



Aviation: proposals for an airport in the Thames estuary, 1945-2010

Standard Note: SN/BT/4920

Last updated: 9 September 2010

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Section Business and Transport Section

In October 2008, the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, announced the establishment of a study group to investigate the feasibility of the construction of a new international hub airport in the Thames estuary. The Group published its preliminary report on 19 October 2009, concluding that it is technically possible to build an airport in the estuary, but that much further study is necessary before a final decision is made. The Mayor established a Steering Group led by Sir David King to oversee consideration of these studies. In July 2010 the new Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition stated that the construction of a new airport in the estuary was not an option the Government was considering.

This Note provides background on Mayor Johnson's investigation and sets this in the context of previous attempts to construct an airport in the area. For information on current policy developments regarding airports in the south east, see [Library Standard Note SN/BT/2893](#); and for developments at Heathrow, see [SN/BT/1136](#).

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Contents

1	Introduction	3
2	Onshore [Coastal] airports	5
2.1	Cliffe, Kent	5
2.2	Foulness Island/Maplin Sands, Essex	7
	Early proposals	7
	Roskill Commission on the Third London Airport (1968-'71)	8
	Why Maplin was chosen, 1971	10
	Why Maplin was abandoned, 1974	12
	Developments since 1974	14
2.3	Sheppey, Kent	16
2.4	Thames Reach, Kent	17
3	Offshore [Artificial island] airports	20
3.1	Marinair/Thames Estuary Airport Company	21
3.2	Mayor of London's Study Groups, 2008-	26
	The role of the Mayor	26
	Douglas Oakervee Report, 2009	27
	Reactions	29
	Actions following the Oakervee Report	31
4	Reference Materials	33
4.1	Chronology	33
4.2	Press articles	40
4.3	Early Day Motions	41
4.4	Map	44
4.5	Bibliography	45
4.6	Material held in National and Local Archives	50

1 Introduction

In 1958, Mr Richard Harris MP (Con, Heston and Isleworth), noting that aircraft noise was “now becoming intolerable for about a million people in South-West Middlesex”, asked the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation to consider removing what was then London Airport [Heathrow] to “a coastal area which is much better fitted to take some of these new, screaming monsters which frighten the life out of our constituents.”¹ Fifty years later, the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, who had earlier described the development of Heathrow as a ‘planning error’, announced a feasibility study into the development of a new airport in the Thames estuary.

Although the Maplin Sands project abandoned in the 1970s is the most well known example, there is a long history of different proposals to site an airport in the Thames estuary.

Estuary airport plans have shared certain characteristics

- Promoters have stressed their relatively benign environmental aspects. In the period before aircraft emission levels were raised as a serious policy concern, this was usually couched in terms of lower levels of noise pollution and impact on local residents.² In 1972 Eldon Griffiths MP (Con, Bury St Edmunds), Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department of the Environment, referred to the Maplin Sands scheme as the “world’s first environmental airport”.³ In 2008, Mayor Boris Johnson said that it was “ever more urgent that we investigate the possibility of a long-term solution, in the form of a new and more eco-friendly international airport at a site in the Thames estuary”.⁴ The 2009 Oakervee report referred to a ‘green airport’ in the estuary.⁵
- They have emphasised the safety advantages of having planes take-off and land over water rather than major built-up areas
- In order to address the perceived inaccessibility of the area, the schemes have often included plans for high speed rail links to connect passengers to central London.
- Estuary airports have been criticised for their potentially destructive effects on bird-life – in particular, Brent Geese - in the area. Conversely, aircraft have been seen as at risk from ‘bird-strike’ incidents in the estuary. The January 2009 crash landing of a passenger aircraft in New York’s Hudson River following a collision with a flock of birds raised concerns about siting an airport in the Thames estuary which is home to a wide variety of bird species.⁶
- Objectors to Thames estuary airports have emphasised the difficulty of relocating the military installations – including a firing range at Shoeburyness - and of removing unexploded ordnance from the area. Concerns have also been expressed about the potential danger caused by the [SS Richard Montgomery](#), a US ‘Liberty ship’ carrying a large cargo of explosives, which was wrecked off the Isle of Sheppey in 1944.

However, the schemes have varied in several respects

- Plans have been put forward by both private sector and public sector bodies.
- In terms of scale, they have ranged from a one runway project in addition to existing airports, to a six-runway scheme replacing all other London airports.

¹ [HC Deb 12 November 1958 vol 595 c368](#)

²² See [Library Research Paper 08/08](#) for information on aviation and climate change

³ [HC Deb 09 August 1972 vol 842 c1747](#)

⁴ “Fly into Gatwick and see why London needs another airport In four years’ time”, *Daily Telegraph*, 12 August 2008, p18

⁵ *Thames estuary airport feasibility review*, October 2009, p36

⁶ [“Airbus crashes in New York river”](#), BBC News website, 16 January 2009 (accessed 16 July 2010)

- Different locations - some based offshore on artificial islands e.g. the Marinair scheme and the suggestion put forward in the 2009 Douglas Oakervee report, some on existing land or on reclaiming land from the sea on the Kent or Essex banks of the estuary e.g. Cliffe.
- Some projects have included extra features in addition to the airport e.g. Maplin Sands which also included a seaport and plans for a new town. These additional features have led to a wide variation in cost projections for the different schemes.
- Sometimes based on a one centre model and sometimes a two-centre project, with terminals in east London and runways in the estuary e.g. the GLC proposals in the late 1970s/early 1980s.

Since the abandonment of the Maplin Sands project in 1974, no plan for an airport in the estuary has received Government support. Nevertheless, new proposals have continued to emerge from those convinced that the estuary is the optimum location for an airport to serve London.

A number of offshore airports have been constructed overseas – in particular in China, South Korea and Japan. In a report commissioned by the Department for Transport in 2003, Halcrow Group stated that “the development of a major airport offshore is entirely feasible and offers advantages of high capacity and much-reduced overall environmental impact”.⁷ However, a number of potential problems with offshore airports were noted. In the aviation White Paper published in December 2003, the Government had the following to say on proposals for Thames estuarial airports:

construction costs would be significantly higher than for onshore sites and less certain. The additional costs would be incurred largely in the early phases of development before any revenues are generated;

construction might be several years longer for an offshore site;

costs of related transport infrastructure could be very high. The further the distance from the key London markets, the more heavily an airport would depend on dedicated, high-speed rail access and sufficient terminal capacity in Central London. A new railway would be expensive and difficult to provide. There is little spare capacity at the London terminals. Substantial additional road infrastructure would also be required;

some impacts (such as noise), would be reduced but damage to sensitive habitats is often more likely, and some new environmental impacts would need to be considered, such as marine ecology, and effects on tidal flow. Land-take at the site would be less than for onshore locations, though land might be still required for associated facilities and for new road and rail links. Risks posed by bird strike would be expected to be greater at estuarine sites, especially those on or close to the shoreline;

forecasting suggests that the financial viability of a new estuarine airport would be likely to depend on government intervention to try to ensure early take up of new capacity by passengers and airlines. Although offshore airports have been built elsewhere in other parts of the world, none of them is part of a multi-airport system as would be the case in the South East. The level of intervention required to ensure success would almost certainly entail significant costs to the public sector...

11.116 In the light of these particular concerns, the evidence currently available to the Government, and all other relevant factors, the Government does not consider that any of the above proposals can be considered to offer a solution that is both superior to the preferred options for development of existing major airports, as previously described, and clearly viable within the timescale concerned.⁸

Many locations in the Thames Estuary have been touted as suitable locations since the 1940s. The remainder of this Note looks at some of the most significant proposals.

⁷ *Development of Airport Capacity in the Thames Estuary*, Halcrow Group Ltd for the Department for Transport, Dec 2003 <http://bit.ly/WRJuh> (UK Government Web Archive, accessed 16 July 2010)

⁸ *The Future of Air Transport, Cm 6046, DfT, Dec 2003*, para 11.110 (UK Government Web Archive, accessed 16 July 2010)

2 Onshore [Coastal] airports

2.1 Cliffe, Kent

The area around Cliffe in Kent has long been considered a potential location for a Thames estuary airport.

Cliffe Marshes was considered as a successor to Croydon as a London airport after WWII but lost out to Heathrow.⁹ It was also short-listed as the site for a new flying boat airport by the 'Pakenham Committee' in 1946/47. The Port of London Authority proposed the construction of a flying boat base with an adjacent landplane airport which could be developed into a bad weather alternative to London Airport.¹⁰ In 1949, the Government confirmed that the Cliffe proposal for a flying boat base had been abandoned.¹¹

In 1954, following the local planning inquiry into the development of Gatwick, the Conservative Government explained why Cliffe had not been chosen

The air space near the Thames Estuary is restricted by two airways, by danger areas and approach sectors for two R.A.F aerodromes. This makes it impossible to find enough room for a control zone for Cliffe or for a holding area reasonably near Cliffe where aircraft could wait their turn to land during bad weather.

Aircraft flying to and from the Channel Islands, which would form an important part of the traffic using the aerodrome, would have to cross the two airways between London Airport and France.

Cliffe would cost more than Gatwick to build, its weather is worse than Gatwick's, and its access to London is so bad as to rule this site out altogether.¹²

An official report again short-listed Cliffe as a possible airport site in 1963. Again it was rejected, this time in favour of Stansted.¹³ Following a public inquiry into the Stansted proposal, the Planning Inspector submitted a report in 1966 (published in 1967) in which he found the case for Stansted unproven and recommended a wider review to look at the alternatives, including Cliffe.¹⁴

In 1967, the Labour Government published a White Paper on a Third London Airport. It rejected Cliffe as a possible location because it would require the removal of a MOD firing range at Shoeburyness; the site would be too restricted to accommodate more than two parallel runways; and because it was too close to Heathrow to allow both airports to function at maximum efficiency.¹⁵

While Cliffe did not make the shortlist of sites investigated by the Roskill Commission (1968-'71) [for more information on Roskill, see section 2.2 below], following the publication of the Commission's report advocating Cublington in Buckinghamshire, it was recommended to Government by a private consortium led by Brian Colquhoun, a consulting engineer. He argued that Cliffe was nearer to London than Foulness or Cublington and its coastal location away from major urban centres would limit nuisance to local residents. The Department of the Environment said it would look at the proposal.¹⁶ However, shortly afterwards it chose Foulness.

Three decades later, Cliffe emerged as a potential new airport site during the South East and East of England Regional Air Services (SERAS) consultations in 2002.¹⁷

⁹ *Thames Reach Airport: SERAS assessment submission*, 30 June 2003 (Internet Archive, accessed 16 July 2010)

¹⁰ "Flying-boat base: examination of Thames Estuary scheme", *Times*, 31 January 1947, p2

¹¹ *HC Committee of Public Accounts*, First, Second and Third Reports, HC 104-I, 186, I, 233-I, 1948-49 (available via the [House of Commons Parliamentary Papers service](#) on the Intranet)

¹² [HC Deb 30 July 1954 vol 531 cc131-2W](#)

¹³ *Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on the Third London Airport*, HMSO, 1964,

¹⁴ *Report of the Inquiry into the Local Objections to the proposed development of land at Stansted as the Third Airport for London* 6th December 1965-11th February 1966, HMSO, 1967, pp4-8

¹⁵ *The Third London Airport*, 1967, Cmnd 3259, p15

¹⁶ "Government are urged to consider estuary alternative to Foulness", *Times*, 5 April 1971, p4

¹⁷ For more information on SERAS, see Library Standard Note [SN/BT/2893](#), *Aviation: airports in South east England*

The proposal was for up to four runways arranged in two east-west close parallel pairs, with a possible fifth runway on a different alignment, which might be used only at night and in particular weather conditions. The main benefits of Cliffe were identified as:

- sufficient land available for a major new airport,
- potentially good surface transport links with London, other parts of the South East and the UK,
- relatively few people would be displaced by the airport's construction for the amount of new capacity provided,
- relatively low numbers of people would be affected by aircraft noise,
- a potential for 24-hour operation to meet the needs of air freight, and
- development of an airport in this location would support regeneration policies in the Thames Gateway.¹⁸

The Cliffe location gained partial support from SASIG (Strategic Aviation Special Interest Group of the Local Government Association). The Group saw Cliffe as an opportunity to “move from a situation where airports grow incrementally as demand forces last minute decisions, to one of planned growth and long term capacity”. While acknowledging the ecological impact of a new airport, SASIG stated that this had to be weighed against the noise and air quality impacts on people living around Heathrow and Stansted of any expansion there. However, the Group noted that there “may be better new airport sites still needing detailed examination.”¹⁹

It was opposed by, amongst others,

- Kent County Council which described it as neither practical, viable nor environmentally acceptable. A number of more specific objections were cited including poor surface access, high cost (estimated by KCC as at least £16 billion), safety risks (including bird strike), planning blight because of the urbanisation and travel impacts of the new airport and destruction of wildlife habitats.²⁰
- The RSPB which was concerned at the potential damage to the breeding grounds of rare wading birds and marshalled a large public campaign against the proposal.²¹
- ‘Freedom to Fly’ aviation industry lobby group.²²
- Local MPs

A 2002 study commissioned by the Department for Transport on the bird strike issue found that

...the environment around the Cliffe airport option contains substantial numbers of birds hazardous to aircraft. Without a comprehensive and aggressive bird management programme in place, incorporating careful and considered airport design, appropriate habitat management and active bird control, an airport could not operate safely in this location. Even with such world class management and mitigation measures in place as identified in this report, it is not considered possible to reduce the risk to a level similar to that experienced at other UK airports.²³

¹⁸ *The Future development of air transport in the UK: South east and east of England: Chapter 11: Cliffe*, Department for Transport, 2003

<http://tinyurl.com/7e4645> (UK Government Web Archive, accessed 16 July 2010)

¹⁹ *Future Development of Air Transport in the UK: response to the Dept for Transport*, SASIG, Nov 2002

<http://tinyurl.com/5dtvst> (Internet Archive, accessed 16 July 2010)

²⁰ *The right airports policy? Kent County Council's view*, Nov 2002

<http://tinyurl.com/6cfex8> (Internet Archive, accessed 16 July 2010)

²¹ “A birdwatcher’s wilderness on London’s doorstep”, *Financial Times*, 3 July 2004, p6

²² “Air industry rejects Cliffe site”, *Guardian*, 20 May 2003, p8

²³ *Study on safety risks from birds and safety measures around Cliffe Marshes*, Central Science Laboratory/British Trust for Ornithology for the Department for Transport, 2002 (UK Govt Web Archive, accessed 16 July 2010)

The Cliffe project was rejected by the Government in the [December 2003 White Paper](#) in favour of expansion at Heathrow and Stansted.²⁴ In a 2008 Commons debate, the Secretary of State for Transport explained why the scheme had been dismissed

After careful consideration, that proposal was rejected for three major reasons—high up-front costs; lower benefits than the options for the development of existing airports; and a significant risk that the site would not be financially viable—and it should be noted that it was the best of the options for a completely new airport. The bird populations in the area were also a significant consideration, given the significant safety implications arising from the risk of bird strike.²⁵

The Cliffe proposal had been derided by some environmental campaigners as a Government ‘red herring’ intended to divert their attention from expansion at existing airports. Criticism also came from promoters of alternative sites. The Thames Estuary Airport Company/Marinair was dismissive

Within the White Paper the Government's definition of an estuary airport was one abutting the Kent foreshore, disrupting the salt-marsh floodplains and virtually destroying the internationally valued bird migration sanctuary. It came as no surprise that this carefully defined ‘Aunt Sally’ of an estuary airport option was so swiftly dismissed.²⁶

In 2009, Concentric Consultancy proposed the construction of a new airport on the Hoo Peninsula,²⁷ but no further proposals to site an airport at Cliffe itself have been traced since 2003.²⁸

2.2 Foulness Island/Maplin Sands, Essex

Although there were early proposals to build an airport on Foulness Island itself, the most well known attempt (and the only one with Government support) at an airport in the Thames estuary was centred on Maplin Sands, just off Foulness Island in Essex. The Maplin Sands proposal for an airport [plans for a seaport and new town were added later] was adopted by the Heath Government in 1971 but abandoned by Labour in 1974. In 1979 the Conservative Government announced that the plan would not be revived; there has been little activity since then.

Early proposals

Foulness Island in Essex was considered as a potential airport site as far back as the early 1960s.²⁹ In May 1963, as the ‘Interdepartmental Committee’ set up by the Conservative Government to consider the location of a Third London Airport continued its work, the Noise Abatement Society suggested Foulness as a viable option in a letter to the Minister of Aviation. The Government's response is recorded in Hansard

Your proposal is much more far-reaching than merely laying down runways and taxiways, etc. on a new site. It would mean writing off well over £50 million capital that the taxpayer and the airlines have put into Heathrow and the use of a large amount of national resources to reprovide them elsewhere. There would also be an immense social problem. Some 30,000 people are employed at Heathrow, and most of them live nearby. Unless they are to be deprived of their jobs, it would be essential to facilitate their transfer to the neighbourhood of the new airport. There are also many people living near Heathrow whose livelihood depends wholly or partly on the employment and business created by the airport. All these people would be vitally affected by your proposals. We should also have to consider the demands on housing and other social services in the area near Foulness, as the new airport would have to operate on the same scale as Heathrow.

A transfer of the kind that you have suggested would therefore constitute a major social upheaval with incalculable consequences. Foulness, anyhow, is not a suitable site for a major airport. We have, as it

²⁴ *Darling announces two new runways for the South east*, Department for Transport Press Release, 16 December 2003

²⁵ HC Deb 20 Nov 2008 c67

²⁶ Thames Estuary Airport Company website (cached version)

<http://web.archive.org/web/20080109015210/http://www.teaco.co.uk/introduction.htm> (Internet Archive, accessed 16 July 2010)

²⁷ *South East of England Airport Feasibility Study*, Concentric Consultancy, 2009

<http://tinyurl.com/32wsyfh> (accessed 12 July 2010)

²⁸ See also Section 2.4 of this Note on the proposal made by ‘Thames Reach’ which is located a short distance from Cliffe

²⁹ David McKie states that the Noise Abatement Society had been interested in this idea since 1957. *A sadly mismanaged affair: a political history of the third London airport*, By David McKie, 1973, p148

happens, examined the possibility of building a new airport in Foulness, not to replace Heathrow but to take the overflow of the London area's traffic when both Heathrow and Gatwick are operating to capacity. Foulness has had to be ruled out, even for this supplementary role, on several grounds. With a major airport at Foulness, Southend would have to be closed and its considerable traffic transferred to the new airport. This would mean that right from the start Foulness would be unable to take both Heathrow's and Southend's traffic, and the London area would thus need another very large airport at the same time. Even if we could find a suitable site—which our current studies show to be extremely difficult—the full cost of this extra airport would fall on the taxpayer. A major airport at Foulness would also mean closing the firing range at Shoeburyness. Many millions of pounds of public money have been spent in developing this range, which plays an essential part in our defence plans. Even if an alternative site were available for the range—and I understand that there is none—we could not justify the abandonment of such a large public investment and its duplication elsewhere.

I would also mention that Heathrow, which incidentally makes a profit of over £1 million a year, could not cease operations before both the airport replacing it and the monorail link with Central London were completed. Your consortium would therefore have to lay out sums of the order of £100 million on the airport, airlines' maintenance bases and the monorail, before beginning to receive a return.

I think that I have said enough to show why I could not encourage your consortium to devote time and effort to an impracticable scheme. I regret that I am therefore unable to support your request to the Secretary of State for War for permission to make soil tests on Foulness.³⁰

The Interdepartmental Committee's report (published in 1964) did shortlist Foulness, but recommended Stansted.³¹ The 1965/1966 public inquiry into the development of Stansted heard evidence from the Noise Abatement Society on the necessity to site airports as far from built-up areas as possible. The Society argued that a monorail link to Foulness could bring the site within 20 minutes travelling time from central London. The Inspector's report found the case for the development of Stansted unproven and recommended further study.³² Although the Labour Government did carry out another 'Interdepartmental Review' in 1966, the report was not made public. The Government's 1967 decision to overrule the Planning Inspector's objections (although it was not a statutory public inquiry) and approve Stansted's development provoked a great deal of protest.

A Motion [debated in the Commons on 29 June 1967](#) demanded that an independent public inquiry be held. During the course of the debate, the President of the Board of Trade, Douglas Jay (Lab, Battersea North) explained the reasons for the rejection of Stansted's alternatives. In respect of Foulness, he said

If, therefore, we were to choose Foulness, there would be a longer journey time to London; another site would have to be found for the firing range; the cost would be very much greater; a much larger number of people in total would be affected by noise; and more agricultural land of high value would be sacrificed. I cannot think that this would be a very sensible decision either.³³

The Motion was defeated, but in a [Lords debate on 11 December 1967](#), the Government's decision was again heavily criticised. In February 1968, citing the reason as a recent decision to realign the runways at Stansted which the 1965/66 Planning Inquiry had not considered, the [Government announced](#) the establishment of an inquiry into the siting of London's third airport.

Roskill Commission on the Third London Airport (1968-'71)³⁴

The Commission on the Third London Airport chaired by Mr Justice Roskill was set up in 1968 "to enquire into the timing of the need for a four-runway airport to cater for the growth of traffic at existing airports serving the London area, to consider the various alternative sites, and to recommend which site should be selected." According to David McKie, the problem was handed over to an impartial Commission 'impervious to nobbling by pressure groups' which would look at the advantages and disadvantages of potential sites in

³⁰ [HC Deb 29 July 1963 vol 682 cc17-9](#)

³¹ HMSO, *Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on the Third London Airport*, 1964

³² *Report of the Inquiry into Local Objections to the proposed development of land at Stansted as the Third Airport for London*, Presented to the Minister of Housing and Local Government by G D Blake, 1967

³³ [HC Deb 29 June 1967 vol 749 cc798](#)

³⁴ For further information on the Roskill Commission, please see HC Library Reference Sheet 71/4, March 1971

a logical manner. It was felt that the findings of such a Commission would have a better chance of gaining public acceptance than a report written in Whitehall.³⁵

Oral and written representations were made to the Roskill Commission from interested parties including local pressure groups and MPs. Essex County Council also submitted proposals in respect of Foulness Island and Foulness Sands/Shore.³⁶

Several proposals for airports at Foulness were made by private sector organisations/engineers around the time of the Roskill Commission. In February 1968, John Howard and Company proposed a 4-runway scheme costing £50-70m. Bernard L Clark & Partners' scheme included a large dock complex in addition to the airport. The company argued that "There are no limits to the extensions or revisions which may become necessary, and certainly, whatever the future holds in store, so far as noise and similar problems are concerned, no inconvenience to the population generally".³⁷ The Roskill Commission appeared unconvinced by their plans and questioned their value for money for taxpayers.³⁸

In March 1969, the Commission released a short-list of 4 potential sites. Three were inland: Cublington (Bucks); Nuthampstead (Herts); and Thurleigh (Beds); and one on the coast at Foulness (Essex). Stansted was eliminated.

The Report noted that Foulness was regarded as the public favourite for the Third London Airport. Nevertheless, although the technical feasibility of reclaiming land was accepted, the Roskill report eventually rejected Foulness on the grounds that its inaccessibility would mean that it would not succeed as an airport, with airlines choosing to fly from Heathrow and Gatwick and therefore increasing the noise burdens at these locations. In December 1970, the Commission released its conclusions, revealing that Cublington in Buckinghamshire was the preferred option of all but one of the Commissioners.³⁹ When the final report was published in January 1971, Professor Colin Buchanan submitted a dissenting opinion in favour of the Foulness site.⁴⁰

In the period between the release of the Commission's conclusions and the announcement of the Government's decision on the location of the Third London Airport, there was a wave of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary protest against the Cublington location.

On 26 April 1971, the Government [formally responded](#) to the Roskill report. It announced that it accepted the need for a third London airport, but decided that the site should be at Foulness rather than Cublington

In the Government's view, the irreversible damage that would be done to large tracts of countryside and to many settled communities by the creation of an airport at any of the three inland sites studied by the Commission is so great that it is worth paying the price involved in selecting Foulness. The Commission has clearly indicated that the Foulness site has its economic and environmental disadvantages.

The Government are confident that an airport at Foulness will meet the needs of aviation, despite the economic penalty involved. Speedy means of access and efficient operation can reduce this penalty, and the use of the new airport would be encouraged by stricter limits on movements at other airports. Such limits, which the new airport would make possible, would help to reduce noise at existing airports. It will be open to the British Airports Authority so to arrange charges between its airports as to stimulate traffic at Foulness. On these assumptions, which differ from those made by the Commission, the new airport can be expected in time to make a proper return on capital invested there, though it may not become self-supporting as quickly as one at an inland site.⁴¹

³⁵ David McKie, *A sadly mismanaged affair: a political history of the third London airport*, 1973, p156

³⁶ *Submissions 1 and 2 to the Commission on the Third London Airport: location of proposed alternative sites*, Essex and Hertfordshire County Councils, 1968

³⁷ *Proposal for an international dock system and airport on reclaimed land on the Thames estuary adjacent to Foulness Island*, Bernard L Clark & Partners, January 1968

³⁸ David McKie, *A sadly mismanaged affair: a political history of the third London airport*, 1973, pp149-153

³⁹ "Government may turn to Foulness for third airport if Cublington protest becomes too strong", *Times*, 19 December 1970, p1

⁴⁰ *Report, Commission on the Third London Airport* [Roskill Commission], HMSO, 1971

⁴¹ [HC Deb 26 April 1971 vol 816 cc34-44](#)

In response, Anthony Crosland MP (Lab, Grimsby), Shadow Secretary of State for the Environment, stated

I believe that the Government are, on balance, right to have rejected the three Roskill inland sites. I think they are also right to have rejected a second runway at Gatwick. But the choice of Foulness is totally wrong, on the ground of damage to environment, and particularly the coastline; on the ground of destruction of homes for motorways; on the ground of enormous additional cost; and probably also on the ground of safety.⁴²

Writing in *The Guardian*, a few days later, Mr Crosland accused the Government of making a monumental blunder' in choosing Foulness. He noted that the provision of new transport links would mean "far more homes and families disrupted by bulldozers than would Cublington". He argued that there was no need for a 4-runway airport, though there might be a requirement for a more modest 2-runway airport, which he said should be located at a coastal location without the drawbacks of Foulness. Ultimately, he believed that the cost would prove prohibitive.⁴³

Critics of the Government's decision, apart from local residents and pressure groups, questioned the need for a 4-runway airport at Foulness or anywhere else in the south east. It was argued that aircraft developments, including STOL (Short Take-Off and Landing) and VTOL (Vertical Take Off and Landing) and general aircraft improvements would limit their noise impact.

Why Maplin was chosen, 1971

The Government claimed that it would be a lesser evil to site the airport on the coast rather than inland, where much countryside and many people would be affected. Other reasons cited by commentators include

- Pressure from well-funded and organised local pressure groups opposed to development of Cublington and pressure from MPs.⁴⁴ According to Peter Hall, 'the forces of economic reason may have declared for Cublington, but the forces of environmental emotion were in favour only of Foulness, and they proved far stronger both in number and in intensity'.⁴⁵
- National environmental groups such as the Council for the Protection of Rural England and the Noise Abatement Society were also in favour of the Foulness site.
- Advocates of Foulness stressed its advantages in terms of lower levels of noise pollution and damage to valuable agricultural land than an inland site. Having aircraft take off and land over the sea rather than over major built up areas would be safer.
- Colin Buchanan's Note of Dissent to the 1971 Roskill report stating that 'it would be nothing less than an environmental disaster if the airport were to be built at any of the inland sites, but nowhere more serious than at Cublington where it would lie athwart the critically important belt of open country between London and Birmingham'.⁴⁶
- Essex County Council was in favour, though it was criticised by anti-Maplin groups as taking this stance because it was dominated by members based in the North of the County who were anxious to protect Stansted from further development. David McKie, writing in 1973, commented that Essex County Council (ECC) had offered up Foulness as a 'burnt offering' in the 1960s in order to draw fire away from other sites in Essex which the Council felt were more important.⁴⁷
- The regeneration of the area around Southend was seen as an advantage by Southend Borough Council.⁴⁸

⁴² [HC Deb 26 April 1971 vol 816 c37](#)

⁴³ "The Folly of Foulness", *Guardian*, 28 April 1971, p12

⁴⁴ "Power of the lobbies in third airport campaign", *Times*, 5 April 1971 pp1,4

⁴⁵ Peter Hall, *Great Planning Disasters*, 1980, p37

⁴⁶ *Report, Commission on the Third London Airport*, [Roskill Commission], HMSO, 1971, pp149-160

⁴⁷ David McKie, *op cit*, p146

⁴⁸ David McKie, *op cit*, pp153-155

- Other commentators criticised Roskill's use of cost-benefit analysis which helped to decide on Cublington rather than Foulness

In February 1972, the Government confirmed that it would consider constructing a seaport as well as an airport at Maplin (as the scheme began to be called rather than Foulness⁴⁹) and invited the Port of London Authority to submit proposals.⁵⁰

On 9 August 1972, the Government announced the proposed site of the Maplin scheme. The Government choice of site C was criticised by local MPs who had preferred the more northerly 'site D' which offered less noise pollution impact.⁵¹

In the 1972-73 Parliamentary Session, the *Maplin Development Bill* was introduced in order to set up the Maplin Development Authority (Chaired by Sir Frank Marshall) which would carry out the redevelopment of the land; to give the Authority the duty of making land available for the airport and seaport; and to grant the necessary planning permission for the project.

On 8 Feb 1973 the [Commons Second Reading](#) of the *Maplin Development Bill* was opposed by the Labour Party "until the case for a new airport and seaport complex at Maplin has been fully reappraised by the Civil Aviation Authority in the light of the many changed circumstances since the original decision was taken and of the development needs of other regions of the country." This 'reasoned amendment' was defeated and the Second Reading subsequently passed. During the course of the Bill's passage, opposition to the project, now estimated by some critics as costing £1 billion,⁵² grew from MPs concerned at its cost and unconvinced that it was necessary.⁵³ The Government inserted an amendment to the Bill which would require a detailed report to be presented to Parliament, and parliamentary approval given, before the Maplin Development Authority exercised its powers to reclaim land from the sea. Nevertheless, criticism of the project grew. According to a 1974 Library briefing,

During 1973 the emphasis in the debate over the third London airport altered. It was no longer a question of choosing a site, avoiding as far as possible environmental disruption and local discontent, but a question of whether it was necessary to build a new airport at all. Reports revising estimates made by the Roskill Commission began to appear... and the need for Maplin was seriously questioned.

The Maplin project seems to have been founded on two premises: that by the 1980s there would be a shortage of runway and other aircraft space in the London area, and that future air transport patterns would involve massive environmental disturbance (mainly noise) which would not be tolerated in a built-up area. By 1973 many of the economic and technological forecasts had altered and much of the "expert opinion" was beginning to argue that it might be possible to manage with existing capacity. The main discussion centred round the following points

Air traffic forecast demand for the London area. [A 1973 CAA report⁵⁴] implies that there will be no need for new runways before 1986 and maybe not even then.

Runway capacities. The CAA report forecast that present capacity could meet requirements if for example 2 mixed mode" operations were used at Heathrow and the runways at Luton, Stansted and Southend were not closed down.

Ground capacity for passengers. A deficiency is accepted by the CAA report but this accepted the restrictions on the expansion at Heathrow and Gatwick in anticipation of Maplin

⁴⁹ 'Maplin' began to be the preferred official name for the airport rather than Foulness ["Foul" seems to derived from the wild "fowl" for which the area is well known] around 1971/1972 as the proposed airport was to be on Maplin Sands rather than on Foulness Island itself. Some critics suggested that 'Maplin' had been adopted because it sounded more pleasant than 'Foulness'. ('Maplin overtakes Foulness', *Times*, 17 February 1972, p21)

⁵⁰ [HC Deb 02 February 1972 vol 830 cc446-55](#)

⁵¹ "Maplin site C is 'too noisy'", *Times*, 10 August 1972, p3

⁵² A figure rejected by the Government, which estimated the costs at £825m. However, in its 1978 White Paper (Cmnd 7084), the Labour Government estimated costs at £680m for a runway and two terminals, plus £410m for building transport links

⁵³ "Angry Tory MPs stalk Maplin", *Observer*, 17 June 1973,

⁵⁴ *Forecasts of Air Traffic and capacity at airports in the London Area*, Civil Aviation Authority, 9th May 1973

Noise forecasts. The report on aircraft noise published by the Department of Environment for the Noise Advisory Council in April 1972 on the siting of the runways at Maplin gives forecasts for noise levels for 1980 onwards which are “significantly quieter than predicted by the Roskill Commission”, based on later information about technological advances... If these forecasts are related to Heathrow and Gatwick, it would seem the number of people affected by noise should fall.⁵⁵

Despite its difficulties, Prime Minister Edward Heath, who in the 1940s had sat on a Ministry of Civil Aviation committee overseeing the development of Heathrow airport, believed that the Government was right to press ahead with plans for an airport at Maplin.⁵⁶ He saw it as a huge opportunity to develop ‘the world’s most modern and well-equipped airport’ which would not be subject to ‘all the disadvantages and restrictions that affect airports located in densely populated areas’.⁵⁷ By contrast, Labour’s Shadow Secretary of State for the Environment, Anthony Crosland, condemned the proposal for an airport, seaport and new town at Maplin as a ‘mad plan for Heathograd in South-east Essex’.⁵⁸

In a [Commons debate](#) on 23rd October 1973, Mr Crosland stated that, “the Labour Party is as of now unalterably opposed to the Maplin project...and will not proceed with it”.⁵⁹ The Act received Royal Assent on 25th October 1973 and the Maplin Development Authority formally came into being on that day. The plan entailed a 2-runway airport (with the possibility of expansion to 4 runways) which was due to open in 1980 (this date was later pushed back) and a deep-sea port. A new town was to be built ‘to the highest environmental standards’ to accommodate the workers employed at the airport and seaport and it was planned to connect Maplin via transport links including a new motorway and a high speed rail link to King’s Cross.⁶⁰

Why Maplin was abandoned, 1974

In March 1974 the Labour Party took power as a minority administration following the General Election of 28 February 1974 and on 20 March announced that it would undertake a review of the Maplin scheme. In July 1974 that review was published,⁶¹ and, in a parliamentary statement, the Secretary of State for Trade, Peter Shore MP (Lab, Stepney and Poplar), announced the abandonment of the project

Seven main conclusions emerge from the reappraisal. First, the forecasts of air passenger demand are significantly lower than was envisaged previously. Secondly, up to 1990 no further main runways will be required at any of the four London area airports at Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted and Luton. Thirdly, the passenger-handling capacity required to accommodate the forecast traffic up to 1990 is not now dependent on a new airport at Maplin. Fourthly, the noise nuisance is expected to be much lower than was forecast by the Roskill Commission. Fifthly, whether or not Maplin were built, capacity at Heathrow would need to be expanded from its present 20 million passengers a year to 38 million and at Gatwick from 6 million to 16 million. Sixthly, beyond that, further capacity would be required from the mid-1980s which could be provided through a new airport at Maplin or by some combination of developments at existing London area airports with the possibility of some diversion of London traffic to regional airports. Finally, the cost of accommodating the forecast traffic at Maplin is now estimated at about £650 million. This is nearly twice as much as the next most expensive alternative considered in the reappraisal.

In the light of this, the Government consider that the case for a new airport at Maplin has not been established, and they have decided to abandon it.

The review has particularly examined the question of aircraft noise. I am deeply conscious of the distress suffered by those who live near airports. However, the review shows that Maplin would not have had a great effect on total noise disturbance. First, if Maplin were built it could not affect the level of noise at existing airports before 1985. Secondly, by 1990 at London area airports nearly all air transport movements are expected to be by new, quieter types of aircraft. This means that, with or without Maplin, there will be a marked improvement in current noise levels at these airports. But there

⁵⁵ *Third London Airport*, HC Library Reference Sheet 74/22, 27 November 1974

⁵⁶ Andy Beckett, *When the lights went out: Britain in the Seventies*, 2009, p36

⁵⁷ “Heath says Maplin offers ‘enormous opportunities’”, *The Guardian*, 12 July 1973, p22

⁵⁸ [HC Deb 24 July 1973 vol 860 cc1415](#)

⁵⁹ [HC Deb 23 October 1973 vol 861 c1033](#)

⁶⁰ *The Maplin Project: designation area for the new town consultation document*, Department of the Environment, July 1973

⁶¹ *Maplin: review of airport project*, Department of Trade. HMSO, 1974

can be no relaxation in our efforts, and I am determined to achieve a further and progressive improvement in noise by tackling it at the source on the aircraft, by intensifying night jet curfews, by revised operational techniques and by improved facilities for noise insulation.⁶²

In response, Edward Heath (Con, Sidcup), then Leader of the Opposition, noted that the decision

...completely fits in with the prejudices of the Government when in Opposition...Of course it is understandable that those with constituencies affected should feel very strongly about it. Those who feel that they have been relieved from Maplin may express their thanks. Others in other parts of the country may take the simple view that money will be saved. But there is beyond all this a national interest, and a very large national interest at stake both in personal communications and trade communications. I do not believe it can be in the national interest for the Secretary of State to indicate that we are to have the worst airport facilities available of any European, North American or Australasian country.⁶³

Following the Labour Government's July 1974 statement explaining its reasons for abandoning the scheme, contemporary/subsequent accounts have emphasised the importance of a variety of factors affecting the Government's decision:

- An additional airport was no longer seen as necessary in the light of new air traffic forecasts
- The oil crisis of 1973-74 (following the October 1973 Arab-Israeli war) which led some people to believe that there would be a sharp reduction in air travel.⁶⁴
- The Labour Party when in Opposition saw it as a Conservative 'prestige project' which was too costly. In difficult economic circumstances it was perceived as unsustainable.
- Mr Eldon Griffiths MP (Con, Bury St Edmunds), former Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, who had ministerial responsibility for the 1970s Maplin scheme, said at the Stansted Public Inquiry in the early 1980s that the change of Government in 1974 was the main reason. He said that the new Labour Government 'was less anxious to support projects in the south-east and more anxious to promote them elsewhere'. Had the Conservative Party been re-elected in February 1974, he felt that the project would have proceeded.⁶⁵
- The airline industry was opposed to it.⁶⁶
- Environmental groups e.g. Friends of the Earth (FoE) were opposed to the potentially disruptive effects on local wildlife.⁶⁷
- Pressure groups with the backing of local MPs fought a vigorous campaign which gathered support from local people as the potential damage caused by the construction of what the Conservative Government had referred to as the world's first environmental airport became clear. The damage caused by the construction of transport links and the large-scale urbanisation resulting from the planned new town had generated growing discontent.⁶⁸ Writing a month after the abandonment of the project, Derrick Wood of the Defenders of Essex claimed that the pressure groups had been able to delay the introduction of the scheme by the Conservative government, buying enough time "to enable political, technical and other expert pressures to be asserted in places where decisions are taken".⁶⁹

⁶² HC Debate, 18 July 1974

⁶³ HC Deb 18 July 1974 vol 877 cc684

⁶⁴ Peter Hall, *Great Planning Disasters*, 1980, p39

⁶⁵ Evidence given by Mr Eldon Griffiths MP, 1982 [part of batch of documents released by the Dept for Transport on 22 August 2008 in response to an FOI request regarding Maplin airport]

⁶⁶ Peter Bromhead, *The Great White Elephant of Maplin Sands*, 1973, p27

⁶⁷ "The Maplin Manifesto", *Ecologist*, April 1973 pp134-137 <http://exacteditions.theecologist.org/exact/browse/307/308/6361/2/16/0/> (accessed, 16 July 2010)

⁶⁸ Peter Hall, *Great Planning Disasters*, 1980, pp38-9

⁶⁹ "Maplin: a campaign concluded", By Derrick Wood, *New Statesman*, 23 August 1974, p248

Developments since 1974

The *Maplin Development Authority [Dissolution] Act 1976* effectively wound up the project; there has been little discussion of Maplin Sands as the site of a new airport since then and few firm proposals.

In 1979, the Greater London Council (GLC) produced a report urging reconsideration of the Maplin scheme, though on a smaller, less expensive scale than the project scrapped in 1974. The terminals would be based in central London with 60-70% of the passengers travelling to the airport site by rail. The GLC was reported to be in favour of Maplin because of the potential economic and social benefits to the East End in particular and also London and the Thames corridor.⁷⁰ The GLC proposal was supported by Essex County Council (ECC) – though by 1981, ECC appeared to favour the expansion of Heathrow instead.

In July 1979, the Town and Country Planning Association recommended the construction of an international airport at Maplin because the location

...although not perfect is superior on environmental grounds to all other potential sites. It fits with projected growth for south-east Essex, could reduce commuting to London, help regenerate the East End, be linked with a new seaport and strengthen communications with Holland and Germany.⁷¹

In December 1979, following consultation, the Conservative **Government announced** that they would not revive the Maplin scheme

The Government have decided not to build a major new international airport of the kind considered by the Roskill Commission report in 1971; nor do they intend to resurrect the Maplin project, even in a revised form. Instead, the Government's policy is, first, to encourage the fullest use of regional airports and, secondly, to provide additional airport capacity, as the traffic develops, based on the existing airports in the South-East, particularly Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted...

We recognise that Maplin has certain advantages, but the provision of additional road and rail links, the preparation of the site and the relocation of defence establishments, all of which would require a commitment of over £1 billion, involve very serious risks, which are unjustified when we cannot be certain that an airport of such a size will be needed. Moreover, an airport at Maplin could not be ready to meet the expected shortfall in capacity in the late 1980s.⁷²

In 1980, the Noise Advisory Council (a Department of the Environment panel) concluded that on aircraft noise grounds, Maplin Sands was its preferred site for the third London Airport. However, no assessment was made of the noise problems arising from the road and rail access routes required.⁷³

In June 1980, the GLC was reported as intending to use the forthcoming public inquiry into the expansion of Stansted as the occasion to present a case for developing a single runway airport at Maplin, linked by a high speed train service to Liverpool Street station.⁷⁴

The 1981-1983 Stansted Inquiry considered the case for reviving Maplin. The Planning Inspector, Richard Eyre QC, stated that the Government's decision to select Foulness in 1971 had been 'ill-advised and precipitate' as little regard appeared to have been paid to vital access and environmental considerations. Mr Eyre noted that public support for Maplin had largely disappeared. Indeed, Professor Colin Buchanan, whose dissenting opinion from the Roskill Commission report had galvanised support for Maplin/Foulness had stated at the Inquiry that "I am driven to the conclusion that the Maplin tide has been missed, probably for good."⁷⁵

The Inspector described those who did still support Maplin as 'voices crying in the wilderness'. One of these was the Town and Country Planning Association which submitted a planning application to develop an

⁷⁰ "GLC takes a new look at Maplin airport plan", *Guardian*, 6 March 1979, p2

⁷¹ "Planners favour airport at Maplin", *Guardian*, 30 July 1979, p3

⁷² [HC Deb 17 December 1979 vol 976 cc34-38](#)

⁷³ "The Third London Airport: report by a working group of the Council", Noise Advisory Council, 1980

⁷⁴ "Plan revived for third London airport at Maplin", *Guardian*, 18 June 1980, p3

⁷⁵ *The Airports Inquiries 1981-1983: Part III: Chapters 9 to 13 inclusive*, Report by Graham Eyre QC, para 1.16

airport at Maplin in March 1981(though it withdrew the application the following year). The TCPA's case was dismissed by the Inspector for the following reasons:

- The construction of an airport, with the associated urban development at Maplin was no longer consistent with regional planning considerations;
- The damage to the environment which would be caused by the construction of new road and rail links. Urbanisation would spoil the area and there would be damaging consequences for the fishing and holiday industries. Mr Eyre described the proposition that an airport at Maplin would be 'noise free' as a myth;
- High cost and difficulty of relocating the MOD firing range at Shoeburyness;
- The existing airports would have to be run down to divert traffic to Maplin – which the Inspector found unrealistic due to the opposition of the airlines;
- Finally, the Inspector said that he believed 'Maplin should be rejected on ground of cost and lead time alone. The costs would prove to be enormous. The risks would be incalculable.'⁷⁶

The Inspector concluded by rejecting the TCPA's argument and said

In my judgment the Maplin project should, for the overwhelming reasons I have rehearsed above, stay well and truly buried.

TCPA remains committed to an airport in the estuary and in 2006 called for the eventual closure of Heathrow in favour of an estuarial site.⁷⁷

Maplin retained support from some pressure groups. An organisation called the Maplin Movement was established in 1973 to campaign in favour of the airport/seaport and in 1977 declared approximately 4000 members.⁷⁸ In a collection of 1980s documents released by the Department for Transport under FOI legislation in 2008 there is a reference to the Chairman of the Movement having written to the Secretary of State for Trade in 1979 and to an MEP in 1982 protesting at the abandonment of the project.⁷⁹ No information on any more recent activities by this group has been traced.

In the 1980s, the Noise Abatement Society remained committed to the location. In 1987, the Chairman of the Society noted that it had been an idea 'before its time', but now felt that with the increase in air traffic congestion, noise and safety concerns at existing London airports,

The political climate is set fair for this imaginative project. The money, the expertise and will to succeed are there, and the first runway to ease the pressure could be ready for use within two years of the Prime Minister's blessing. We and vast numbers of flight path noise victims await it with eagerness and expectation.⁸⁰

The construction of a new airport at Maplin also remained popular with activists opposed to the development of existing London airports. In August 1988, Evelyn Atlee of the Federation of Heathrow Anti-Noise Groups wrote to the Financial Times

...in the 1970s there was a proposal to build a combined airport and deep water port on the coast in Essex. Aircraft would have taken off and landed over water, not people. With a high speed train to central London, and a motorway to join up with the national network, access would have been free from problems.

⁷⁶ *ibid*, paras 8.4-9.2

⁷⁷ *Heathrow: a retirement plan*, by Tony Hall and Peter Hall, TCPA, 2006
<http://tinyurl.com/5c5rcz> (Internet Archive, accessed 16 July 2010)

⁷⁸ *Directory of British Associations 1977-8, 1977*, p225

⁷⁹ *FOI request for documents/plans for Maplin Airport*, DfT, released on 22 August 2008

⁸⁰ "Noise group urges revival of Maplin plan", *Financial Times*, 20 August 1987, p7

The chaos at our airports this summer shows our civil aviation industry in disarray. It also shows that the need for Maplin is greater now than when it was cancelled. It should be built now, before expansion plans for existing airports are carried out, bringing further turbulence in their wake.⁸¹

A newspaper in Essex carried a report in 2002 of a proposal from a local engineer to construct a new six-runway airport on Foulness Island (rather than Maplin Sands).⁸² Nothing further has been traced about this particular scheme. Although Maplin Sands was apparently raised as a potential site by Reigate and Banstead Borough Council, no firm Maplin/Foulness proposal appears to have been submitted during the SERAS consultation in 2002/2003.⁸³

2.3 Sheppey, Kent

The Isle of Sheppey has been labelled the birthplace of British aviation as Short Brothers opened the country's first aircraft factory there in 1909.⁸⁴ Plans for airports on or around the island have almost as long a pedigree.

Sheppey was considered by the Interdepartmental Committee on the Third London Airport in 1963/64 but rejected in favour of Stansted.

In the mid-1960s, Sheppey Island was suggested as site for a 'super-airport' with up to six runways to replace Heathrow.⁸⁵ This proposal was submitted to the 1965-66 public inquiry into the plan to develop Stansted as London's third airport, but the Planning Inspector ruled it out of the inquiry's scope. Sheppey, Foulness and Cliffe were also proposed at the Inquiry by Essex County Council, which argued that these sites merited further investigation. The Council's QC 'contrasted the rural character of North West Essex, its towns, villages and buildings with Cliffe and Sheppey which he said were marshlands with no particular amenities'.⁸⁶

In May 1967 a Government White Paper set out the reasons for rejecting the Isle of Sheppey.⁸⁷ The Government claimed it was the most promising of the Thames estuary sites for the following reasons,

- no significant interference with military flying
- enough flat land available for three or four runways
- low noise pollution
- low quality agricultural land on the island
- loss of rural amenity might not be so grave as with other areas
- no serious objections to a modest expansion of population in the area

However, there were serious disadvantages – in particular the high cost of combating the relative inaccessibility of the site and the need to close Southend airport and relocate the MOD firing range at Shoeburyness – which meant that it should be ruled out.

This decision was supported by the British Airports Authority, whose Chairman, Peter Masefield, stated

⁸¹ Letter to the editor: "Maplin should be built", *Financial Times*, 9 August 1988, p13

⁸² "New idea for more runways", *Echo (Essex)*, 11 October 2002

⁸³ *The Future Development of Air Transport in the United Kingdom: a national consultation: Report on responses to the Government's consultation: south east*, Dept for Transport, December 2003, p67
<http://bit.ly/Rt4aC> (UK Govt Web Archive, accessed 16 July 2010)

⁸⁴ "'Cradle of aviation' title craved by Sheppey", *Daily Telegraph*, 28 May 2007, p11

⁸⁵ "London airport must go", *Observer*, 7 November 1965, p11

⁸⁶ *Report of the Inquiry into Local Objections to the proposed development of land at Stansted as the Third Airport for London*, HMSO, 1967, p28

⁸⁷ *The Third London Airport*, Cmnd 3259, Board of Trade, 1966-67, pp15-16

As a satisfactory operational airport and as an economically viable airport, Sheppey is a non-starter. And for those who live around – nearly half as many again as around Stansted – the site includes the largest remaining area of unspoilt coastline in Kent.⁸⁸

In August 1967, the Sheppey Protection Group met for the first time and announced that a series of technical studies would be undertaken to counter any attempt to make this location an airport site.⁸⁹

Members of the Sheppey Group submitted written evidence to the Roskill Commission (1968-1971) [see Section 2.2 for further information on Roskill] detailing the adverse effects on the residents of the island which would arise from the siting of an airport at Foulness/Maplin.⁹⁰ Essex and Hertfordshire County Councils recommended Sheppey, mainly ‘because a large flat area is available which is only thinly populated’.⁹¹ However, Sheppey did not reach the shortlist of four sites considered by the Commission.

During the Department for Transport’s SERAS consultations in 2002/2003 Sheppey Airport Ltd submitted plans for an airport costing £6.6 billion.⁹² Initially, 2 runways were planned, with a total of 4 by 2030. The project’s promoters claimed that the airport’s remoteness would mean very little destruction of existing residential property to construct the railway and low levels of noise pollution. The risk of ‘bird strike’ was less than at Cliffe and the cost of development would also be lower.⁹³

In its 2003 White Paper, the DfT rejected the Sheppey location

The Sheppey proposal would generate significantly lower net economic benefits than a combination of one new runway at each of Stansted and Heathrow. The promoters’ heavy reliance on high speed rail access with limited road connections was considered to be highly optimistic. There are also uncertainties as to whether the site proposed is adequate to handle the assumed level of traffic.⁹⁴

Sheppey Airport Ltd was dissolved in 2007.

2.4 Thames Reach, Kent

<http://www.thamesreachairport.com>

Proposals for a new airport called ‘Thames Reach’, located a short distance from Cliffe on the Hoo Peninsula in Kent, emerged in 2002. The scheme came from a private sector consortium headed by ‘Bluebase’ architects.

The new airport, partially based on reclaimed land, would have two runways (subsequent submissions from Bluebase offered alternative models – of up to 4 runways). A road and rail tunnel under the Thames would link the Kent site with Essex and high speed rail lines would link to central London. A 2003 press release sets out the consortium’s view of the scheme’s advantages

Straightforward comparisons between Thames Reach and new runways at Heathrow, Gatwick or Stansted are startling: -

Aircraft take-off and land over the Thames Estuary, not over people’s homes.

⁸⁸ “Airports Authority Backs Stansted”, *Flight International*, 22 June 1967 p1025
<http://bit.ly/JzsWA> (accessed 16 July 2010)

⁸⁹ “Sheppey’s move to stop airport”, *Guardian*, 3 August 1967, p8

⁹⁰ *Commission on the Third London Airport: Papers and Proceedings Vol III: Stage II: Local Hearings Foulness (off shore)*, HMSO, 1969

⁹¹ *Submission 2 to the Commission on the Third London Airport: statement on proposed sites*, Essex and Hertfordshire County Councils, October 1968

⁹² “Isle of Sheppey airport proposals submitted”, *This is Gravesham*, 6 January 2003

⁹³ Review of Sheppey Island proposal, Halcrow Group for the Department for Transport, 2003 <http://bit.ly/2QuWEp> (UK Govt Web Archive, accessed 16 July 2010)

⁹⁴ *The Future of Air Transport*, Cm 6046, Department for Transport, Dec 2003, p135
<http://bit.ly/LF0Vj> (UK Govt Web Archive, accessed 16 July 2010)

Low-grade, flood-risk land is used, rather than prime countryside or Green Belt land.

20 homes and no listed buildings are lost rather than several hundred homes and a score of listed buildings.

Less than 15,000 people affected by noise, rather than over 300,000.

No one suffers excessive air pollution, compared with over 30,000 people.

Not just an aviation solution - also far reaching strategic integration benefits, e.g. AirRail and Thames Gateway regeneration.

With the potential to operate 24-hours a day 7-days a week, Thames Reach will provide the required capacity with greater economic benefits while enabling night flights at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted to become a thing of the past. In addition there are the very substantial wider benefits arising from the alliance of Thames Reach Airport with the Lower Thames Tunnel and other infrastructure improvements to the Thames Gateway. The airport integrated with the tunnel creates Europe's leading transport hub and transforms the historic, radial infrastructure north and south of the Thames into an orbital and circulatory system; a well-connected and unified Thames Gateway metropolis. With the value of these wider benefits included in the overall economic assessment Thames Reach becomes unassailable.⁹⁵

Bluebase claimed to have had 'encouraging' talks about the proposal with the Star Alliance network of airlines led by Lufthansa.⁹⁶ The proposers were confident that their bird management system would reduce the risk of bird strike to normal UK levels.⁹⁷

Consultants commissioned by the Department for Transport carried out a review of the Thames Reach proposals

In summary, a number of adjustments and some positive claims have been made by Bluebase. Many of the claims for additional benefit made by Bluebase do not appear to be well-founded, and there remain important differences between the Bluebase claimed benefits and the SERAS estimated benefits which are outlined below.

Bluebase's estimated airport development costs are low in relation to the SERAS estimates for Cliffe and lower than can readily be explained by differences in site location. The Thames Reach site area is deliberately kept small which keeps down the costs of creating the site platform and airport pavements, but it is not clear that the small site would allow the necessary operational flexibility. Terminal and satellite costs per mppa at Thames Reach are considerably lower than at Cliffe though annual and peak hour capacities would need to be similar. It is not clear that proper allowance for additional terminal capacity to accompany the 3rd and 4th runways has been made.

Bluebase's estimated surface access costs are low in relation to SERAS estimates and seem to omit surface access schemes that should be included. 25% of the costs of the Lower Thames Tunnel, estimated at £3 billion, have been allowed for on the basis that airport traffic might equate to 25% of its capacity. But a substantial part of airport traffic will not use the tunnel and no costs are assumed to accommodate this traffic nor for infrastructure enhancements which would be needed in several areas of the rail network more distant from the airport. The Cliffe estimate assumed that surface access schemes costing £1.8 billion in addition to the Lower Thames Crossing would be needed to serve the airport. Most of these schemes, costing of the order of £1.4 billion could still be needed to serve the Thames Reach airport, but only £0.7 billion has been allowed for.

The bases for proposed additional benefits are not clear. Variations proposed by Bluebase in their recent communications – 3rd and 4th runways, additional rail access, additional on-site parking, longer operating hours, increased freight benefits – do not generally offer more capacity or better surface

⁹⁵ "Thames Reach Airport: an integrated hub solution for the southeast", Press Release, 25 October 2003, Bluebase Inc <http://bit.ly/MeKm8> (Internet Archive, accessed 16 July 2010)

⁹⁶ "Third Kent airport plan - 23 million passengers a year for £6.5bn site", *Evening Standard*, 13 February 2003

⁹⁷ <http://tinyurl.com/9lj37l> (Internet Archive, accessed 16 July 2010)

access provision than has already been assumed in the estimation of benefits, so generally there is no case for allowing additional benefits.

'Comparative proximities' benefit are claimed from shorter taxiing distances, but outer runways would have to be accessed by crossing or going round inner runways and runway to gate time is more function of traffic circulation and movement conflicts than distance alone. A smaller infield area is likely to make it more difficult to resolve conflicts.

Benefits from other new-build design features have been claimed, but significant fuel efficiencies from reduced taxiing distances cannot just be assumed, SERAS has made an adequate allowance for the reduced labour force at new airports and benefits for supplementary shell valuations have not been claimed in any SERAS appraisal.

Comparative compensation benefits appear to be estimates of additional costs that could be incurred by an additional runway at Heathrow. If they were accepted, they should feature in a Heathrow not a Thames Reach cost:benefit appraisal.

Wider strategic planning benefits of up to £5 billion have been claimed. Throughout SERAS, posited wider, or indirect, economic benefits have not been taken into account, because: There can be considerable overlap between direct and indirect benefits, so that to count both would be double-counting.

Any comparison of alternative development proposals taking account of such wider impacts would have to apply to all such proposals, not just for one proposal.

Finally, any saving in public expenditure due to any utilisation of excess capacity on CTRL, if such were to take place at and beyond the time at which Thames Reach airport were in place, is a Government financial transaction and not a resource saving which could count in economic appraisal.⁹⁸

In its 2003 White Paper following the consultation period, the DfT rejected the Thames Reach proposal

11.114 Although the Thames Reach promoters managed to mitigate some of the drawbacks of Cliffe, a substantial part of the airport site would impact, as did Cliffe, on areas of very high ecological value that are protected under the EC Habitats Directive, and we have doubts whether the passenger numbers envisaged could be handled within the land-take given the likely demand for air travel over the day. We were concerned that the surface access proposals were not robust and over-dependent on rail. In the light of the appraisal of the Cliffe option, there remain significant concerns about the risk of bird strike and the efficacy of the measures proposed to address it. The capital costs assumed by the promoters are much less than those for Cliffe, including for surface access.⁹⁹

Despite this setback, the Consortium remains committed to the project and in February 2008, responded to the Department for Transport's plans to add a new runway at Heathrow

The current proposals by BAA for Heathrow's expansion are only incremental and will only "buy" a few additional years. This is not a long term solution in the interest of the UK citizens. The decision, where to locate airport capacity is very complex and far reaching and cannot be left for "public opinion" to decide. Our experience with the SERAS white paper has shown, that the related governmental assessment has been influenced by vested [interests] being played out in the media – and less by expert scrutiny, as it is urgently needed for such an important decision, i.e. the cost of only adding a 3rd runway at Heathrow of £12bn is higher than building a complete new airport with the same Net benefits (to the UK) in the Thames Estuary.

We believe, as does Sir Peter Hall, Heathrow should be ultimately relocated to a safe and efficient new location highly integrated into regional, national and international rail networks, as demonstrated by Thames Reach Airport.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ *Review of Thames Reach Proposal*, Halcrow Group for the Department for Transport, 2003, p27
<http://bit.ly/gUNyd> (UK Govt Web Archive, accessed 16 July 2010)

⁹⁹ *The Future of Air Transport*, Cm 6046, DfT, Dec 2003

<http://bit.ly/LF0Vj> (UK Govt Web Archive, accessed 16 July 2010)

¹⁰⁰ http://www.bluebase.com/air/TRA_Response_-_Feb08.pdf (accessed 16 July 2010)

3 Offshore [Artificial island] airports

Offshore airport schemes may broadly be divided into two types

- Airports based on man-made structures. Plans to create ‘floating airports’ on platforms, sometimes called ‘mega-floats’ or ‘Very Large Floating Platforms’ have existed for decades,¹⁰¹ but no examples of existing ‘floating airports’ have been traced.¹⁰² Separate schemes have proposed building airports on piers driven into the sea bed rather than on floats, for example the 1997 plan by the Pacific Airport Group to create an offshore airport for Sydney in Australia.¹⁰³
- Airports built on artificial islands

Recently constructed offshore airports have been based on artificial islands. Some examples (not a comprehensive list) of proposed or existing ‘artificial island’ airports follow

China

Hong Kong International Airport, though strictly speaking not a completely artificial island, airport opened for commercial operations in 1998. After some initial problems, for which foreign managers and engineers (including Doug Oakervee who led the Mayor of London’s preliminary feasibility group) were blamed by the Hong Kong authorities,¹⁰⁴ the Airport has won many notable international "Best Airport" awards.¹⁰⁵ HKIA operates twenty-four hours a day with 2 terminals and in 2009 had a passenger throughput of over 46.1 million with 59 flights per hour at peak times.¹⁰⁶

Japan

Several offshore airports were constructed in Japan (where the cost of land is extremely high) during the ‘lost decade’ of the 1990s as part of economic stimulus plans. More recently, many airports in Japan have been experiencing problems of overcapacity and lack of revenue.¹⁰⁷

- 1) **Kobe Airport** is on an artificial island just off the coast of Kobe on the island of Honshu. The construction of the airport was stalled for lack of funding until 1995. Construction began in September 1999 but political controversy continued. The airport finally opened on February 16, 2006 and was used by 2.97 million people in 2007. First year operation (2006) results were 2,697,000 passengers at 61.1% capacity. Kobe is already the most indebted municipality in Japan and this project’s cost (estimated at US \$2.7 billion) has made it very controversial.¹⁰⁸
- 2) **Chubu Centrair** is the main international gateway for the Chūbu ("central") region of Japan and Japan’s second airport on a man-made island. Construction started in August 2000. It opened with a 3,500m runway on February 17, 2005¹⁰⁹ and is able to operate 24 hours a day.
- 3) **Kansai Airport** on an artificial island in Osaka bay was opened in 1994. It has experienced greater than predicted problems with subsidence, which has caused damage to airport buildings.¹¹⁰ In August 2007, it opened a second runway allowing it to operate 24 hours a day.¹¹¹ In 2008 it was serving over 15 million passengers. Its major shareholder is the central government which has

¹⁰¹ “Floating airports favoured by engineers”, *Times*, 25 February 1970, p5

¹⁰² “California company claims part of Pacific for floating airport”, *Commercial Property*, 17 July 2007

¹⁰³ Cached version of Sydney Offshore website <http://bit.ly/22uJv9> (Internet Archive Wayback Machine, accessed 16 July 2010)

¹⁰⁴ “Hong Kong blames foreign managers”, *New York Times*, 23 January 1999

¹⁰⁵ “HK loses best-airport title, held for 7 of past 8 years, to S Korea”, *South China Morning Post*, 10 June 2009

¹⁰⁶ <http://www.hongkongairport.com/eng/media/facts-figures/facts-sheets.html> (accessed 15 July 2010)

¹⁰⁷ “Keynes Killed JAL; The airline fell victim to infrastructure stimulus gone terribly wrong. Is China next?”, *Wall Street Journal*, 21 January 2010

¹⁰⁸ “Kobe hopes for post-quake economic boost from new airport”, *Agence France Presse*, 15 February 2006

¹⁰⁹ “Chubu airport opens as Japan’s 3rd main int’l gateway”, *Kyodo News*, 17 February 2005

¹¹⁰ “Kansai airport going down”, *Japan Times*, 6 October 2002

¹¹¹ “Kansai open all hours with new runway”, *The Australian*, 3 August 2007, p35

provided subsidies for it since 2003. Nevertheless it remains heavily indebted.¹¹² It has recently achieved success in attracting budget airlines by cutting fees charged to newcomer airlines.

Netherlands

In 1999, the Dutch Government put on hold plans to build a new airport for Amsterdam on an artificial island in the North Sea, although it did not rule out the possibility of such an airport in the long-term.¹¹³ More recently, a Dutch engineering company has proposed constructing a rotating 'floating airport' approximately 15-20km off the mainland to reduce pressure on Schiphol. It claimed that this would be cheaper and less harmful to the marine environment than an artificial island scheme.¹¹⁴

United Kingdom

- **Severnside International, Wales.** In 2003, plans were submitted to the Department for Transport for a new international airport on a man-made island in the Severn Estuary. The Government rejected the proposal in its 2003 White Paper, stating that such an airport "would not be financially viable and would not generate sufficient economic or regeneration benefits to merit support in this White Paper".¹¹⁵
- **'The Cant'.** This site emerged during 'optioneering' studies produced for the Department for Transport in its SERAS consultation on the future of air transport. A 2003 report for the DfT summarised the scheme as, "an offshore site on an artificial island in the Thames Estuary, some 10 km to the west and 2 km to the south of the Marinair site. The concept also offers four runways in an east-west, twin close-parallel layout. The construction advantages of The Cant were seen to arise from shallower water and the scope for a better solution in terms of river hydrology. Surface access advantages stemmed from its closer proximity to London and therefore lower infrastructure cost and faster journey times". The site was dropped at a preliminary stage.¹¹⁶

Information on the most well known UK artificial island scheme, 'Marinair', and the current artificial island suggestion from the Mayor of London follows.¹¹⁷

3.1 Marinair/Thames Estuary Airport Company

<http://www.teaco.co.uk/proposal.htm>¹¹⁸

The 'Marinair' proposal by the Thames Estuary Airport Company (TEACO) to build an airport on an artificial island in the Thames estuary has existed since the late 1980s. It has been at pains to deny that it is a 'Son of Maplin' scheme and has described itself as a true estuary airport in contrast to the Maplin Sands-type projects based onshore, often on land reclaimed from the sea.

The original version of the scheme, estimated as costing £20 billion and funded by an overseas consortium, was based on a two-centre model, with the terminals at East Tilbury and the runways on the artificial island in the estuary. The two would be linked by high speed rail via a tunnel which would transport passengers the 22 mile distance direct to the aircraft in 12 minutes.

The company submitted evidence to the Runway Capacity to Serve the South East (RUCATSE) Working Group in the early 1990s. TEACO argued that while no cap should be placed on existing airports, the provision of second runways at Gatwick and Stansted and a third runway at Heathrow would be 'politically

¹¹² "Kansai operator heads for clearer skies", *Nikkei Weekly*, 17 August 2009

¹¹³ "Dutch Government rejects proposal for new Amsterdam airport at sea", *Associated Press*, 17 December 1999

¹¹⁴ <http://www.noort-innovations.nl/RFAindex.htm> (accessed 21 July 2010)

¹¹⁵ <http://bit.ly/2EzNob> (UK Govt Web Archive, accessed 16 July 2010)

¹¹⁶ *Development of airport capacity in the Thames estuary*, Halcrow Group for the DfT, December 2003, p4 [UK Govt Web Archive, accessed 16 July 2010]

¹¹⁷ Other schemes are listed in Chapter Two of the *Thames Estuary Airport Feasibility Review*, October 2009

¹¹⁸ This website was inaccessible when checked on 5 August 2010, but a cached version from 2008 is available at <http://web.archive.org/web/20080208162414/http://www.teaco.co.uk/proposal.htm>

unpalatable'. By contrast, the Marinair scheme would be an expandable long-term solution. The Report of the RUCATSE group stated

The Marinair proposal offers an innovative means to tap the potential benefits of a Thames estuary option. But it seemed to us that, although a great deal of useful initial work had been done, there were still a good many uncertainties over the project and some challenging issues left to resolve. Our fundamental concerns and reservations related to demand, including the project's reliance on the effective capping of existing London airports at levels well below those which we believe could be accommodated using existing runways; and the operational details of the scheme which we thought raised serious problems of practicality.¹¹⁹

Lord Mowbray and Stourton was Chairman of the company from 1993-2006 and spoke about the proposals in a 1994 Lords debate, noting the regeneration benefits for the East Thames region as well as the transport advantages of the scheme

...I have declared my interest as chairman. I must declare also that at present the company has all the solutions in the bag except the final solution: we do not have quite the financial support that we need. The company will be an inward investment company. By inward investment, I mean inward investment from foreigners who bring enormous sums of money into this country. If your Lordships think that that is not useful to this country, then I believe that your Lordships should think again.

When I was first made a junior member of the government some 24 years ago, I was at the Department of the Environment. My then right honourable friend Mr. Peter Walker had appointed Sir Frank Marshall to look into Maplin, which was a land airport round the corner from Southend. Unfortunately, it was forgotten that Shoeburyness military range was there as well, so that was turned down. Of course, the road situation there was not right.

...Marinair is totally in line with the East Thames corridor policy and will greatly improve the economy of North Kent and South Essex.

...If we were to develop the South East policy of an airport in the estuary—and we have chosen a part of the estuary 31 kilometres east of Tilbury where we would have our first terminal—one would travel there by way of the A.13, which is to be improved, and we would build a joint road to accompany it. So the Marinair terminal is no further east than the Heathrow one is west. We would then have our island estuary which would not be a small island; indeed, it would be over five kilometres long, nearly three kilometres wide and would consist of 4,000 acres situated about eight kilometres north of Whitstable. There would eventually be three runways, two terminals and two cargo berths for liners or cargo. It would not require the destruction of one house. However, if Terminal 5 is built at Heathrow, what happens? Well, 4,000 houses will be destroyed. Of course, one may argue it one way or the other but I believe that to be the case—

Lord Brabazon of Tara My Lords, my noble friend says that 4,000 houses would be destroyed if Terminal 5 is built. I really think that my noble friend should get his facts straight.

Lord Mowbray and Stourton My Lords, with all the extensions that Heathrow requires that would be the total number.

At any rate, there are many more problems as regards noise. If one was to go to our plans in the next century, instead of going to one of the most concentrated areas of traffic and noise as regards aeroplanes, one would have a new concept where one could land as many planes as one wanted without noise affecting any housing.

Let us just think about it. It is not a silly concept; indeed, it is a good concept. No houses would be destroyed and we would add 4,000 acres to the land mass of Great Britain because that part of the Thames is only 4 metres deep. It makes a good deal of sense. We shall bring people from Tilbury and Kent in fast underground trains through tunnels under the Thames to the airport in 12 minutes. It is not to be sneezed at. There will be no noise pollution and no demolition of property.

It cannot be said that there is no noise pollution or demolition of property as regards any other of the airports. I do not mind to whom I address those remarks. Noble Lords know that to be a fact. Moreover,

¹¹⁹ *Runway Capacity to Serve the South East: a report by the working group*, Dept of Transport, July 1993, p144

because we are so far into the estuary, and with the help of modern technology, we would have the ability to operate 24 hours a day without causing anyone any upset. We could be phased to meet the demand: in the short term, one runway; in the medium term, two runways; and, in the long term, three runways. Therefore, we are able to accept the title of a mega airport. It is not pie in the sky...

...Sometimes I am told that I am old fashioned, but I think on this matter I am probably more in touch with the feelings of the people who live round the airports than most other people. By adopting my proposition all the environmental and planning objections as regards Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted would be obviated. There would be no greater problem as regards access. The estuary island would be 5 x 2.75 kilometres and would cover 1,375 hectares. The average depth of water in the estuary at that point is four metres. Everything is looked after. The flooding projection has been based, I am told, on a 1,000 year period. I find that hard to believe but it is what I am told.

What are we worrying about? Why is no one considering my proposal, as I think it is the sanest solution? It offers no risk of flooding and it is just as convenient to reach as any other airport, with the extensions to the A.13. Noble Lords are all talking about the vested interests of airlines whereas I am trying to suggest that there is an alternative. I should add that I am chairman of a shell company; I am not drawing any money from that. I believe my proposal will offer a much better service in the future for Britain...¹²⁰

TEACO submitted written evidence to the 1995/96 House of Commons Transport Select Committee investigation into UK airport capacity.¹²¹ It rejected the approach of squeezing more capacity into the existing London airports and advocated 'the provision of a new airport in an environmentally acceptable location with safe approach and departure routes, designed to meet the needs of air transport in the medium and longer term'.

The company stated that by having the runways based on an island away from built-up areas, the Marinair scheme would 'virtually eliminate' the noise pollution problems arising from the expansion of existing London airports and would allow 24-hour operation. The main features of the scheme were the separation of runways from terminals 'allowing the independent development of each'. The terminals would be constructed (on the site of a disused quarry near east Tilbury) onshore for ease of landside access – with direct links to the M25, the Channel Tunnel link and allowing access by river craft. The terminals would be connected to the runways by a 4-track high speed train service running in a tunnel under the Thames. There would be road access to the island via a tunnel from the Isle of Sheppey. The artificial island in the Thames would contain 3 runways and two satellite island terminals.¹²²

In oral evidence from the company's representatives, Lord Mowbray and Stourton said that the airport would be privately financed. The Japan-based owners of virtually 100% of the airport would be the 'Flamingo Trust'. Once the costs of construction had been paid, half (and eventually all) of the profits would go to charitable purposes.¹²³

The Committee report stated

205. We are not in a position to give an authoritative judgment on the particular scheme proposed, but clearly the idea of an airport in the Thames Estuary is one of the options to be considered and should not be ruled out if demand for airport capacity in the South East is predicted to be substantially higher than could be satisfied by a single extra runway serving the region. Such an estuarial development would avoid most of the land use and noise problems of a mainland airport, although there are likely to be adverse environmental implications for the Estuary itself. Surface access and the arrangements for moving passengers to the aircraft would need careful examination. In the meantime, the Government

¹²⁰ [HL Deb 17 May 1994 vol 555 cc225-29](#)

¹²¹ HC Transport Select Committee, *UK airport capacity*, HC 67, 1995/96 http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:hcpp&rft_dat=xri:hcpp:fulltext:1995-096250:170 (HCPP – Intranet only)

¹²² A map of the scheme is available here http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:hcpp&rft_dat=xri:hcpp:fulltext:1995-096250:175 (HCPP – Intranet only)

¹²³ HC Transport Select Committee, *UK airport capacity*, HC 67, 1995/96 http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:hcpp&rft_dat=xri:hcpp:fulltext:1995-096250:180 (HCPP – Intranet only)

should ask NATS to study the air traffic control implications of an airport in the Thames Estuary and how any problems might be surmounted.¹²⁴

The Government response to the Committee's report stated that it had not ruled out the possibility of an estuarial airport. Noting that the RUCATSE report had listed pros and cons for such developments, the Government said that 'it would be for a promoter to come forward with a proposal for an estuarial airport and seek planning permission; such an application would be judged on its merits.'¹²⁵

In 2002, at the time of the DfT's consultation on the future of air transport, the company's proposal changed from a two-centre to a one-centre model. Instead of having the terminal complex at Tilbury, it was proposed that all facilities would be located on the artificial island, which would be located 5km north east of Minster on the Isle of Sheppey.

In 2003, TEACO's representatives gave oral evidence to the House of Commons Transport Select Committee on the project, which was now estimated as costing £33 billion. Mr Crocker, representing the company, said that all of the funding would come from the private sector, although 'banking confidentiality' prevented the company from revealing further details.¹²⁶

The Committee appeared sceptical about the nature of this funding.

Mr Crocker: What I am leading up to, Madam Chairman, is that, if we are able to pursue our proposal, then we shall be providing our country with a state of the art airport which has the minimum environmental impact. It is something which will not call on the Exchequer to support, and we believe that with the benefit of a state of the art facility such as I am describing, then the airlines will be encouraged to come anyway, but part of our financial plan would be probably to support them in making that change.

Chairman: Well, it sounds almost too good to be true, Mr Crocker.

Q1187 Clive Efford: How do you manage to secure the funding because, if you do not have guarantees or expressions of interest from the airlines, you do not seem to have a strong business case in order to attract that sort of private sector interest?

Mr Crocker: We certainly have not produced a detailed feasibility study or a detailed business plan, but we certainly have done enough research in overall terms to satisfy ourselves that this project can be very successful, and if for no other reason it really is the very best solution for our country. We are talking about a state of the art airport which has minimal environmental impact and does not require funds of government.

The Company stated that it would be able to build the new airport in 7-10 years, once planning permission had been granted.

TEACO's representative was asked about international precedents for offshore island airports

Q1213 Mr Campbell: Could I just finally ask you, and this follows on from a question a colleague alluded to about the Holland experiment [a proposal to build an airport in the North Sea which had been abandoned by the Dutch], what international precedents have you based your project upon?

Mr Crocker: The new runway island at Hong Kong is probably the latest example we have. Yes, before that there was Osaka, Japan, but I deliberately did not mention that.

Q1214 Chairman: Yes, this Committee were told that Osaka had considerable problems with the fact that some of their runways are sinking.

¹²⁴ HC Transport Select Committee, *UK airport capacity*, HC 67, 1995/96

¹²⁵ Transport Select Committee: *UK airport capacity government observations on second report session 1995/96. (HC 67)*, HC 644 1995/96, p xv
http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:hcpp&rft_dat=xri:hcpp:fulltext:1995-097023:15 (HCPP – Intranet only)

¹²⁶ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200203/cmselect/cmtran/454/3050707.htm>
(accessed 23 March 2010)

Mr Crocker: That is an engineering problem.

Q1215 Chairman: It is also quite of import if you are trying to run an airport and it is disappearing into the sea!

Mr Crocker: I must tell you, Madam Chairman, that I was not responsible for Osaka.

Q1216 Chairman: No, but I think it is a valid argument to ask you, you see, because we have not had very specific answers. Anyway, gentlemen, that has all been very interesting. We are all very grateful to you for taking the time to come. Thank you very much.

In its conclusions, the Committee stated

229. We see the future of airport development in the United Kingdom being centred on targeted expansion of existing sites. We have not seen any off-shore or green field developments that would provide a solution to the capacity problems. The new sites and extensive new land access infrastructure required to service them would have high environmental costs. The only way to ensure that a newly built hub airport would be successful would be to close down existing ones. This would be neither cheap nor easy; airport operators and airlines would expect compensation for their losses and local communities would lose the employment that established airports provide.¹²⁷

The Marinair scheme was not short-listed by the Government following the SERAS consultations. In its 2003 White Paper following the consultation period, the DfT commented

Insufficient information was supplied by the promoters of the Marinair proposal to enable a meaningful comparative appraisal of its potential costs and benefits. However, from the limited information provided it would appear likely that the Marinair project would be prohibitively expensive, both in terms of airport construction and road and rail links.¹²⁸

A statement on TEACO's website condemned the dismissal of its proposal. It described the White Paper as a simply a restatement of the status quo and a 'BAA charter to increase its monopolistic hold on air travel into and out of the country'. It further claimed that the Government had withheld the detailed engineering assessment of the Marinair scheme on the grounds of confidentiality.

For some considerable time now the almost daily intense media coverage highlighting the sorry state of affairs at Heathrow in particular, and with the air transport facilities of this country in general, publicises the damage resulting from the Government's steadfast adherence to a policy of patch and mend and piecemeal development. Marinair embraces the vision and radical approach to redress the situation for the benefit of our country, the people who live here and the myriad of annual visitors to our country.¹²⁹

The company's website has not been accessible for several months,¹³⁰ but TEACO has continued to file accounts at Companies House.

¹²⁷ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200203/cmselect/cmtran/454/454.pdf> (accessed 16 July 2010)

¹²⁸ *The Future of Air Transport*, Cm 6046, DfT, Dec 2003
<http://bit.ly/LF0Vj> (UK Govt Web Archive, accessed 16 July 2010)

¹²⁹ <http://web.archive.org/web/20080109015210/www.teaco.co.uk/introduction.htm> (Internet Archive, accessed 16 July 2010)

¹³⁰ Last checked on 5 August 2010. A cached version of the website is from 2008 available at
<http://web.archive.org/web/20080208091810/http://www.teaco.co.uk/> (Internet Archive, accessed 16 July 2010)

3.2 Mayor of London's Study Groups, 2008-

The role of the Mayor

Although Heathrow and London City Airport are the only airports located within the GLA boundary, London authorities have regularly contributed to discussions about airport capacity in south east England. For example, the Greater London Council (GLC) gave evidence to the 1968-'71 Roskill Commission in favour of Foulness in Essex as the location for a Third London Airport.¹³¹ Later, it supported the Maplin Sands proposal and recommended its revival in the late 1970s/early 1980s (see Section 2.2 above).

The Greater London Authority Act 1999 enables the Mayor of London to do anything within his power that he considers will promote economic/social development, and the improvement of the environment in Greater London.¹³² The Mayor has a role in developing a transport strategy for London. In 2002, press reports suggested that the then Mayor of London Ken Livingstone was interested in the possibility of developing an airport in the Thames estuary.¹³³ However, in a meeting of the Greater London Authority's Planning and Spatial Development Committee on 17 September 2002 he stated

We went back and examined the concept of a Marinair – a Hong Kong-style floating airport - but the cost of that was £50 billion and it's completely out of line with any other alternative to a factor of 300%.¹³⁴

The Conservative candidate for Mayor of London Boris Johnson raised the idea of an estuarial airport, as opposed to further expansion at Heathrow, during his successful election campaign in 2008. Following his election in May 2008, Mayor Johnson commissioned an in-house desk-top review into the possible siting of an airport in the estuary. The review came to a provisional decision that such an airport would be feasible. The Mayor then established a study group led by the consulting engineer Douglas Oakervee (who had been project manager during the construction of Hong Kong International Airport in the 1990s) to produce a preliminary feasibility report on the practicalities of building an international hub airport with the capacity to accommodate up to six runways and operate 24 hours a day.

At a meeting with the leaders of other local authorities in the South East of England on 13 November 2008, the Mayor said that while he was not prepared to countenance a new runway at Heathrow, he recognised the need for expansion in airport capacity in the SE. It was not his intention to close Heathrow; or to 'wreck' parts of Kent with a massive new airport; rather he wanted to explore other alternatives, including a new airport in the Thames estuary. The minutes of the meeting stated that the forum was 'in broad agreement' that London should investigate an estuarial airport.¹³⁵

Writing in the Daily Telegraph on 16 December 2008, Mr Johnson confirmed his opposition to a new third runway for Heathrow¹³⁶

...I believe we should also be brave and consider what could be a beautiful and long-term solution, and one with big environmental attractions. I don't mean Cliffe, or Foulness or Maplin Sands. There are plenty of people - an increasing number of passionate enthusiasts - who believe we can find a site in the Thames Estuary that presents a minimal threat to bird life, or north Kent marginal seats, and which is nowhere near an unexploded munitions ship, and that could be connected to London by high-speed rail.

We should at least look at this option; and it's no use protesting that "it's never going to happen". That is an extremely weak objection, and one that was made for centuries against aviation itself.¹³⁷

On 23 January 2009, Mr Johnson paid a visit to the Thames estuary on a dredger in search of possible locations for the airport and said that the trip had reinforced his belief that an estuary airport should be

¹³¹ "GLC wants Foulness as airport", *Times*, 6 August 1970, p3

¹³² Request for Mayoral Decision MD479: The Thames Estuary Airport Steering Group, 16 October 2009, Section 4

¹³³ "Livingstone resurrects plan for £30bn floating airport on Thames", *Independent*, 3 August 2002, p5

¹³⁴ <http://bit.ly/cU0wtP> (Internet Archive, accessed 16 July 2010)

¹³⁵ *Minutes of the Meeting of the Advisory Forum on Regional Planning for London, the South East and the East of England*, 13 November 2008

¹³⁶ For more information on proposals for a third runway at Heathrow, see [Library Standard Note SN/BT/1136](#)

¹³⁷ "Benn the Younger talks sense", *Daily Telegraph*, 16 December 2008, p16

considered as an option in order to meet London's long-term aviation needs.¹³⁸ The Mayor has denied that he has any commitment to, or a plan, project or blueprint for, a new airport in the estuary, but has stressed that it would be irresponsible not to look at all the aviation options in the south east. He said the decision on whether or not to build an airport would be taken by national government and not the Mayor.¹³⁹

Any formal proposal for a new airport in the estuary would be the subject of a planning inquiry. See Section III of [Library Research Paper 09/11](#) for further information on airport planning procedures.

Douglas Oakervee Report, 2009

Douglas Oakervee was appointed by the Mayor in November 2008 to lead the GLA's preliminary feasibility study. He was asked to advise the Mayor on whether to establish a full scale appraisal of the Thames estuary airport option. The report was delivered to the Mayor in August 2009 and was published on the website of the [Thames Estuary Research and Development Company](#) on 19 October 2009.¹⁴⁰

The Oakervee Report itself acknowledged that it was a brief review of the issue rather than an in-depth study. It recommended that a further series of detailed studies and proper consultation should be undertaken. The report stated that the feasibility of developing a new airport in the estuary should be considered as part of wider development and environmental issues in the Thames estuary/Thames Gateway region.¹⁴¹ Rather than looking at a new airport in isolation, Mr Oakervee recommended that a holistic approach should be adopted. He specified the following elements

- Climate change/Protection of people and property on the Thames floodplain. In order to provide a further safeguard, an outer estuary barrier could be constructed. A multi-function barrier encompassing tidal energy generation and an airport would cut costs.
- Tidal energy generation
- Transport links
- Regeneration
- Protection of ecology/wildlife

Mr Oakervee noted a series of potential difficulties including the impact on the environment and obstructions such as the wreck of the [SS Richard Montgomery](#), but said that he saw 'no overwhelming constraints' to the development of a 2 runway airport (capable of incremental extension to 4 runways) in the estuary. The following are the major features of the preliminary airport plan

- **Demand for a new airport in the estuary**

Although press speculation has referred to a new airport in the estuary as 'Heathrow-on-Sea' and the Mayor has referred to the development of Heathrow as a 'planning error', the Oakervee Report did not recommend the closure of Heathrow airport. In June 2010, the Mayor remarked that

Heathrow is a great airport and nobody is proposing to close Heathrow. The problem is that to get to Heathrow you have to fly over so much of the rest of London. The difficulty, therefore, is to expand Heathrow without gravely inconveniencing the lives of Londoners. That is why I am against the third runway.¹⁴²

The Oakervee report envisaged a new airport in addition to rather than as a replacement for existing London airports. The report stated that even if 3 new runways were to be built at existing London

¹³⁸ Speaking at the Stansted Planning inquiry in 1982, Mr Eldon Griffiths MP recalled visiting Maplin Sands on a cockleshell boat with Sir Frank Marshall, then Chairman of the Maplin Development Corporation, "where we stuck a flag on the sandbank there and we looked at it and that was the place that we believed within ten years would see a modern runway of great pride to Britain". [documents released by the DfT re Maplin airport on 22 August 2008 in response to an FOI request]

¹³⁹ GLA, Mayor's Question Time, 17 March 2010

¹⁴⁰ *Thames estuary airport feasibility review*, Prepared by Douglas Oakervee, 19 October 2009
<http://www.testrad.co.uk/pdf/TEAFRreport.pdf> (accessed 16 July 2010)

¹⁴¹ For further information on the Thames Gateway, see [Library Standard Note SN/SC/3894](#)

¹⁴² [GLA, Mayor's Question Time, 9 June 2010](#)

airports (Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted), the Labour Government estimated that additional runway capacity will be needed by 2030.¹⁴³

The report said an airport in the Thames estuary could be open by 2029 when London airport capacity is projected to be exhausted. The report emphasised the danger and nuisance to residents living under the flight paths of existing London airports, particularly Heathrow, and noted the potential benefits of creating a new airport away from major built up areas. However, introducing a new airport in the estuary would not provide immediate relief to these people as Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted would continue to operate. Unlike these airports however, an estuary airport could increase its runways in the future with less damage to local residents.

- **Timing of opening of a new airport**

The report stressed that the time scale is conservative, but, dependent upon agreement, the report sets out a timeline

	By
Agreement to the next stage	2010
In depth Study and consultation complete	2013
Concept design and drafting of Bill	2015
Approvals	2018
Detailed planning and consents	2020
Construction and commission	2029 ¹⁴⁴

- **Location**

The Oakervee report was not yet able to say when, how or exactly where it should be built, although the most likely location would be in the outer estuary approximately 7-10km north east of Whitstable. He stressed that in order to determine the most appropriate location a series of further studies would need to be undertaken.

- **Construction**

Despite press reports describing it as a 'floating airport', the Oakervee Report proposed building the estuary airport on an artificial island (similar to existing offshore airports in Japan) rather than on a floating platform. For a 2-runway airport, the platform would be approximately 4800m long x 1800m wide and would be around 7m above mean high tide level. The material for the platform could come from construction waste generated in the south east and, potentially, also from waste material which would otherwise go to landfill sites or incinerators. Additional material would be needed to provide protection against wave action and ensure stability.¹⁴⁵

- **Cost/Finance**

The cost of building a 2-runway airport [plus transport links] was estimated at £40 billion, although the report suggested that this figure could be reduced.

The Oakervee report focused on engineering issues and so did not address the issue of who would pay for a new airport.¹⁴⁶ However, earlier in October 2009, the Mayor's deputy, Kit Malthouse, was quoted as saying

"We have had an incredible amount of interest from countries such as Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE, which have signalled they would like to fund the airport. It is possible we could build it without taxpayers' money.

"Who wouldn't want to own an immovable fixed asset just off the coast? It's extremely valuable and the owners of sovereign wealth funds know they could bequeath it to their children."

¹⁴³ See Library Standard Note SN/BT/2893, *Aviation: airports in South East England* for more information on the projected demand for air travel

¹⁴⁴ *Thames estuary airport feasibility review*, p61
<http://www.testrad.co.uk/pdf/TEAFRreport.pdf> (accessed 16 July 2010)

¹⁴⁵ *ibid*, pp55-58

¹⁴⁶ A further report was planned to look at the economic benefits of a new airport. This has not yet been published.

Mr Malthouse said the Chinese government had also indicated it may want to put cash into the project during discussions at the Beijing Olympics.¹⁴⁷

No further information about the nature of this overseas funding has emerged. Other promoters of Thames estuary airports have also said that funding would be available from abroad. For example, in 1996 representatives from the Thames Estuary Airport Company/Marinair scheme told the House of Commons Transport Select Committee that they had backing from foreign investors and that their scheme would not cost the taxpayer a penny [see section 3.1 above].¹⁴⁸ Promoters of these schemes have remained similarly reluctant to provide details about their backers.

Reactions

Political

The proposal did not receive support from the leadership of any of the 3 main parties represented in the House of Commons before the 2010 General Election, although it was welcomed by the UK Independence Party which offered its enthusiastic backing for a new London airport in the Thames estuary off North Kent.¹⁴⁹

However, in January 2009 an All-Party Parliamentary Group was established to “promote consideration of a new airport in the Thames Estuary and its potential to meet airport capacity requirements for London and the South-East of England in the most environmentally acceptable way.”¹⁵⁰ Press reports suggested that the Group would be re-convened after the 2010 General Election¹⁵¹, but this APPG is not listed in the Register of All-Party Groups published on 30 July 2010.

Local authorities

Kent County Council and Medway Council, which campaigned against a proposed airport at Cliffe in 2002, have signalled their opposition to the latest suggestion, describing it as a ‘pie in the sky’ proposal. A [campaign website](#) has been established and an [on-line petition](#) against the plan has been set up. When last checked on 19 July 2010 there were 1,551 signatories.

Medway Council declared its opposition to an estuary airport on the following grounds:

(i) It is unnecessary and not wanted;(ii) The cost of an airport would be prohibitive;(iii) The current infrastructure would not cope with huge increases in traffic;(iv) The environmental damage would be catastrophic;(v) The noise, light and air pollution would be intolerable;(vi) The risk of air strike from migrating and nesting wildfowl would be high especially as this is an internationally important site for wildlife;(vii) The airport would be disproportionately affected by fog and high winds;(viii) The airport would lead to blight in the surrounding area including falling property prices and uncertainty for many years about inward investment into Medway(ix) Kent County Council is promoting Manston as an airport destination and this provides a viable alternative.¹⁵²

Kent County Council noted the negative impact a Thames estuary airport would have on the environment, in particular it questioned whether such an airport would be compatible with the UK’s legal obligations e.g. the EU Habitats and Species Directive. It doubted that an airport in the estuary would be economically viable, noting the reluctance of major airlines to switch from Heathrow. KCC also claimed that the transport infrastructure which would be necessary and the urbanisation which would result from a new airport would adversely affect the area.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁷ “Sheikhs to fund ‘Boris island’ airport in the Thames estuary”, *Evening Standard*, 7 October 2009

¹⁴⁸ http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:hcpp&rft_dat=xri:hcpp:fulltext:1995-096250:180 [Intranet only]

¹⁴⁹ “UKIP backs ‘Boris Island’ over Cameron”, 29 January 2010

<http://www.ukip.org/content/latest-news/1431-ukip-backs-boris-island-over-cameron> (accessed 16 July 2010)

¹⁵⁰ “Register of All-Party Groups” [as at 12 April 2010]

¹⁵¹ “MPs sign up to back Thames airport on ‘Boris Island’”, *Evening Standard*, 1 July 2010

¹⁵² *Thames Estuary Airport Feasibility Review: report to Council*, Medway Council, 2010

<http://www.medway.gov.uk/f20100114r-3.pdf> (accessed 15 July 2010)

¹⁵³ *Thames estuary airport objections – from Kent County Council*, 2010 [evidence submitted to London Assembly Environment Committee

<http://legacy.london.gov.uk/assembly/envmtgs/2010/mar11/item06b.pdf> (accessed 16 July 2010)]

Environmental groups

The RSPB has consistently campaigned against all proposals for a new airport in the Thames estuary. The Society said in a critique of the Oakervee Report that siting a new airport in the estuary would be likely to constitute a breach of the UK's legal duty to protect the environment. Further, it rejected Oakervee's apparent confidence that it would be possible to control the risk of bird strike to aircraft without aggressive bird management techniques.¹⁵⁴

In December 2009, the Aviation Environment Federation published a briefing paper on Thames estuary airport proposals, and confirmed its opposition to a new airport. It stated that rather than expanding aviation capacity, the Government should instead focus on investing in low-carbon alternatives to aviation.¹⁵⁵

Aviation industry

In general, proposals for estuary airports have failed to attract support from the aviation industry. For example, the 1968-71 Roskill Commission report noted the "unqualified opposition of airlines, British and foreign, and of the British Airports Authority to Foulness" and rejected Foulness as a possible location because it would not succeed as an airport, with airlines choosing to fly from other airports.¹⁵⁶ Similarly, the Mayor of London's decision to investigate the issue has not received backing from the airline industry. In March 2010, a survey carried out on behalf of Medway Council (which is opposed to the proposal) stated that 90% of the international airlines using Heathrow were against the idea of building an airport in the estuary. Michael Carrivick, Chief Executive of the Board of Airline Representatives, UK listed the following objections

- Huge safety fears of bird-strikes from large colonies in the estuary.
- It would cause huge unemployment around Heathrow, which employs 70,000 direct staff, and the collapse of the economy of Thames Valley and west London.
- It would cost billions of pounds of public money to fund the new site, whereas Heathrow's runway expansion would be paid for by the airport operator and its airline customers.
- There is inadequate transportation to handle the projected 63 million passengers per annum that would start and finish their journeys at a Thames Estuary airport.
- Transport problems caused by passengers from the South West, Wales and southern Midlands having to travel through or around London to access the estuary.
- As Heathrow is a major hub airport 'it is naive to assume airlines and passengers would simply use Thames Estuary as an alternative'.
- Unknown dangers connected to wartime munitions ship sunk in the estuary with volatile cargo.

Mr Carrivick added: "Any airport operating the estuary would severely affect the use of continental airspace – which would require, if it was feasible, considerable re-design.

"It would also severely affect the operations of at least one of the existing London airports on the eastern side of the metropolis.

"And it would still require many departing and arriving aircraft to fly over London, so nullifying one of the reasons for building an estuary airport."¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Thames Estuary airport: Oakervee feasibility review: RSPB critique, 2010 [evidence submitted to London Assembly Environment Committee

<http://legacy.london.gov.uk/assembly/envmtgs/2010/mar11/item06b.pdf> (accessed 19 July 2010)]

¹⁵⁵ Thames estuary airport: AEF position paper, Aviation Environment Federation, 3 December 2009

http://www.aef.org.uk/downloads/Thames_Estuary_Airport_proposal___AEF_position_paper.pdf

(accessed 19 July 2010)

¹⁵⁶ *Report, Commission on the Third London Airport*, [Roskill Commission], HMSO, 1971, p 137

¹⁵⁷ "Ninety per cent of the airlines that use Heathrow say no to a Thames Estuary airport", Stop the Estuary Airport campaign press release, 3 March 2010 <http://bit.ly/9ee0LU> (accessed 16 July 2010)

Actions following the Oakervee Report

On 16 October 2009, the Mayor established the Thames Estuary Steering Group, chaired by the Labour Government's former Chief Scientific Adviser Sir David King, to

oversee further consideration of and studies on the use of the Thames Estuary following the completion of a technical review on the feasibility of building and operating an International Hub Airport within the Thames Estuary. Issues such as climate change, flood management, renewable energy, environment and ecology, regeneration, shipping, road and rail links, and aviation will need to be properly considered when determining any future use of the Thames Estuary.¹⁵⁸

The Group was allocated £1000 pa (plus administrative support) from the GLA budget.

Its first major step was intended to be the commissioning of a scoping study to consider options for the future of the Thames estuary (rather than simply on a possible new airport).¹⁵⁹ Following the scoping study, what Sir David described as "the definitive in-depth study of options for the Thames estuary" would be undertaken. This study would take 2-3 years to complete and would cost in excess of £5 million (the Oakervee Report had suggested £10 million). It was suggested that although the GLA would not pay for this study, it could use its influence to "unlock funding from other bodies (for example, central government, London Development Agency, European Union as well as the private sector)."¹⁶⁰ In response to a question asked by Caroline Pidgeon AM, the Mayor said on 19 May 2010 that he had not approached any bodies to request funding. The scoping study has not yet been published, though the minutes of meetings of the Thames Estuary Steering Group suggest that a report, produced by a set of consultants on a pro-bono basis, had been drafted by May 2010.

At a meeting of the Steering Group on 4 February 2010 it was noted that should the 2010 General Election not result in a clear majority, 'the Government of the day would be likely to steer clear of the issue surrounding the Thames estuary'. However, it was agreed that a briefing document should be developed to present to the new Government.¹⁶¹

Mr Oakervee had been due to appear before the London Assembly's Environment Committee on 11 March 2010, but in early March it was announced that he was required to be in Hong Kong for 'several months' in order to work on major infrastructure projects in the region.¹⁶² Mr Oakervee subsequently denied that this meant the scheme had been abandoned.¹⁶³

Following the General election in May 2010, the new Conservative- Liberal Democrat Coalition government set out a series of policies for the next 5 years. One of these was to rule out the construction of new runways at Heathrow, Gatwick or Stansted. The Government subsequently announced the formation of a South East Airports Taskforce to help make the most of existing airport infrastructure.

In July 2010, the Conservative MP for Chatham and Aylesford asked the new Government about its policy towards the construction of a new airport in the estuary. In response, the Secretary of State for Transport stated

I can confirm that the Government has no plans to build any new airports in the region. Our aviation policies are firmly focussed on improving existing airports - making our airports better, not bigger.¹⁶⁴

Nevertheless, the Mayor has said he remains committed to investigating the issue, writing in the Daily Telegraph on 2 August 2010 he commented

¹⁵⁸ <http://bit.ly/dv4jr3> (accessed 16 July 2010)

¹⁵⁹ Minutes from Thames Estuary Steering Group First Meeting, 4 December 2009 <http://www.london.gov.uk/strategy-policy/thames-estuary-airport> (accessed 16 July 2010)

¹⁶⁰ *ibid*

¹⁶¹ Notes from the Thames Estuary Steering Group Meeting, 4 February 2010 <http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Draft%20Meeting%20Notes%20from%20Thames%20Estuary%20Steering%20Group%20Meeting%20-%204%20Feb%202010.pdf> (accessed 16 July 2010)

¹⁶² <http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Oakervee%20letter.pdf> (accessed 16 July 2010)

¹⁶³ "Oakervee reaffirms Thames Estuary plans", *New Civil Engineer*, 11 March 2010

¹⁶⁴ "Transport Secretary says no to Boris Island", Weblog of Tracey Crouch MP, 27 July 2010

<http://blog.traceycrouch.org/2010/07/transport-secretary-says-no-to-boris.html> (accessed 28 July 2010)

...it is obvious that the current policy of no new runways anywhere in the South East is utterly ridiculous.

Of course the good people of Sussex will object to a new runway at Gatwick, and the same points will doubtless be made against any expansion of Luton, Stansted or any other terrestrial location in the vicinity of London.

That is why some people are arguing for a clean, green 24- hour hub airport that could be built in the Thames estuary, far from human habitation, with no more threat to bird life than there is at Heathrow. I don't know if they are correct. But we are surely right to look at it seriously.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ "Turkey is taking off, but with Heathrow our wings are clipped", *Daily Telegraph*, 2 August 2010

4 Reference Materials

4.1 Chronology

'After the biggest inquiry, by the Roskill Commission [on the Third London Airport] in 1968-71, someone unkindly said that the documentation, suitably pulped and compressed, could provide all the material needed for the runways'¹⁶⁶

The following timeline sets the proposals for an airport in the Thames Estuary in the context of airport development in the Greater London area and attempts to list the relevant major events and reports since the 1940s. The Library does not hold all of the many reports referred to, but, where available, links to on-line versions of material or their Library locations have been provided.¹⁶⁷

- 1943** Proposal by the aircraft designer FG Miles for a combined land/flying boat airport near Gravesend (*Times*, 21 July 1943, p2). Reference is also made to a proposal from the London Regional Reconstruction Committee for an airport at the Isle of Dogs.
- 1946** Heathrow opens for traffic as a civilian airport [Cliffe Marshes had been considered as a potential successor to Croydon as London's main airport¹⁶⁸].
- 1947** Cliffe was considered as a flying boat airport by the Pakenham Committee (1946/47) (*Times*, 31 January 1947, p2), but in 1949 the Government confirmed its rejection of the site.
- 1953** Government white paper (Cmd 8902) proposes Gatwick as second London Airport. Estuarial airports were not short-listed.
- 1954** Local public inquiry into development of Gatwick. Government report on the Inquiry (Cmd 9215) and policy statement (Cmd 9296) confirming its decision to develop Gatwick.
- 30 Jul 1954** [Government explains](#) that Cliffe was rejected as an alternative site to Gatwick on grounds of cost, poor transport links, and weather and air traffic control concerns.
- 1958** Gatwick Airport opens as a one-runway airport.
- 1960/61** [HC Estimates Committee report on London Airports](#) (HC 233 1960-61) recommends study into developing Stansted as third London Airport.
- Jun 1963** 'Interdepartmental Committee' reports shortlist of 18 sites including Cliffe, Foulness, Sheppey and Southend-on-Sea. It recommends Stansted as the best option.¹⁶⁹
- Consortium proposes scheme to move London Airport to Foulness Island (*Observer*, 30 June 1963, p1).
- Nov 1965** Plan to develop a 6-runway airport on the Isle of Sheppey to replace Heathrow (*Observer*, 7 Nov 1965, p11).
- Dec 1965 - Feb 1966** Public inquiry into [development](#) of Stansted with Leysdown on Isle of Sheppey touted as the alternative. Foulness is rejected on several grounds including cost and the difficulty in removing the military firing range at Shoeburyness.
- Mar 1966** General election. Labour wins power with a majority of 96.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ Peter Hall, *Great Planning Disasters*, 1980, p15 (Library location: TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING-HAL)

¹⁶⁷ The full text of the older parliamentary papers listed is accessible to Intranet users via the House of Commons Parliamentary Papers service

¹⁶⁸ [Thames Reach Airport – SERAS assessment submission](#), Thames Reach, 30 June 2003, p34 (accessed 16 July 2010)

¹⁶⁹ *Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on the Third London Airport*, HMSO, 1964 (Library location: SOP AVIATION NS 4)

¹⁷⁰ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/politics97/background/pastelec/ge66.shtml> (accessed 16 July 2010)

- May 1966** Planning Inspector submits report (Published 1967) into inquiry and finds the case for Stansted unproven, recommending a wider review to look at the alternatives including Cliffe and Sheppey.¹⁷¹ The Government sets up a Second Interdepartmental Committee to revisit the issue.
- Jan 1967** In a lecture given in a personal capacity at Leeds University, Sir Donald Gibson, DG of Research and Development at the Ministry of Public Building and Works, suggests that a new airport made of expanded polystyrene could be constructed to float on the mud flats of the Thames estuary. Passengers could travel to the new airport by hovercraft (*Guardian*, 27 January 1967, p3).
- May 1967** [Government White paper](#) (Cmnd 3259) produced at the same time as the Planning Inspector's report is published, recommends Stansted but discusses alternatives including Gunfleet Sands near Clacton, Dengie Flats in Essex, Foulness island, Isle of Sheppey and Cliffe in Kent and Plumstead Marshes.
- 12 May 1967** [Ministerial Statement](#) announcing the decision to develop Stansted.
- 29 Jun 1967** [HC Debate](#) on National Airport Policy.
- Sep 1967** 'Floating airport' off Sheppey proposed by a Mr A.J Harris, consulting engineer (*Guardian*, 9 September 1967, p9).
- Oct/Nov 1967** Noise Abatement Society report (summarised in [Foulness: a feasible alternative? Flight International, 9 November 1967](#)) prefers Maplin Sands over Stansted.¹⁷²
- 11 Dec 1967** [Lords debate](#) on Airport issue. General hostility to Stansted as the proposed site.
- Feb 1968** [Government announces](#) the establishment of the Commission to re-examine the location of Third London Airport.
- John Howard and Company (engineers) announces a scheme for an airport on Maplin Sands with four runways. Privately financed, it would be handed over to the Government as a going concern. The Govt would then pay back the costs 'over a period to be agreed' when the airport started to earn money. (*Times*, 27 February 1968, p3)
- May 1968** Roskill Commission Inquiry. During its course, opposition grows at
Dec 1970 potential inland sites
- Nov 1968** Report released by Essex and Hertfordshire County Councils recommending Foulness Sands (*Guardian*, 20 November 1968, p12).
- Dec 1968** Proposal by Bernard Clark (engineer) for an airport and port at Foulness on Maplin Sands using reclaimed land (*Times*, 5 December 1968, p2).
- Mar 1969** Roskill Commission issues short list of sites – Cublington, Foulness, Nuthampstead and Thurleigh.
- Mar 1969** Thames Aeroport Group plans for Foulness outlined (*Times*, 20 March 1969).
- Nov 1969** Thames Aeroport Group and Bernard L Clark & Partners combine and announce that a viability study of the project will be undertaken by the Netherlands Economic Institute. Another group, Thames Estuary Development Company (Tedco), supported by Southend Corporation, continued separately.

¹⁷¹ *Report of the Inquiry into Local Objections to the proposed development of land at Stansted as the Third Airport for London*, Presented to the Minister of Housing and Local Government by G D Blake, 1967 (Library location: SOP HOUSING & LOCAL GOVERNMENT NS 34)

¹⁷² Ralph G Covell et al, *The third London airport*, Noise Abatement Society, 1967 (Library location: 387.7-COV – Reserve)

- Jan 1970** The Roskill Commission releases research showing Foulness to be the most expensive and Cublington to be the cheapest of the short-listed sites (*Guardian*, 31 January 1970, p1).
- Feb 1970** Survey by Ministry of Building and Public Works states that offshore airports are feasible and have many advantages over inland sites. (*Times*, 25 February 1970, p5).
- Jun 1970** General election. Conservative majority of 30.¹⁷³
- Jul 1970** All Party Parliamentary Committee, led by Stephen Hastings MP (Con, Mid-Beds), set up to oppose inland sites for the airport and recommend Foulness.
- Dec 1970** Roskill Commission releases summary of conclusions.
- An EDM against the Cublington location and in favour of Foulness or ‘any other suitable coastal site’ is introduced and rapidly gathers signatures - over 200 by the end of session.¹⁷⁴
- Jan 1971** Roskill Commission final report rejects Foulness and recommends Cublington in Buckinghamshire by majority. Professor Colin Buchanan submits a minority report in favour of Foulness, describing the Cublington proposal as an ‘environmental disaster’.¹⁷⁵
- Feb 1971** Bernard Clark (engineer) criticises Roskill decision and accuses the Commission’s report of altering the proposed location from Foulness and overstating its costs. (*Times*, 4 February 1971, p 4)
- Feb/Mar 1971** Lords debates on [22nd](#)(part one); [22nd](#)(part two) and [23rd](#)(part one); [23rd](#) (part two) February and [Commons debate](#) on 4 March 1971 on the Roskill Commission report.
- 4 Apr 1971** Group led by Brian Colquhoun (consulting engineer) recommends Cliffe in a proposal sent to the Government (*Times*, 5 April 1971, p 4).
- 26 Apr 1971** Government makes announcements in the [Commons](#) and [Lords](#) revealing that it has overruled the Roskill Commission recommendation in favour of Foulness on environmental and planning grounds.
- 28 May 1971** [Commons debate](#) on Foulness airport proposals.
- 9 Aug 1972** [Government announces plan](#) to develop site ‘C’ creating “the world’s first environmental airport” at Maplin Sands.
- Jan 1973** Publication of ‘Maplin Manifesto’, opposing the Maplin development, by Friends of the Earth (FOE) (*Guardian*, 30 January 1973, p26).
- 8 Feb 1973** 2nd reading of [Maplin Development Bill](#) which provides for reclamation of land and the establishment of a 4-runway airport and a seaport. Government majority of 23 in favour of the Bill.
- During the passage of the Bill, a clause is inserted which ensures that a review should be carried out before any reclamation work takes place.
- 15 Feb 1973** A pamphlet from the [Conservative] Bow Group suggests that the development of Vertical Take Off and Landing (VTOL) aircraft would allow the development of landing pads at Surrey Docks or King’s Cross making Maplin scheme redundant (*Observer*, 25 February 1973, p3).

¹⁷³ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/politics97/background/pastelec/ge70.shtml> (accessed 16 July 2010)

¹⁷⁴ EDM 208 1970/71

¹⁷⁵ *Report, Commission on the Third London Airport* [Roskill Commission], HMSO 1971 (Library location: BT 387.736(421),P)

May 1973	Civil Aviation Authority report claims that Maplin would not be needed before 1985. ¹⁷⁶ The Government reiterates its view that Maplin is the best site.
Jul 1973	Letter from Prime Minister Ted Heath to Toby Jessel MP (Con, Twickenham) thanking him for sending him a petition from 5000 constituents supporting Maplin. Mr Heath stresses the advantages of the Maplin site (<i>Guardian</i> , 12 July 1973, p22). Conservative Central Office produces 'The case for Maplin' leaflet for Conservative MPs (<i>Times</i> , 23 July 1973, p2).
Oct 1973	British Chamber of Commerce study claiming that developing Maplin would be pointless because of the introduction of quieter aircraft (<i>Guardian</i> , 3 October 1973, p5).
6-22 Oct 1973	Arab-Israeli ['Yom-Kippur']war. OPEC restrictions led to a substantial rise in the cost of oil.
23 Oct 1973	In a Commons debate , Mr Anthony Crosland (Lab, Grimsby) reiterates his objections to the scheme and confirms that the Labour Party would scrap the scheme if elected.
25 Oct 1973	Maplin Development Act receives Royal Assent
Feb 1974	General Election. In March 1974, Labour Party takes power, though as a minority administration. ¹⁷⁷
20 Mar 1974	Government announces that a Review of the Maplin project will be initiated.
Jun 1974	Institute of Economic Affairs pamphlet condemns the Maplin project. ¹⁷⁸
18 Jul 1974	Government abandons Maplin .
Aug 1974	Department of Trade consults on Maplin Review and on how future London air traffic should be handled. ¹⁷⁹
Oct 1974	General Election. Labour majority of 3. ¹⁸⁰
Nov 1975 - Jun 1976	Government consultation on Airport Strategy for Great Britain.
Feb 1978	White Paper on Airports policy repeats Government position that Maplin should be abandoned citing cost factors and lack of need on the basis of air traffic forecasts. Expansion of Stansted recommended. ¹⁸¹
Mar 1979	Greater London Council report urging building of airport at Maplin (<i>Guardian</i> , 6 March 1979, p2).
1979	Maplin investigated by Study Group on South East Airports. Recommends Stansted and Hoggerston (Bucks).
May 1979	General Election, Conservative majority of 43. ¹⁸²
Aug 1979	"Gatwick Agreement" ¹⁸³ between BAA and West Sussex County Council that there would be no operational second runway at the airport until 2019.

¹⁷⁶ *Forecasts of Air Traffic and capacity at airports in the London Area*, Civil Aviation Authority, 1973 (Library location: DEP 5459)

¹⁷⁷ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/politics97/background/pastelec/ge74feb.shtml> (accessed 16 July 2010)

¹⁷⁸ Christopher Foster et al, *Lessons of Maplin: is the machinery for governmental decision-making at fault?* IEA, 1974 (Library location: Members Library HU (NS) VOL 8)

¹⁷⁹ *Airport strategy for Great Britain: part 1, the London Area*, Dept of Trade, 1975 (Library location: SOP TRADE NS 54)

¹⁸⁰ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/politics97/background/pastelec/ge74oct.shtml> (accessed 16 July 2010)

¹⁸¹ *Airports policy*, Dept of Trade, Cmnd. 7084, 1978

¹⁸² <http://www.bbc.co.uk/politics97/background/pastelec/ge79.shtml> (accessed 16 July 2010)

- Nov 1979** Advisory Committee on Airport Policy report.¹⁸⁴
- 17 Dec 1979** Following the receipt of the Study Group on South East Airports and Advisory Committee on Airports reports, the **Government states** that they ‘do not intend to resurrect the Maplin project, even in a revised form’ and that no new airport would be built.
- 1980** Noise Advisory Council report recommends Maplin as location for third London airport on aircraft noise grounds.¹⁸⁵ However, it notes that if it the new airport could not attract passengers, demand would fall on other London airports.
- 21 Feb 1980** **Commons debate** on airports policy in which the Secretary of State for Trade reiterates the reasons for the abandonment of Maplin.
- Jun 1980** GLC plan for Maplin seaport and passenger terminal with one runway (*Guardian*, 18 June 1980, p3).
- 1981-1983** Inquiry into development of Stansted, Heathrow’s 5th terminal and a new airport at Maplin.
- 1982** Town and Country Planning Association criticises planning inquiry into Stansted but withdraws planning application for new airport at Maplin (*Financial Times*, 2 Feb 1982, p7).
- 1984** After the Stansted Public Inquiry (1981 to 1983) lasting 258 days, Inspector Graham Eyre rejects Maplin proposal but recommends that the application to increase capacity on Stansted's single runway should be allowed only if Government guaranteed that throughput would never go beyond 25 million and that there would never be a 2nd runway.¹⁸⁶
- 1985** Following the public enquiry, the Government **accepts** Eyre's recommendations and approval is given for Stansted to be developed.
- 1986** Opening of Heathrow Terminal Four.
- 1987** Opening of London City Airport aimed at business travellers and using short take off and landing (STOL) aircraft.
- Apr 1989** Marinair scheme to build an offshore airport on an artificial island near Maplin Sands (*Guardian*, 22 Apr 1989, p24)
- 1990** CAA advises Government that air traffic in the south east would reach saturation point by 2005 and that another runway would be needed at one of ten locations including Stansted.¹⁸⁷ Local consultation took place on two close parallel runway options for Stansted but these were universally rejected in view of the assurances given by Government in the 1985 White Paper
- 1991** New terminal at Stansted opens.
- 1993** The RUCATSE panel was formed to decide which of the options would be adopted. RUCATSE dismissed the Stansted option for much the same

¹⁸³ Copy of Agreement stored on an archived version of the Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign’s website <http://bit.ly/Uvt79> (Internet Archive, accessed 23 March 2010)

¹⁸⁴ *Report of the advisory committee on airports policy*, HMSO, 1979

¹⁸⁵ *The Third London Airport: report by a working group of the Council*, Noise Advisory Council, HMSO, 1980 (Library location: SOP Environment, NS 80)

¹⁸⁶ *The Airports Inquiries 1981-1983, Report of the Inspector, Graham Eyre*, Department of the Environment, 1984 (Library location: DEP 1196)

¹⁸⁷ *Traffic distribution policy and airport and airspace capacity: the next 15 years – Advice to the Secretary of State for Transport*, CAP 570, Civil Aviation Authority, 1990 (Library location: SOP CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY NS 3)

reasons that the Graham Eyre Inquiry had identified and recorded that a new runway was not likely to be needed there before 2015. The report also discussed estuarial sites, stating that they ‘remain a long term possibility and offer important potential benefits but [that] they raise major issues in relation to cost of construction, passenger demand and effect on the natural environment’ and the Marinair proposal in particular, recording reservations on the grounds of lack of demand and practicality.¹⁸⁸

- 1996** Marinair project submits written and oral evidence to the House of Commons Transport Select Committee (HC 67 1996/96).¹⁸⁹
- 2002** Press reports of Mayor of London Ken Livingstone considering and then rejecting estuarial airport proposal (*Planning*, 20 September 2002, p1).
- 2003** South East Regional Air Services Study (SERAS) examines Cliffe etc.¹⁹⁰
- Jan 2003** Stop Stansted Expansion campaign submits short report to the House of Commons Transport Select Committee on offshore airport development.¹⁹¹
- 2003** Marinair project gives [oral evidence](#) to the House of Commons Transport Select Committee.
- 2003** Report commissioned by the DfT providing an overview of the concept of developing estuarial airports.¹⁹²
- Dec 2003** Labour Government White Paper dismisses proposals to construct an airport in the estuary.¹⁹³
- 2006** Town and Country Planning Association pamphlet recommending closure of Heathrow in favour of an estuarial airport.¹⁹⁴
- Nov 2007** [Labour Government consultation paper](#) on the construction of a third runway at Heathrow.
- 2008** Opening of Heathrow Terminal Five.
- London Mayoral election campaign in which Boris Johnson raises the option of siting an airport in the estuary.
- Nov 2008** All Party Parliamentary Group formed to promote consideration of an airport in the Thames estuary.
- 15 Jan 2009** Labour Government confirms its support for a third runway at Heathrow¹⁹⁵
- Aug 2009** Oakervee Report delivered to the Mayor of London.
- 16 Oct 2009** Thames Estuary Steering Group established by the Mayor of London¹⁹⁶

¹⁸⁸ *Runway Capacity to Serve the South East :a report by the working group*, Dept of Transport, 1993 (Library location: DEP 9554)

¹⁸⁹ <http://parlipapers.chadwyck.co.uk/fullrec/fullrec.do?id=1995-096250&DurUrl=Yes> (HCPP – Intranet only)

¹⁹⁰ For more information on SERAS, please see [Library Standard Note SN/BT/2893](#)

¹⁹¹ <http://tinyurl.com/753x7q> (Internet Archive, accessed 16 July 2010)

¹⁹² *Development of Airport Capacity in the Thames Estuary*, Halcrow Group for the Department for Transport, December 2003 <http://tinyurl.com/57ecs9> (UK Govt Web Archive, accessed 16 December 2008)

¹⁹³ *The Future of Air Transport*, Cm 6046, Department for Transport, Dec 2003 <http://tinyurl.com/38u38c2> (UK Government Web Archive, accessed 16 July 2010)

¹⁹⁴ Tony Hall and Peter Hall, *Heathrow: a retirement plan*, TCPA, May 2006 (Internet Archive, accessed 16 July 2010)

¹⁹⁵ “Hoon outlines air, road and rail improvements to boost economy and jobs”, Dept for Transport press release, 15 January 2009

19 Oct 2009	Thames Estuary Airport Feasibility Review report published. ¹⁹⁷
3 Dec 2009	Aviation Environment Federation position paper on Thames estuary airports ¹⁹⁸
7 Dec 2009	Report by Concentric Consulting recommending construction of a new airport on the Hoo Peninsula in Kent. ¹⁹⁹
Jan 2010	Report for Medway Council summarising the Oakervee Report and the Council's objection to an airport in the estuary. ²⁰⁰
Feb 2010	London Assembly Environment Committee releases evidence submitted to the Committee by interested organisations ²⁰¹
26 Mar 2010	High Court judgment rules that a further review of the policy issues should take place before agreement is given to a third runway at Heathrow. ²⁰²
6 May 2010	General election
20 May 2010	New Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government issues a full list of agreed policies. New runways at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted are ruled out. ²⁰³
July 2010	Secretary of State for Transport states that the Government has no plans to build an airport in the estuary. ²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁶ <http://legacy.london.gov.uk/mayor/mayor-decisions/docs/20091019-md479-thames-estuary-airport-signed.pdf> (accessed 16 July 2010)

¹⁹⁷ <http://www.testrad.co.uk/pdf/TEAFRreport.pdf> (accessed 16 July 2010)

¹⁹⁸ http://www.aef.org.uk/uploads/Thames_Estuary_Airport_proposal___AEF_position_paper.pdf (accessed 16 July 2010)

¹⁹⁹ <http://tinyurl.com/3af7bcq> (accessed 16 July 2010)

²⁰⁰ <http://www.medway.gov.uk/f20100114r-3.pdf> (accessed 16 July 2010)

²⁰¹ <http://legacy.london.gov.uk/assembly/envmtgs/2010/mar11/item06b.pdf> (accessed 13 July 2010)

²⁰² <http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2010/626.html> (accessed 16 July 2010)

²⁰³ http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/409088/pfg_coalition.pdf (accessed 15 July 2010)

²⁰⁴ <http://blog.traceycrouch.org/2010/07/transport-secretary-says-no-to-boris.html> (accessed 28 July 2010)

4.2 Press articles

Recent press articles can be found using [Factiva](#) via the Library Intranet

The [Times Digital Archive](#) service on the Intranet can be used to trace older articles from the *Times*.

A pack of relevant articles from various newspapers from the 1960s-1980s is available to Members from the Library's [Business and Transport Section](#) (x3694/4314)

4.3 Early Day Motions

EDM 493 2010/11 – THAMES ESTUARY AIRPORT

Mr Gordon Henderson (Con, Sittingbourne and Sheppey)

That this House notes the re-inauguration of the Thames Estuary Airport All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) to promote consideration of a new airport in the Thames Estuary; believes that this APPG is ill conceived as such an airport would be economically unviable, operationally unsafe and environmentally disastrous; and is concerned that continued speculation about the feasibility of an airport in the Thames Estuary is bringing unnecessary uncertainty and distress to those residents of North Kent and South Essex who would be most affected by its construction.

EDM 321A1 2008/09 – UK INTERNATIONAL HUB AIRPORT

Mr Bob Spink (Ind, Castle Point)

at end add `; and finally notes that various studies and Government policies have ruled out an airport in the Thames Estuary and that this option should not be re-opened.'

EDM 321 2008/09- UK INTERNATIONAL HUB AIRPORT

Mr Graham Stringer (Lab, Manchester Blackley)

That this House recognises the need for a world-class international airport in the UK; notes that additional capacity in the South East will be essential to achieving this, and that future economic growth in the UK including Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the English regions depends on global aviation links; further recognises that all current and future UK airports must meet strict environmental rules and standards including noise levels being no higher than 2002 levels and adherence to tough EU air quality standards; and further notes that aviation will become part of the EU Emissions Trading Scheme in 2012.

EDM 1795 2002/03 - PROPOSED NEW AIRPORT AT CLIFFE

Mr Robert Marshall-Andrews (Lab, Medway)

That this House believes that the proposal for a new airport at Cliffe in north Kent would be one of the most environmentally damaging infrastructure developments ever seen in the United Kingdom; notes that it would destroy sites designated as special protection area, Ramsar site, special area of conservation, site of special scientific interest, national nature reserve and environmentally sensitive area; further notes that it would have a damaging impact on local communities, destroying over 1,000 residential properties; believes that it would not attract sufficient funding from the private sector to cover its construction costs or attract carriers away from existing airports; urges the Government to reject the case for a second hub airport in the South East and to take a more sustainable view of aviation by managing demand; and therefore calls on the Government to reject the Cliffe option when it publishes its air transport White Paper.

EDM 1781 2002/03 - INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AT CLIFFE MARSHES

Mr Alan Meale (Lab, Mansfield)

That this House is alarmed at proposals to build a new international airport on the Cliffe marshes in Kent, which is an internationally protected wildlife area which encompasses within it three sites classified as being of special scientific interest, together with a number of important wildlife reserves; is concerned that the construction of such an airport in this area would destroy these important assets which offer harbour to millions of migratory and wintering wading birds and wildfowl; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government not to support such measures which would neither be welcomed nor necessary as capacity already exists elsewhere.

EDM 457 2002/03 - CLIFFE AIRPORT

Mr Bob Spink (Con, Castle Point)²⁰⁵

That this House notes the extension of the air transport consultation to consider Gatwick as an option in the South East; further notes the overwhelming public rejection of a five runway, new hub airport, operating 24 hours each day, at Cliffe; believes that the continuing uncertainty is causing great concern and blighting the lives of many people in Kent and Essex; and urges the Government to make the earliest possible announcement and reject the Cliffe option.

EDM 52 1978/79 - MAPLIN SANDS

Mr Ronald Bell (Con, Beaconsfield)

That this House, noting how the operation of the four existing London airports imposes a heavy burden of noise disturbance upon the centres of population in or near which they are situated, and that every intensification of their use imposes an additional burden upon that population, deeply regrets that Her Majesty's Government should be proposing yet further expansion of these airports; and declares that there is no acceptable solution of the problem of aircraft noise, in spite of all technical advances and procedural mitigations, except the development of a coastal airport for London.

EDM 223 1973/74 - ABANDONMENT OF MAPLIN

Mr Ronald Bell [Con, South Bucks)

That this House deeply regrets the decision of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to abandon the project of an airport at Maplin Sands; and declares that by this Her Majesty's Government have condemned millions of people living around London Airport to the indefinite continuance of intolerable noise nuisance, to the consequences of a proposed growth in passenger movement of nearly ninety per cent, to the continuance of night movements and to the operation over very many years of surviving noisy types of aircraft and of Concord when it is introduced.

EDM 458 1971/72 - GOOSE INGESTION

²⁰⁵ UKIP MP since April 2008

Mr Maxwell-Hyslop (Con, Tiverton)

That this House, aware that a civil aero engine certification requirement is the safe ingestion of a 4lb chicken, and that the proposed site of the Third London Airport at Maplin lies in the migratory path of geese, warns the Government not to enter into any binding contracts concerning the construction of an airport on this site until the aircraft which will use it have demonstrated a certified capacity safely to ingest such geese.

EDM 457 1971/72 - SITING OF THE RUNWAYS AT THE THIRD LONDON AIRPORT

Sir Bernard Braine (Con, Essex SE)

That this House, recognising that the Government's decision to site the Third London Airport off-shore rather than in-shore was the result of a policy decision designed to ensure that the minimum number of people should be subject to noise nuisance, urges Her Majesty's Government to choose Site D, notwithstanding the additional cost, and so keep the airport as far out to sea as possible and away from people's homes.

EDM 449 1970/71 – THAMES TUNNEL TO FOULNESS AIRPORT

Mr John Wells (Con, Maidstone)

That this House, noting with concern the adverse effect any airport at Foulness would have on the quality of life in Kent without any compensating economic advantage to that county, urges Her Majesty's Government to declare a new tunnel under the Thames Estuary to be a prerequisite of any airport at Foulness.

EDM 234 1970/71 – COMMISSION OF INQUIRY ON THE THIRD LONDON AIRPORT

Mr James Wellbeloved (Lab, Erith & Crayford)

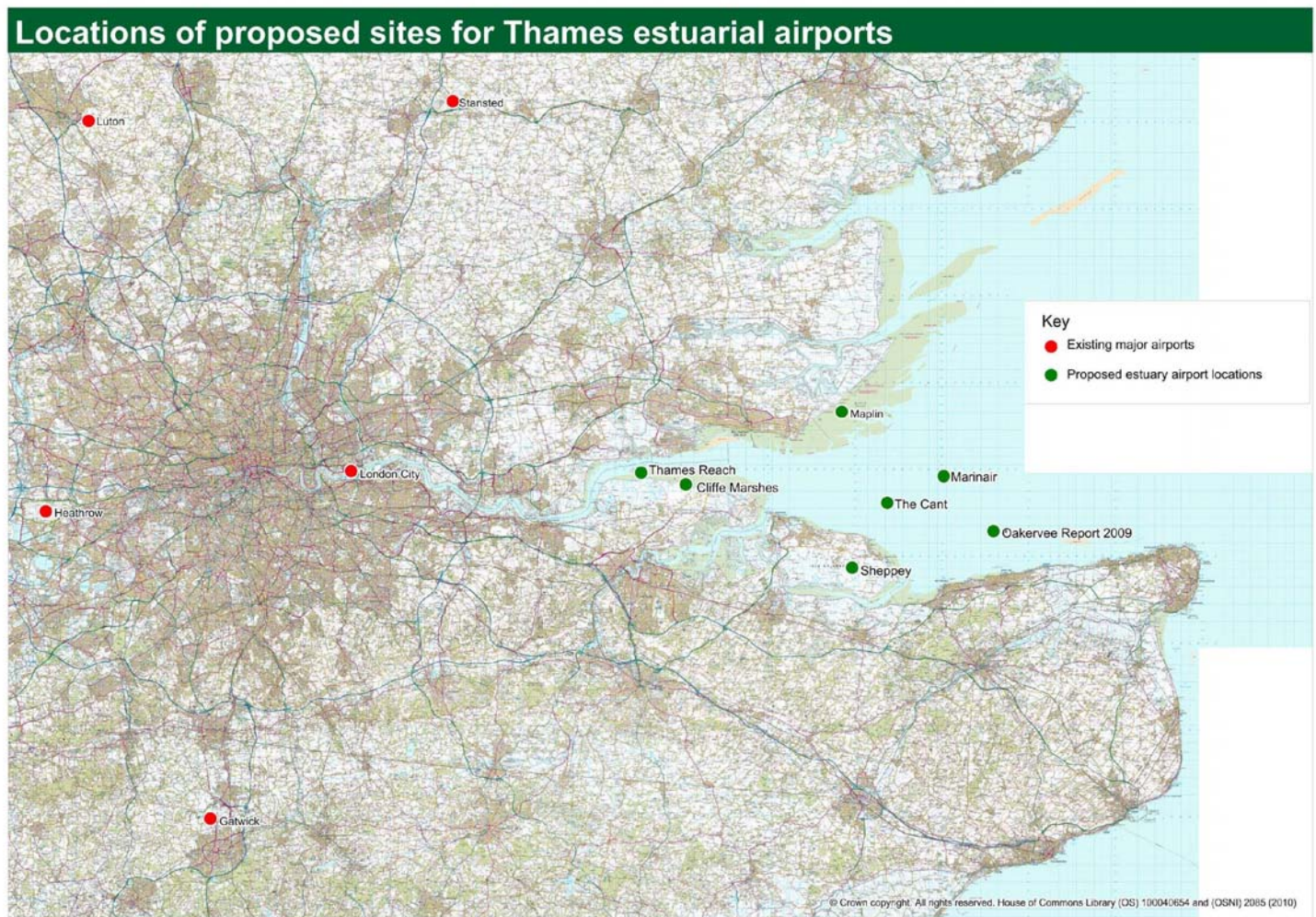
That this House commends the Commission of Inquiry on the Third London Airport under the chairmanship of the Honourable Mr Justice Roskill on the painstaking thorough and able way it carried out its work; recognises that it showed great humanity in the careful way it investigated the whole problem and took fully into account the effects of a major international airport upon people, their amenities and their environment at each one of the sites, as well as showing a clear understanding of the many technical aspects in assessing the effects upon farm land and in weighing up the rest of the planning, communications and other considerations; appreciates that each of the sites would involve an environmental disaster; notes that there has never been an enquiry on such a massive scale before; and, as it would be difficult if not impossible to devise a fairer, less-biased and more thorough way to make such an investigation, calls upon Her Majesty's Government to accept the Commission's recommendations.

EDM 208 1970/71 – THIRD LONDON AIRPORT

Mr Stephen Hastings (Con, Mid-Bedfordshire)

That this House, while recognising the need for a third London Airport is totally opposed to the choice of any inland site, or to the extension of any other existing airport for this purpose; and strongly advocates the selection of Foulness or any other suitable coastal site.

4.4 Map²⁰⁶



This map gives locations for existing airports serving London and for recent proposals for estuary airports. The position shown for the spot suggested in the 2009 Oakervee Report is an approximate location only. Oakervee stressed that a further series of studies would be required to determine the most appropriate location

²⁰⁶ This map has been adapted from *Development of airport capacity in the Thames estuary*, Halcrow Group Ltd for the Dept for Transport, Dec 2003 <http://tinyurl.com/57ecs9> (UK Govt Web Archive, accessed 9 August 2010)

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4.6 Material held in National and Local Archives²⁰⁷

1) National Archives

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/catalogue/search.asp>

A wide selection of official papers on proposals for Thames Estuary airports – in particular the proposals for an airport at Foulness/Maplin Sands in the 1960s/1970s.

2) Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Record Service

http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/A2A/records.aspx?cat=004-cs_2&cid=-1&Gsm=2008-06-18#-1

“This archive has been compiled from the files created by Bedfordshire County Council's County Secretary's Department. They naturally favour the two sites that would affect the county most (Thurleigh and Wing), though a considerable amount of evidence concerning the Nuthampstead and Foulness sites as well as general information concerning the issue as a whole was compiled. The County Record Office's normal practice (as outlined in its Collecting Policy) is to collect material mainly of relevance to Bedfordshire. However, given the interlinked nature of the records of the Commission and the fact that the Third London Airport was an important national issue of which records might well not survive elsewhere, it was decided to keep the archive intact, retaining information on the Bucks, Herts and Essex sites and fights as well as those concerning Thurleigh. This enables the researcher to build up a picture of the work of the Commission and the co-ordinated campaign against the various sites. It also serves to highlight differences of approach and/or emphasis between Bedfordshire County Council and BARA compared with other local authorities and pressure groups.”

3) Centre for Kentish Studies

http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a/records.aspx?cat=051-cc_5-2&cid=1-9-25&kw=airport%20foulness%20maplin#1-9-25

“In 1965 it was announced that the government had selected Stansted in Essex as the site of the Third London Airport. A public inquiry was to be held and there was a possibility that some of the objectors would suggest alternative sites including sites in Kent. Initially the County Council did not feel able to support or oppose any site in Kent until the fullest possible technical information and professional advice had been obtained. This was still the County Council's view when the decision to use Stansted was reopened by means of the Roskill Commission enquiry which began in 1969 though the County Council expressed apprehension as to the effect of noise on parts of Kent and the implications for the transport system of the county and an adviser on the effects of noise was retained by the County Council. As the implications became clearer of what a large new airport would mean in terms of additional population, transport needs, noise and loss of recreational facilities, the County Council advised the Commission that it hoped that a site in Kent would not be on the short list. When this was drawn up in 1969, the County Council then turned to the implications for Kent of the nearest of the possible sites, Foulness. Again the County Council reserved judgement until more information on noise was produced both by the Commission and their own consultant, but when the position was clearer the County Council decided that Kent would obtain no benefit from an airport at Foulness only inconvenience and gave evidence to the Roskill Commission that noise nuisance from Foulness would have a detrimental effect on Kent particularly in respect of development on Sheppey and in its effect on holiday use of the North Kent coast.

When the choice of the site of Cublington in Buckinghamshire was made, the County Council, while feeling that the points put forward at the enquiry on the County Council's behalf had had a marked

²⁰⁷ The Library does not have special access to these archives, and a personal visit would be necessary to consult the material they hold

effect on the final outcome, remained wary of the strong pressure which still existed in favour of Foulness and made their views known to Kent MPs. Their caution was justified as the decision for Cublington was reversed in favour of Foulness in 1971. The County Council continued the policy of collecting further information and of obtaining safeguards and assurances from the Department of the Environment in respect of certain matters in the Maplin Development Bill and of demanding the right to full consultation. (Extracted from E Melling, "History of the Kent County Council", pp122-123)"

4) Essex Archives

<http://www.essexcc.gov.uk/vip8/ecc/ECCWebsite/dis/gui.jsp?channelOid=13813&guideOid=14802>

This collection contains material on the 1970s Maplin Sands scheme and includes papers relating to the Defenders of Essex Association which opposed the proposal