

31 March 2023

## Policy Statement

### Guidance on the application of the airspace change process for the establishment of new and changes to existing No Planning Zones and Flight Plan Buffer Zones

#### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The CAA's statutory obligations include the need to "secure the most efficient use of airspace consistent with the safe operation of aircraft and expeditious flow of air traffic" while considering the requirements of all airspace users and having regard for national security, international obligations and environmental matters<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, the CAA (Air Navigation) Directions 2017 (as amended)<sup>2</sup> require the CAA to "develop and publish rules, guidelines, technical design criteria and common procedures for the use of UK airspace".
- 1.2 Pursuant to these requirements, the purpose of this policy statement is to provide guidance on the application of the airspace change process (CAP 1616) for the establishment of new, and changes to existing, No Planning Zones (NPZs) and Flight Plan Buffer Zones (FBZs).

#### 2 Scope

- 2.1 The establishment of new and changes to existing NPZs in a Free Route Airspace (FRA) environment are within the scope of this policy statement.
- 2.2 The establishment of new and changes to existing FBZs are within scope of this policy statement.

#### 3 No Planning Zones

- 3.1 NPZs are airspace volumes of defined dimensions within which the planning of flight trajectory is either not permitted or allowed under certain specified conditions<sup>3</sup>.
- 3.2 In order to avoid short crossing of multiple ATC airspaces and to manage ATC operationally sensitive areas, relevant zones unavailable for flight planning may be established. It is within the airspace volume representing such zones that the planning of flight trajectory is either not permitted or allowed under certain specified conditions. In order to assist the airspace users in the presentation of the intended flight operation, the flight planning limitation(s) shall be defined in the Route Availability Document (RAD). Airspace users can avoid such zones by flight planning via appropriate significant points around it or in accordance with allowed conditions.
- 3.3 Whilst NPZs are considered airspace volumes, the operational applicability (including the identifier, lateral limits, lower/upper limits and remarks) of NPZs in Free Route Airspace environments (ordinarily at FL245 and above) concerns flight planning and Air Traffic Flow and Capacity Management (ATFCM) only.
- 3.4 Although NPZs are used in a flight planning and ATFCM capacity and the operational validity of NPZs is processed and validated by the ANSP via the standard EUROCONTROL Network Manager Route Availability Document (RAD) validation process, as they are considered airspace volumes, it is also a requirement to publish

<sup>1</sup> Section 70 of the Transport Act 2000.

<sup>2</sup> The Civil Aviation Authority (Air Navigation) Directions 2017 (as amended) Article 3(c).

<sup>3</sup> As defined in European Route Network Improvement Plan (ERNIP) - Part 1 | EUROCONTROL.

them as notified airspace into the UK Aeronautical Information Publication (UK AIP) under ENR 2.2 (Other Regulated Airspace)<sup>4</sup>. In addition to the UK AIP, NPZs are defined in the RAD section of the EUROCONTROL Network Operations Portal (NOP).

- 3.5 As NPZs are defined in the UK AIP, the establishment of new and changes to existing NPZs fall in scope of the airspace change process (CAP 1616). Furthermore, as NPZs are categorised as airspace structures, the establishment of new or changes to existing NPZs would ordinarily align to the definition of a Level 2c proposal and processed as such.
- 3.6 Any regulatory decisions under CAP 1616 approving the establishment of new or changes to existing NPZs relate to the provisions on the quality of aeronautical data and information only, and not on the operational validity of the NPZs; the latter being a function which is fulfilled by the ANSP under the terms of their Operating License.
- 3.7 Notwithstanding that NPZs ordinarily align to the definition of a Level 2c proposal, CAP 1616 allows for the specific requirements for airspace change proposals to be scaled to an appropriate level depending on the impact of the change. Given the nature of NPZs, Annex A, which provides guidance on the application of the airspace change process for NPZs, provides a predetermined proportionate level of scaling within the CAP1616 framework.
- 3.8 On receipt of a Statement of Need from the change sponsor, Airspace Regulation will contact the change sponsor to confirm that the proposal is in scope of this Policy Statement and that the scaling guidance, as detailed in Appendix A, is suitable to be followed.

#### 4 **Flight Plan Buffer Zones**

- 4.1 FBZs are airspace volumes which may be established in association to a Special Use Airspace (SUA) structure such as a Prohibited Area (PA), Restricted Area (RA), Danger Area (DA), Temporary Reserved Area (TRA) and Temporary Segregated Area (TSA)<sup>5</sup>.
- 4.2 The FBZ defines the lateral, vertical and time limits for the purpose of validating submitted IFR Flight Plans (FPLs) when the associated area is activated or planned to be activated.
- 4.3 As FBZs are defined in the UK AIP alongside the relevant section containing the parent SUA structure, the establishment of new and changes to existing FBZs fall in scope of the airspace change process (CAP 1616). Furthermore, as FBZs are categorised as airspace structures, the establishment of new or changes to existing FBZs would ordinarily align to the definition of a Level 2c proposal and processed as such.
- 4.4 Notwithstanding that the establishment of, or changes to existing FBZs, ordinarily align to the definition of a Level 2c proposal, CAP 1616 allows for the specific requirements for airspace change proposals to be scaled to an appropriate level depending on the impact of the change. Furthermore, CAP 1616 also allows for a proportionate approach to the requirements where sufficient rationale has been submitted by the change sponsor in support of the proposal which demonstrates that the proposal does not alter traffic patterns or has a negligible impact to other users. Annex B, which provides guidance on the application of the airspace change process for FBZs, provides a predetermined proportionate level of scaling within the CAP 1616 framework.
- 4.5 Examples of instances where benefits and dis-benefits of the establishment of new or changes to existing FBZs could be influenced, and therefore the CAP 1616 requirements may be scaled through this Policy Statement include, but are not limited to:
- the overall size of the FBZ in comparison to the associated/parent SUA;
  - the introduction of a new FBZ which is different in size to that of an existing FBZ;
  - the introduction of a new FBZ where no FBZ existed previously;

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<sup>4</sup> CAP 1054 Aeronautical Information Management.

<sup>5</sup> As defined in European Route Network Improvement Plan (ERNIP) - Part 1 | EUROCONTROL.

- the airspace environment in which the FBZ is being introduced.
- 4.6 Following assignment of an Account Manager or Technical Regulator, Airspace Regulation will contact the change sponsor for a preliminary meeting (usually in the form of an Assessment Meeting), to discuss the suitability of applying the scaling guidance as detailed in Appendix B for the proposal being progressed.
- 4.7 If the scaling guidance detailed in Appendix B is deemed unsuitable for the change being progressed, Airspace Regulation will provide further advice on the requirements on a case-by-case basis.
- 4.8 Notwithstanding the guidance provided at Annex B, the CAA is currently undertaking a review of the airspace change process (CAP 1616) with the expectation that appropriate measures are established to provide more certainty in relation to the scaling discussions that take place during the initial stages of the airspace change process. As a result, we will develop further guidance on how and where the requirements of the airspace change process may be scaled.

## 5 **Regulatory Decision Period**

### 5.1 **No Planning Zones**

- 5.1.1 On receipt of a DAP 1916: Intended Change to Notified Airspace Arrangements (Statement of Need) which pertains to NPZs, Airspace Regulation will make a determination, where possible, of the provisions on the quality of aeronautical data and information in line with the AIS sponsor change requests cut-off for the target AIRAC as indicated in the Statement of Need.
- 5.1.2 This aims to prevent any undesirable flight planning situations pertaining to time constraints that may have ordinarily been introduced as a result of the CAP 1616 process.

### 5.2 **Flight Plan Buffer Zones**

- 5.2.1 On receipt of a DAP 1916: Intended Change to Notified Airspace Arrangements (Statement of Need) pertaining to FBZs, Airspace Regulation will assign either an Account Manager or Technical Regulator in line with the CAA's priorities (as directed by the Secretary of State for Transport) and against Airspace Regulation's workplan.
- 5.2.2 The Stage 5 regulatory decision will be made in accordance with the CAA decision timescales stipulated in CAP 1616 (currently 10 weeks or less for a level 2c).

## 6 **References**

### 6.1 **Policy Statements:**

- SARG Policy: Special Use Airspace - Safety Buffer Policy for Airspace Design Purposes;
- SARG Policy: Aeronautical Data Associated with CAP 1616 Airspace Changes.

### 6.2 **Civil Aviation Publications (CAPs):**

- CAP 1616 Airspace Change;
- CAP 1054 Aeronautical Information Management.

### 6.3 **Other related guidance material:**

- EUROCONTROL Route Network Improvement Plan (ERNIP) Part 1.

## 7 **Review of Policy**

- 7.1 The CAA shall review this policy statement and its associated annexes on a discretionary basis but not less than triennially from its publication date.

## 8 **Point of Contact**

- 8.1 Any queries or further guidance required on the contents or implementation of this Airspace Policy Statement should be addressed to:

**Airspace Regulation**

Airspace, ATM & Aerodromes  
CAA Safety and Airspace Regulation Group  
Aviation House  
Beehive Ringroad  
Crawley  
West Sussex  
RH6 0YR

E-mail: [airspace.policy@caa.co.uk](mailto:airspace.policy@caa.co.uk)

## **Application of the Airspace Change Process for No Planning Zones**

### **A1 Introduction**

- A1.1 This Annex provides amplifying guidance to the scalability of the requirements to establish new and make changes to existing No Planning Zones through the CAP 1616 permanent Airspace Change Process.
- A1.2 The process requirements within this Annex relate to airspace change proposals that pertain solely to the establish of new or changes to existing NPZs (e.g. where an NPZ is not being progressed as part of a wider airspace change).

### **A2 Process**

- A2.1 The following process should be read alongside the permanent process outlined within CAP 1616.
- A2.2 Given that the CAA's regulatory decision relates to the aeronautical data quality and not the operational validity of the NPZ(s), there is no requirement to publish any related information onto the CAA's Airspace Portal.

#### **A2.3 Stage 1 (Define)**

- A2.3.1 The change sponsor submits a DAP 1916: Intended Change to Notified Airspace (Statement of Need). The Statement of Need should include a target AIRAC in which implementation is needed by in order to meet the change sponsors operational requirements.
- A2.3.2 In addition to the Statement of Need, details of the proposed NPZ(s) must be submitted via an Aeronautical Data Approval Template, in accordance with the SARG Aeronautical Data Policy<sup>6</sup>. An Assessment Meeting is usually not required however Airspace Regulation will confirm to the change sponsor that the proposal is in scope of this Policy Statement and that the scaling guidance is suitable for the change being progressed.
- A2.3.3 Step 1b (design principles) and a Define Gateway is not required.

#### **A2.4 Stage 2 (Develop & Assess), Stage 3 (Consult), Stage 4 (Update & Submit)**

- A2.4.1 Stage 2, Stage 3 and Stage 4 are not required.

#### **A2.5 Stage 5 (Decide)**

- A2.5.1 Airspace Regulation will make a decision on the provisions on the quality of aeronautical data and information. Airspace Regulation will assess the data and either confirm approval to the change sponsor via an approved copy or send back an unapproved copy of the Aeronautical Data Approval sheet which indicates where further attention is needed to gain approval.
- A2.5.2 The regulatory decision will be made in line with the period outlined in Section 5 within this document (Regulatory Decision Period).
- A2.5.3 If the amount of data contained within the proposal is significant and it is therefore disproportionate to process in line with the period, Airspace Regulation will contact the change sponsor to discuss alternative options. The specified period is also dependent on the quality and accuracy of the data submitted by the change sponsor.

#### **A2.6 Stage 6 (Implementation)**

- A2.6.1 Once verification of the aeronautical data/information is complete, Airspace Regulation will authorise that the AIP amendments and AIS change request may be submitted to AIS via Aurora's Change Request Portal.
- A2.6.2 The submission to AIS should include a copy of the authorisation email along with an approved copy of the completed Aeronautical Data Approval sheet.

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<sup>6</sup> SARG Policy: Aeronautical Data Associated with CAP 1616 Airspace Changes.

**A2.7 Stage 7 (Post Implementation Review)**

A2.7.1 There is no requirement for a Post Implementation Review (PIR).

## Application of the Airspace Change Process for Flight Plan Buffer Zones

### B1 Introduction

- B1.1 This Annex provides amplifying guidance to the scalability of the requirements to establish new and make changes to existing Flight Plan Buffer Zones through the CAP 1616 permanent Airspace Change Process.
- B1.2 The process requirements within this Annex relate to airspace change proposals that pertain solely to the establish of new or changes to existing FBZs (e.g. where an FBZ is not being progressed as part of a wider airspace change).

### B2 Process

- B2.1.1 The following process should be read alongside the permanent process outlined within CAP 1616.
- B2.1.2 For proposals pertaining to FBZs, all relevant information must be published onto the CAA's Airspace Portal as outlined in CAP 1616.

#### B2.2 Stage 1 (Define)

- B2.2.1 The change sponsor submits a DAP 1916: Intended Change to Notified Airspace Arrangements (Statement of Need).
- B2.2.2 Following assignment of either an Account Manager or Technical Regulator, Airspace Regulation will contact the change sponsor to arrange an Assessment Meeting. The Assessment Meeting will be used to confirm whether the scaling guidance provided within this Annex is suitable for the FBZ proposal being progressed.
- B2.2.3 If the scaling guidance is suitable for the FBZ proposal being progressed, then the change sponsor may continue to apply the process as described below. If the scaling guidance is not suitable, Airspace Regulation will provide further advice to the change sponsor on any additional requirements of the process.
- B2.2.4 Step 1b (design principles) and a Define Gateway is not required.

#### B2.3 Stage 2 (Develop & Assess), Stage 3 (Consult)

- B2.3.1 Stage 2 and Stage 3 are not required.

#### B2.4 Stage 4 (Update & Submit)

- B2.4.1 The change sponsor's submission to the CAA must include (but not limited to):
- details of the change being progressed;
  - evidence to confirm that the proposal:
    - does not alter traffic patterns,
    - has engaged with impacted stakeholders (where relevant) and,
    - has mitigated any impacts to stakeholders (where required);
  - any considerations given to ensure the change accords with the SARG Buffer Policy<sup>7</sup>. Additionally, if the change sponsor is seeking dispensation to the SARG Buffer Policy, then the change sponsor should also provide full details of the associated hazard mitigation;
  - an Aeronautical Data Approval Template with the proposed FBZ(s), in accordance with the SARG Aeronautical Data Policy<sup>8</sup>.

#### B2.5 Stage 5 (Decide)

- B2.5.1 Airspace Regulation will complete an assessment of the proposal and will present a recommendation to the CAA Decision Maker.

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<sup>7</sup> SARG Policy: Special Use Airspace - Safety Buffer Policy for Airspace Design Purposes.

<sup>8</sup> SARG Policy: Aeronautical Data Associated with CAP 1616 Airspace Changes.

- B2.5.2 Airspace Regulation will also assess the aeronautical data submitted and either confirm approval to the change sponsor via an approved copy or send back an unapproved copy of the Aeronautical Data Approval sheet which indicates where further attention is needed to gain approval.
- B2.5.3 The regulatory decision will be made in line with the period outlined in Section 5 within this document (Regulatory Decision Period).
- B2.5.4 Once a decision has been made, Airspace Regulation will notify the change sponsor of the outcome and next steps.
- B2.6 **Stage 6 (Implementation)**
- B2.6.1 Once verification is complete and, if approved, Airspace Regulation will authorise that the AIP amendments and AIS change request may be submitted to AIS via Aurora's Change Request Portal.
- B2.6.2 The submission to AIS should include a copy of the authorisation email along with an approved copy of the completed Aeronautical Data Approval sheet.
- B2.7 **Stage 7 (Post Implementation Review)**
- B2.7.1 There is no requirement for a Post Implementation Review (PIR).