

Draft procedure for reviewing the classification of airspace

CAA consultation

25 June to 17 September 2020

airspace.modernisation@caa.co.uk



Purpose of this consultation



The CAA is introducing a new procedure to review and where appropriate amend airspace classification.

This procedure must reflect the CAA's statutory airspace functions, government policy and best practice decision-making, as well as fitting into the CAA's wider [strategy and plan](#) for airspace modernisation.

We must introduce the new procedure and allocate staff to run it by 1 December 2020.

How to respond?

We are seeking your views on a draft of our proposed procedure before 23.59 on **17 September 2020**. We cannot commit to taking into account comments received after this date.

Please respond through our dedicated webpage:

<https://consultations.caa.co.uk/policy-development/draft-procedure-to-review-airspace-classification>



Our proposed procedure

Our new procedure has three distinct stages:

- to **Consider** regularly whether we carry out a review of airspace classification
- to **Review** (including consulting airspace users) where we consider a change might be made
- to **Amend** the classification as we consider appropriate.

We summarise what happens at each stage on the next slides.



Consider stage

What do we need to do?

Every two years in an internal CAA meeting we make a simple yes/no decision as to whether we are going to review airspace classification.

How do we do it?

We base this on, for example:

- international obligations;
- airspace safety, efficiency, environmental or access benefits that a review might help to define and deliver;
- our workload and resources;
- outstanding priorities from a previous review;
- a specific request from the Department for Transport.

What is the outcome?

We publish a report on whether we will carry out a review or not, and a rationale as to why.



Review stage

What do we need to do?

Having decided to carry out a review, we use appropriate intelligence including continuous monitoring of airspace safety, access or utilisation issues to draw up a plan that lists airspace volumes where a case could be made for amending the classification.

How do we do it?

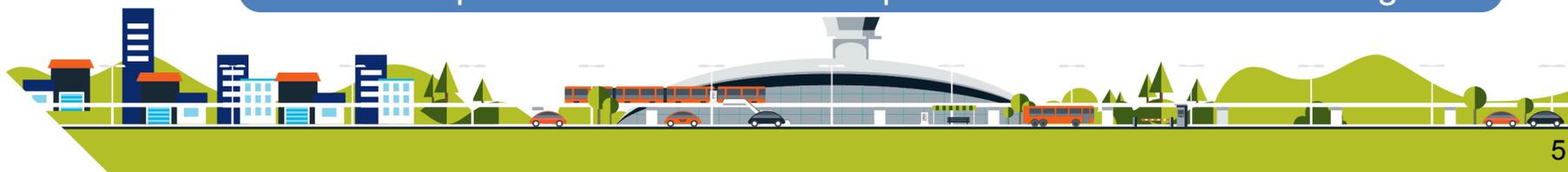
We seek feedback on the plan from aviation stakeholders, and also consider any additional suggestions from them.

We apply filters to remove proposals not appropriate for this procedure, for example where they would have significant environmental or operational impacts, or where there is an ongoing or recent change in airspace design already.

What is the outcome?

We publish our final plan identifying the airspace volumes we want to take further to the Amend stage.

We adopt this plan as part of our Airspace Modernisation Strategy, and take the airspace volumes in this final plan forward to the Amend stage.



Amend stage

What do we need to do?

We develop each case further into a proposal to amend the classification. We rely on vital input from the airspace controlling authority (the entity that manages the traffic in a certain volume of airspace) and work with other relevant stakeholders as necessary.

How do we do it?

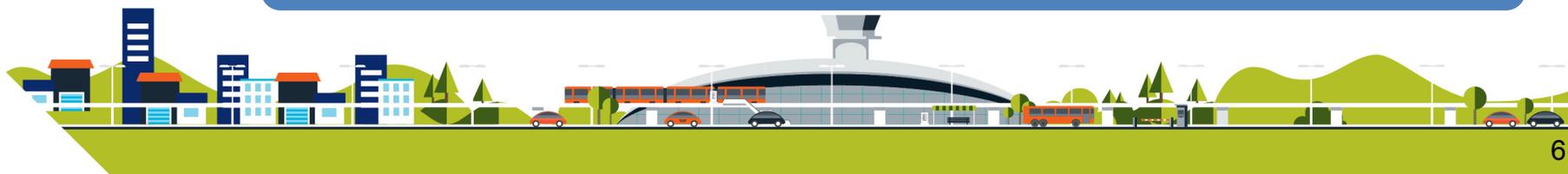
The proposal may change airspace dimensions or classification, or manage access in a flexible way. The airspace controlling authority develops the operational procedures and safety case with CAA assistance, but ultimately the controlling authority owns the safety component of the proposal.

We consult relevant impacted stakeholders about the proposal.

What is the outcome?

Our Airspace Regulation team publishes its decision on each formal proposal.

The airspace controlling authority implements any amended classification, monitors its ongoing effectiveness and reports after one year to the CAA.



Consultation questions

Question 1: Do you have any general comments about our proposed procedure?

Question 2: Do you have any comments about our proposed approach for the Consider stage?

About right	Some modifications needed	Significant modifications needed	Don't know
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Question 3: Do you have any comments about our proposed approach for the Review stage?

About right	Some modifications needed	Significant modifications needed	Don't know
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Question 4: Do you have any comments about our proposed approach for the Amend stage?

About right	Some modifications needed	Significant modifications needed	Don't know
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Question 5: Please can you quantify the cost impacts of the new procedure on your organisation, or more broadly if possible, and how we might best minimise these?



December 2019 consultation

The Secretary of State gave us this new function in October 2019. As a way of initiating a review in parallel with developing this new procedure, we ran an earlier consultation between December 2019 and March 2020 seeking suggestions for volumes of airspace that we might consider for reclassification.

We have now [published the results](#) of this consultation as a separate document, CAP 1935.

Once the new procedure is in place in December, we can take forward to the Amend stage for further analysis those cases that we identified through your suggestions.

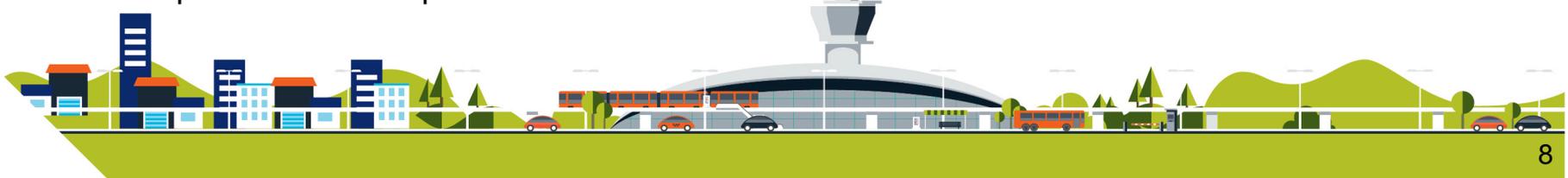
What happens next?

We will publish responses to this consultation in full on our [consultation website](#), where we have consent to do so.

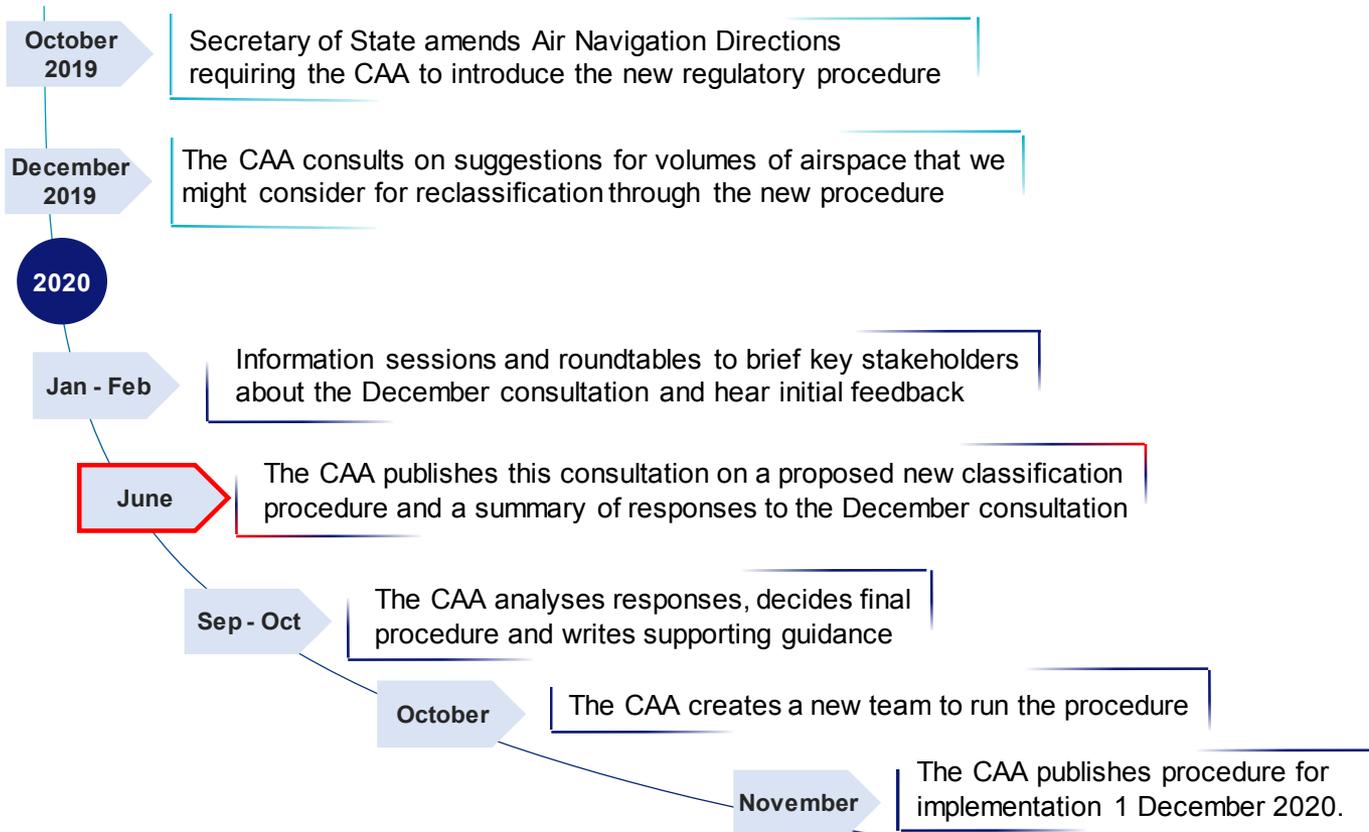
We will consider your views and whether any modifications are needed to our proposed procedure.

We will publish the final procedure for reviewing the classification of airspace in November 2020, along with a summary of responses and what modifications we made.

We will implement the new procedure from 1 December 2020.



Timeline



Additional information



What is airspace classification?

UK airspace has to be managed so that it is used safely and efficiently.

Airspace is designated according to the type of air traffic service provided and in accordance with the ICAO airspace classification system. Air traffic control service is provided to all flights within airspace classes A to D and to those flights operating in accordance with the instrument flight rules (IFR) in class E airspace; these are known as 'controlled airspace' classifications. Flight information service may be provided to all flights in class G (uncontrolled airspace) and to visual flight rules (VFR) flights in Class E airspace.

The classification determines the flight rules that apply in that airspace and the procedures that must be followed. The classification depends upon the types, density and complexity of air traffic and the safety hazards posed to passenger-carrying commercial air transport operations. More information on airspace classifications can be found [here](#).



Why introduce the procedure?

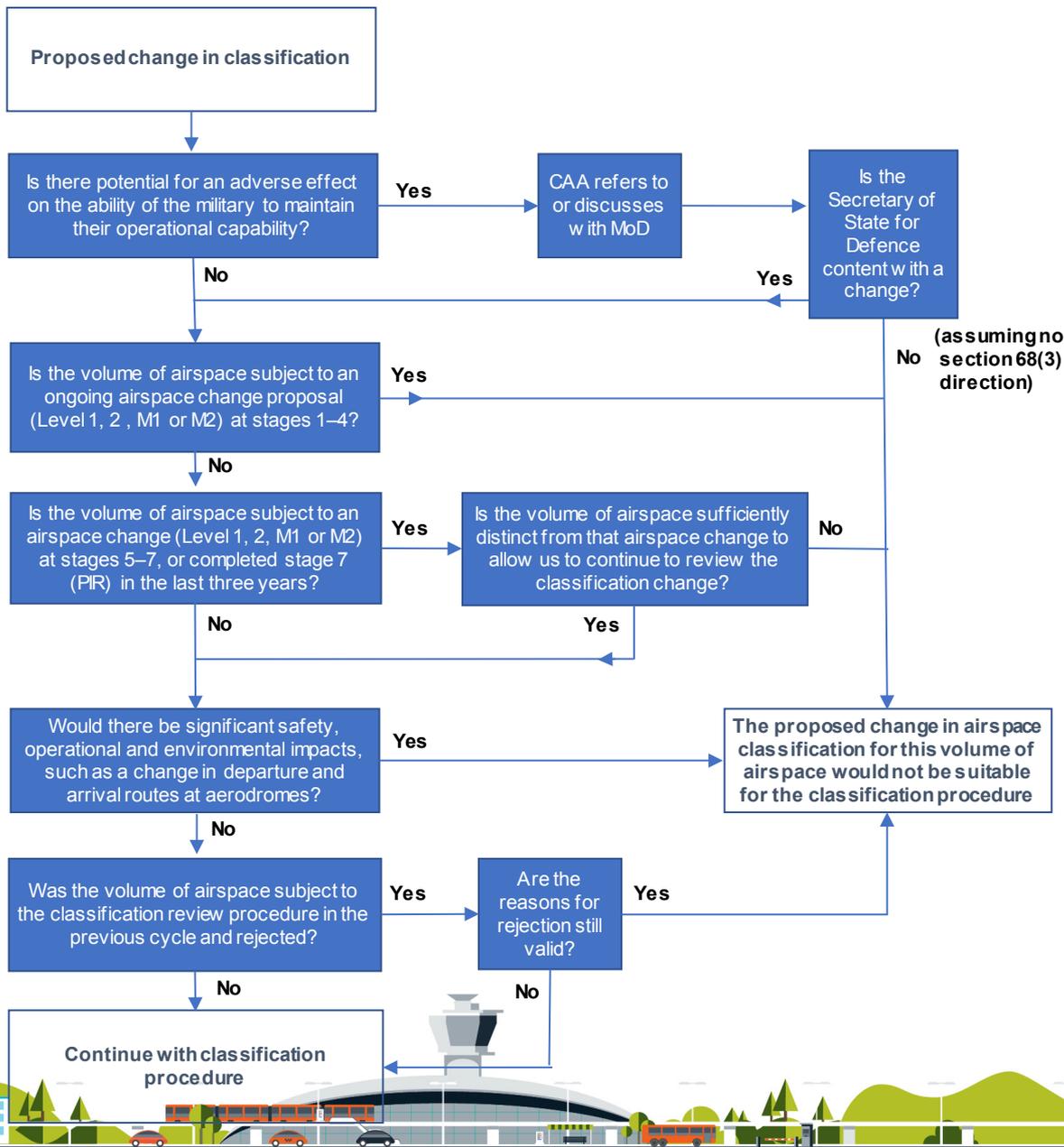
The Secretary of State [has given](#) the CAA a new function that requires us to review and where appropriate amend airspace classification. This responds to a General Aviation-led review of how airspace is managed.

In applying our classification policy, or amending a classification, we must seek to ensure that the amount of controlled airspace is the minimum required to maintain a high standard of air safety. Also, subject to overriding national security or defence requirements, that the needs of all airspace users are reflected on an equitable basis. (The CAA understands ‘equitable’ to mean that needs are fairly accounted for, not that each user has the same and equal amount of airspace. The needs of different types of airspace user could vary considerably.)

The procedure will allow different, sometimes competing, factors to be taken into account, including satisfying the requirements of airspace users. In the longer term, it will be a useful CAA tool for airspace modernisation, for example for integrating new types of airspace user.



Filters applied to create the CAA's plan at the Review stage



Consultation at the Review stage

