

Safety and Airspace Regulation Group

12 August 2024

Version 3

Policy Statement

POLICY FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF VISUAL REFERENCE POINTS (VRPs)

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This document details the policy and guidance for the establishment, utilisation, amendment or disestablishment of VRPs.

2 Purpose of VRPs

- 2.1 The purpose of a VRP is to provide a visual reference marked on an aeronautical chart to facilitate:
- ATC provision of routing advice within, beneath or adjacent to Controlled Airspace to facilitate access and transit of VFR traffic.
 - ATC provision of routing advice outside Controlled Airspace to assist the deconfliction of traffic using instrument approaches or departure procedures.
 - Radar identification.
- 2.2 VRPs may be established to support with temporary airspace arrangements notified for special events.

3 Use of VRPs

- 3.1 ATC references relating to VRPs are advisory; however, pilots are requested to comply with instructions associated with a particular routing if it is safe for them to do so in order to assist in traffic integration, for example to remain clear of other traffic making instrument approaches or departures.
- 3.2 Pilots should as far as practicable avoid direct overflight of a VRP.
- 3.3 Controllers should avoid directing VFR traffic to fly overhead a VRP unless the position of other traffic making an instrument approach or departure specifically demands it.

4 Establishment of VRPs

- 4.1 Responsibility for establishing, reviewing or disestablishing VRPs lies with:
- The Air Traffic Service Unit (ATSU) acting as controlling authority for Controlled Airspace (normally a Control Zone or Control Area) within which the VRP is located.
 - An ATSU providing air traffic services for published instrument approaches to aerodromes outside Controlled Airspace which utilises the VRP.

- c. The operator of an aerodrome wholly or partially within Controlled Airspace (other than the controlling aerodrome) at which either Aerodrome Flight Information Service or Air/Ground service only is provided, which utilise the VRP.
- 4.2 The establishment of new VRPs (including the replacement of existing VRPs by new VRPs) is to be undertaken in accordance with the requirements the CAA's [CAP1616 Airspace Design: Guidance on the regulatory process for changing airspace design including community engagement requirements](#).

In the first instance the [DAP1916 Statement of Need](#) should be submitted, whereupon Airspace Regulation will then assess the required level of change and scale the change accordingly. Due to the potential for a low impact on both aviation and non-aviation stakeholders, changes to VRPs may not need to provide the same level of detail in their final airspace change proposal submission that is expected for most Level 1 or 2 Airspace Change Proposals. A scaled back Level 3 ACP ([CAP1616H](#)) or an Applicability and Policy Alignment Check (APAC) may be appropriate.

- 4.3 In assessing the suitability of establishing a new VRP it is recommended that VRP 'sponsors' conduct an airborne assessment of the proposed point to assess the suitability from a pilot's perspective, including ease of reference on VFR charts.
- 4.4 VRPs should:
- a. Be visible by day and by night. It is recognised that not all VRPs may be suitable for use at night, in which case sponsors should ensure that procedures based upon reference to VRPs take this into consideration.
 - b. Be based upon prominent features such as major road networks, road junctions, masts, buildings, lakes, river confluences and reservoirs. **Transitory features such as woodland, towns, villages, housing estates and disused airfields may not be suitable and should be avoided where possible.**
 - c. Be consistent with Commission Regulation (EU) 923/2012 SERA.3105 'Minimum heights'.
 - d. Ensure there is no conflict with VRPs associated with adjacent aerodromes.
 - e. If referring to a disused aerodrome depicted on VFR charts, an assessment of the visibility of vestigial aerodrome features is to be undertaken in advance of selecting such features as VRPs.
- 4.5 VRP naming convention:
- a. VRP names should be clear, distinctive and unambiguous. Names should be as short as possible without detriment to ease of reference to the salient feature in the air.
 - b. When using disused aerodromes as VRPs, the word 'disused' shall be included in the VRP name.
 - c. Names of VRPs based upon road junctions are to start with the road number followed by the junction number (e.g. M1 Junction 9), or - if not numbered - name

(e.g. A40 Northleach Roundabout). Salient features other than junctions are to be similarly named (e.g. M5 Avon Bridge).

- d. Names of VRPs based upon road junctions and referring to adjacent settlements, physical features or other roads are to be avoided as far as possible. Where employed such names will be presented in parenthesis (e.g. A1(M) Junction 57 (A66(M)), M9 Junction 2 (Philipstoun)) in AIP AD2 entries but may not appear in full on VFR charts due to charting constraints.
 - e. To avoid possible confusion with mainland UK road numbers, the names of VRPs based upon the Northern Ireland road numbering system will start with a place name followed by road and junction number (e.g. Glengormley (M2 Junction 4)).
 - f. AIP and VFR chart depictions of VRPs shall use the letter 'J' in lieu of the word 'Junction' (e.g. M1 Junction 9 = M1 J9). Exceptions to this convention will be considered on a case-by-case basis, for example when they may result in overly complex or potentially confusing depiction on charts. For example, A1(M) Junction 57 (A66(M)), may be better presented as A1(M)/A66(M) rather than A1(M) J57, as A1(M) junction numbers are not shown on 1:500000 scale VFR charts (but are shown on 1:250000 charts).
 - g. Lighthouse names shall be those promulgated in the Hydrographic Office's 'Admiralty List of Light and Fog Signals (British Isles and North Coast of France)'.
- 4.6 An application to establish or disestablish a VRP must be made by submitting a DAP1916 Statement of Need in accordance with CAP 1616. The Statement of Need is to contain the following information:
- a. A statement of requirement, including consideration of the points noted in paragraphs 4.1 to 4.4 of this policy.
 - b. WGS84 coordinates in format DDMMSS.ss of the proposed VRP. Where lighthouses are selected as VRPs, the co-ordinates shall be those promulgated in the Hydrographic Office's 'Admiralty List of Light and Fog Signals (British Isles and North Coast of France)'.
 - c. A proposed name for the VRP in accordance with paragraph 4.5 of this policy
 - d. Dated aerial photographs or Google Earth images of the proposed VRPs.

5 Promulgation of VRPs

- 5.1 VRPs are to be depicted in charts supporting aerodrome entries at UK AIP AD2; they may also be depicted in terminal Controlled Airspace charts at ENR 6. In addition, they are to be depicted on the CAA's 1:250000 and 1:500000 VFR charts by a blue box surrounding the name which is linked to the location identified by a cross within a circle.
- 5.2 A consolidated list of all published VRPs (which can be filtered by aerodrome) is available on the NATS AIS website under [Digital Datasets](#).

6. Review

- 6.1 Due to the nature of VRPs, they may over time become less visible from the air and therefore be rendered unsuitable. This can be due to factors such as landscape use change, demolition or urban development.
- 6.2 VRPs should be reviewed not less than five yearly to confirm their ongoing suitability. When a review is conducted an aerial assessment for the VRP should be undertaken, where possible. Responsibility for conducting a review is as determined in section 3 above.
- 6.3 Reviewing entities shall inform the Civil Aviation Authority on completion of a VRP review. Responses should be sent to airspace.policy@caa.co.uk.
- 6.4 Where a VRP is identified as no longer suitable, the reviewing entity shall amend or disestablish the VRP (see paragraph 4.6 above). Where it is proposed to disestablish a VRP, the Statement of Need is to include the reason for disestablishment including confirmation the VRP is not utilised by other ATSU or aerodrome.

7. Decision

- 7.1 The CAA will consider whether to approve applications to establish, amend or disestablish VRPs taking into account its duty to maintain a high standard of safety in the provision of air traffic services and any other factors which the CAA considers are relevant. (see Stage 5 [CAP1616H](#)).