelling should have presented the Inspector with a clear picture of what additional delay Birmingham arrivals would be generated by growth in Coventry departures. The results presented by both BIAL and WMIAL have failed to do this. In our opinion, there has been a missed opportunity for both BIAL and WMIAL to actually commission and participate in a joint modelling exercise. Had they done so, then regardless of any shortcomings in the methodologies applied, there would at least have been an agreed set of results that could then have been discussed. Given the commercial tensions between the two companies, this was probably an unrealistic aspiration.
- 5.45 The results presented by both the RAMS and SIMMOD Pro modelling studies have served to confuse rather than assist. The fact that the scenarios tested have been different means that the results are not compatible and so an overview is unclear. If both tools had used the same set of inputs and the same set of scenarios, the results would still have been different, which is inevitable with different tools, however the proportionate differences between the outcome of one scenario set against another would at least have been similar.
- 5.46 Clearly an exercise using the same tool would have been preferential. Here we offer no preference to either RAMS or SIMMOD Pro; they are both sound modelling tools with a good track record. We also offer no criticism of the modellers undertaking the study. We would though suggest that the scenarios adopted by each study failed to model properly a sensible start point, or datum, and did not offer a systematic set of outputs reflecting steadily growing levels of traffic at both airports.
- 5.47 The flight schedules used by each model reflected the daily flight pattern at each airport in 2004. The RAMS model then selected forecasts for the year 2014 which reflected growth at both airports, but crucially did not reflect Birmingham Airport at a peak main runway rate of 48, instead using a value of 43 in line with the forecast; (48 would have occurred at a later date 2019). The SIMMOD Pro model did use a 2019 set of schedules as well as 2014. There were though some differences between the composition of the schedules – neither RAMS nor SIMMOD Pro had exactly the same numbers of arriving and departing flights in each hour.

- 5.48 At Birmingham Airport the busiest hour is the 07:00 to 07:59 period at 2004. Forecasts suggest that this will remain the busiest hour. At Coventry Airport the current peak is the 06:00 to 06:59 hour comprising of departing flights only. WMIAL forecasts suggest that this pattern will remain the same though be it with some additional flying activity, all of them departures, in this peak hour.
- 5.49 BIAL's concern is that if Coventry Airport develop departing activity in the next hour 07:00 to 07:59 then this will coincide directly with Birmingham Airport's peak period and so create undue delay to the arriving flights in particular during this period. There was much debate and disagreement as to whether Coventry activity would indeed be scheduled to any degree of significance in to this 07:00 hour or whether activity from the previous hour would be routinely delayed in to this hour and so cause Birmingham arrivals regular and significant delays.
- 5.50 Both models attempted to prove this point, in the case of the BIAL RAMS work, or disprove it, in the case of WMIAL's SIMMOD Pro work. Neither model has been able to demonstrate conclusively a definitive answer either way. Not least due to the variations in the schedules used, the overall methodologies and in particular due to the different periods of the day that delay statistics have been derived. The RAMS model has generated average delay values for the peak two hour period only, whilst in contrast the SIMMOD Pro model has generated average delays across the full day.
- 5.51 Either approach to delay statistics can be viewed as being adequate, although we would have preferred to focus on the peak period delay only. However, because there are fundamentally different criteria for the delay evaluation means that apart from all the other differences between the two studies it is practically impossible to judge the outputs with any degree of confidence. Both models could have been configured to generate delays in the same way as each other if their respective studies had been set up in a consistent manner.
- 5.52 The belief by BIAL that Coventry Airport departing activity in the crucial 07:00 hour will create delays for Birmingham Airport arrivals, if allowed to develop unchecked, has been central to the BIAL case and underpins their desire for the Inspector to impose a limit on the numbers of flights at Coventry in each hour as a condition of approval if he is so minded to approve the 'appeal'.

5.53 Neither study established what the break point would be at either airport, Birmingham in particular – i.e. at what level of delay does the system break in terms of unsustainable delays. Establishing this level of delay would have enabled the studies to identify the maximum number of movements the runway can handle. Further, the studies should have first concentrated on growing the traffic levels, keeping the input assumptions in terms of facilities and procedures constant, then, when the delay break point is reached, introducing each mitigating measure to see if and to what extent this would improve matters. This is the cornerstone of a systematic approach to such studies. In our view, both studies seem to have adopted a ‘scatter gun’ approach, with arbitrary levels of traffic applied representing a limited number of forecast years, rather than a system capacity study which would have better delivered the results the Inspector required.

5.54 The other failure of the BIAL RAMS study was that BIAL had not converted the delay results in to what it actually meant to the business case for the second runway. In other words, if 46 movements per hour is the limit with Coventry at 2 mppa, then:

- is the loss of 2 movements per hour from Birmingham’s single runway material in terms of the wider role of the Airport?
- what cost to BIAL’s business is the loss of the two movements from the required target of 48 that undermines the case for and/or timing of the second runway?
- does this result in a delay to the provision of a second runway or make its delivery unlikely?

5.55 Regrettably due to the inconclusive outputs from the modelling exercises presented to the Inquiry, obscured by the ‘mud slinging’ that took place by both BIAL and WMIAL regarding the modelling process and chronology, we are unable to provide WMRA with a view on the evidence presented regarding whether or not growth at Coventry Airport to 2 mppa will undermine growth at Birmingham Airport.

5.56 On the one hand, WMIAL has argued that to the extent that there is a material impact, this will be mitigated by the measures which it is proposing. On the other hand, BIAL contend that the mitigation measures cannot be relied on and that Coventry could alter its operating pattern giving rise to more substantial effects. In our view, the only way to resolve the merits of this would be for a systematic independent study to be commissioned.

Potential outcomes of the inquiry

5.57 Whilst the Inquiry proceedings have now concluded, the outcome from the Inquiry will not be known until around the middle of 2007. This will be too late to inform the early part of the RSS review process. We set out here, the range of potential outcomes from the Inquiry:

- i. the 'appeal' is rejected and Coventry Airport continues with its current approved IPF with a Passenger Air Transport Movement, PATM²⁰, limit of 10,700 per annum;
- ii. the 'appeal' is approved in full allowing the new terminal to be built with a capacity of 2 mppa and with no restriction on PATM per annum;
- iii. the 'appeal' is approved for the construction of a 2 mppa terminal but with a new and higher PATM limit, raising the current 10,700 per annum level;
- iv. the 'appeal' is approved for the construction of a 2 mppa terminal, a new higher PATM limit raising the current 10,700 per annum level and a cap is placed on the number of peak hour departures.

5.58 As may be expected, WMIAL argued at the Inquiry that a decision should be made to allow the development, unfettered by any restrictions (over and above those environmental and surface access obligations negotiated as part of its Section 106 Agreement). In reality, it is likely that some form of PATM restriction, equivalent to the capacity of the terminal would be acceptable to WMIAL.

²⁰ Passenger air transport movements

5.59 BIAL's position during the Inquiry shifted from one of complete opposition to one of some acceptance of the development provided that peak hour movements are capped and/or some form of scheduling agreement is in place if the Inspector is minded to recommend approval of the expansion of Coventry to 2 mppa. Evidence was presented by BIAL of a potential agreement between both airports regarding the numbers of movements at Coventry that would in effect have been an agreed cap on the number of departures in any hour, in particular the critical hours when arrivals at Birmingham are at their greatest. Such an agreement was first discussed between the two airports in 2004 but did not materialise.

5.60 At this stage, it is not possible to 'second guess' the Inquiry outcome. Following the precedent of the IPF Decision, it would appear likely that the Secretary of State will seek to balance the local economic benefits from further development at Coventry with the environmental impacts of such development and the wider implications for development at Birmingham. In our view, the air space evidence presented at the Inquiry, both in its content and the manner of its presentation²¹, has served to obscure the true impact or not of operations each airport might have on the other.

²¹ including the failure to call the actual modelling experts of both parties and the degeneration into attacks on process rather than substance.

6 REVIEW OF RSS POLICIES

- 6.1 Clearly, understanding the nature of the airspace conflict and its impact will be crucial to ensuring that the right planning policy framework is established for airport growth within the West Midlands through the RSS. In our view, and having regard to the IPF decision, this leaves two key tests:
- to what extent does development of Coventry Airport to any particular passenger throughput jeopardise the eventual development of a second runway at Birmingham in time to meet the wider Midlands' (East and West) requirement for additional runway capacity?
 - what is the specific balance of environmental costs and economic benefits in relation to the development of Coventry, or any, airport in the region?
- 6.2 We discuss here the potential implications of the airspace issue based on the information presented at the Inquiry.

Current RSS Policies

- 6.3 At para. 4.2, we set out the existing RSS Policy T11 in full. At the very least, policy F will need to be adapted to reflect at least the current situation at Coventry Airport where it has now moved on from being a purely 'freight airport' providing a 'complementary role' to Birmingham. It has its own based airline Thomsonfly with a now well established range of routes serving the same or similar leisure destinations as those operated from Birmingham. It has the potential to attract more services operating to a wider range of destinations even with the limits of the IPF approval; its throughput has not yet reached the 1 mppa limit. It continues to have freight operations as well as business aviation activity. These will continue to develop alongside the passenger services.

- 6.4 In adapting Policy F, the RSS should also consider including a set of Coventry specific policies similar to Policies A to E that apply to Birmingham recognising that Coventry Airport has an established and potentially more pivotal role serving the West Midlands air transport needs, subject to the outcome of the current 'appeal'. T11 at the very least should establish policies on 'public transport mode share' recognising the thrust of the current Policy H which states that *'challenging targets should be set to encourage a greater percentage of trips, by passengers, visitors and staff, by more sustainable modes'* applicable to all the regions airports.
- 6.5 The Inquiry debated at length the quality of the current public transport offering at Coventry Airport an that proposed by WMIAL should the Airport be developed to handle 2 mppa. Comparisons were made between the considerable differences in the quality of public transport offered at Birmingham with the more limited set of bus services likely to be available at Coventry.
- 6.6 BIAL argued that this more limited offering at Coventry will mean that not only will a much lower % of the Coventry throughput be attracted to use public transport compared to Birmingham and that for those that do use it the quality will be inferior. BIAL also claimed that some 90%²² of the Coventry throughput, both currently and if it is allowed to grow to 2 mppa, are passengers that would have used Birmingham Airport and as such these 'Birmingham Airport' passengers will now be faced with less choice in the range of public transport services on offer at Coventry. It would be helpful if the RSS clarified the interpretation of this public transport target and how it applies to Birmingham, Coventry and other airports in the Region.

Future RSS Policies

- 6.7 The first requirement is for the revised RSS to reflect the policies towards airports in the Region set out in the White Paper. Whilst policy support for growth to between 32 and 40 mppa and the provision of a second runway at Birmingham is clear, policy is less explicit regarding the acceptable throughput at Coventry. The White Paper also links the level of development at Coventry to its *"conclusions on capacity elsewhere in the Midlands"*.

²² Our work would suggest the true figure is around 57%

- 6.8 It is in this context that the existence or otherwise of an airspace conflict by which development at Coventry would restrict the ability of Birmingham to deliver the planned additional capacity, and with its region-wide economic benefits, is material. During our observations of the airspace proceedings at the Inquiry, it was evident that the two airport companies BIAL and WMIAL were understandably protecting their own business concerns. This has resulted in a 'polarised' stance regarding a range of practicable issues covering the failure to undertake a 'proper shared modelling study' to the delivery of ATC services and lack of agreement on scheduling limits.
- 6.9 With its approved IPF for 1 mppa Coventry Airport is now an established, real and developing airport that is not going to go away. Likewise, Birmingham Airport has the critical mass and momentum to continue its development as the West Midlands' pre-eminent airport and will always dwarf its smaller neighbour. This means that the policy framework must find a means for the two airports to co-exist without detriment to each other and in order to optimise both local and regional benefits.
- 6.10 WMRA may wish to reflect on this and consider whether RSS policy should attempt to influence a climate of co-operation between the two airport companies or whether alternative influencing strategies may be more appropriate. A number of measures, outside of the scope of the RSS and beyond the scope of the planning regime more generally appear likely to assist in mitigating the impact of the airspace conflict, namely:
- a joint ATC service;
 - a joint co-ordination of schedules.
- 6.11 All parties agreed that a joint ATC service managing air traffic control for both airports would assist both airports in the mitigation of delay. Indeed discussions have been held by both BIAL and WMIAL to this effect. These failed to reach a successful conclusion ahead of the inquiry. The establishment of such a joint ATC service would offer both airports a much improved ATC service as clarity of a balanced tactical decision making in the best interests of traffic at both airports could then be achieved. DAP are able to arbitrate in the reaching of an agreement on a joint ATC should this be required, but they would much prefer to see the two airport companies reach a consensus as there must also be business agreement on how such a joint operation is to be managed, funded and facilitated.

- 6.12 Regarding the co-ordination of schedules, there has again been some discussion ahead of the Inquiry between BIAL and WMIAL in the form of a Letter of Agreement, LOA, which reached a 'draft' stage during 2004. This failed to reach a conclusion and it is unclear if it is 'dead in the water' or 'still up for consideration' in the light of proceedings at the Inquiry. The LoA sought to have an agreed limit on the numbers of movements at Coventry Airport, in particular departures during certain hours. This may be an area where some condition could be brought forward attached to any permission for development at Coventry up to 2 mppa, if approved.
- 6.13 Recognising that such measures cannot form part of the RSS, the RSS may need to consider being more specific about the scale of acceptable development at Coventry. Ideally, this would have been informed by clear cogent evidence on what level of demand at Coventry would impinge upon Birmingham Airport's wider regional role. Regrettably such evidence is not available, with the evidence such as there is from the recent Public Inquiry subject to claim and counter claim.
- 6.14 Whilst we accept that the measures proposed by Coventry will have the impact of mitigating the airspace conflict between the two airports, there does remain, in our view, considerable uncertainty regarding whether further growth at Coventry would give rise to material constraints on operations at Birmingham Airport. Ideally, this should be resolved in a 'mature' discussion between the two parties, informed by an agreed capacity assessment but this appears an unrealistic aspiration.
- 6.15 Failing that, we would recommend that the RPB considers adopting a clarificatory policy which places a restriction on development at Coventry to the level approved following the current application or some higher level, subject to the discussions and implementation of the measures suggested above.

6.16 In considering the appropriate response within the RSS, It is important to for the RPB to recognise that the development of a second runway at Birmingham Airport is not an end in itself but is part of a wider strategy to see airports within the Midlands handle a greater proportion of passenger demand arising in the Midlands as demand grows over time, making the provision of a wider range of services viable. Generally, the provision of a wider range of services will be achieved by a degree of concentration at the major airport within any region, in this case Birmingham. However, it is clear that the White Paper recognises the benefits of a greater range of services being offered at local airports, accepting that these will tend to duplicate destinations already offered at the main airport. In this sense, competition between airports is accepted. We consider that our previous report to the RPB sets out many of the key considerations which should inform a review of the RSS.²³

²³ We are aware that elements of our previous Report (paras 6.20 and 6.21) dealing with the extent to which development at Coventry would impact on demand at Birmingham has been the subject of some debate at the recent Public Inquiry. We stated that our best estimate was that on routes operated at Coventry, which are also operated from Birmingham, some 57% of passengers would have been expected to use Birmingham in the absence of a Coventry service. We take this opportunity to reiterate the findings of our previous Report, which was based on the observed and modelled impact of Coventry Airport on operations at Birmingham. Both BIAL and WMIAL misinterpreted this figure at the Public Inquiry, with BIAL claiming that 90% of passengers at Coventry would otherwise have used Birmingham Airport, but this is not borne out by actual evidence of the impact. However, nor is it right to contend, as WMIAL did, that 43% of passenger demand using Coventry will have been clawed back from outside the Region as a substantial proportion of this additional passenger demand will have been newly stimulated to travel as a result of the new low fare offer. In addition, Coventry Airport, given its position in the Region, will draw in demand originating in the East Midlands, East and South East Regions. To an extent, this highlights the artificiality of using claw back of regional demand as the primary criterion for determining airports policy given the proximity of airports to regional boundaries.