Manchester Low Level Route – Requirement Statement

Following a thorough and comprehensive review of the MLLR airspace by the CAA published in July 2023 (CAP 2564) it was identified that whilst the airspace was in no way deemed to be unsafe a number of risks were present within the airspace and that improvements could potentially be made to lower risk in the area.

It has therefore been identified that the MLLR airspace is suitable to be taken through to the “Amend” stage of the CAP1991 process (Procedure for the CAA to review the classification of airspace). The production of this requirements statement formally begins this stage of the procedure.

Final Plan CAP No (where appropriate): CAP 2564

CAP 1991 Amend ID: CRA-1991-2023-002

Title of proposal: Manchester Low Level Route Future Proposal

Date: 08 September 2023

Sponsor: UK CAA

P.O.C.: Gareth Shaw – Airspace Amend Lead

Current Situation

The current airspace known as the Manchester Low Level Route (MLLR) is a 4nm wide corridor on a North to South axis between Manchester and Liverpool airports. The Low-Level Route has a vertical extent of 1300ft AMSL and provides a route through the Manchester Class D CTR for General Aviation traffic to travel between the aforementioned airports without having to route around CTRs either to the East over high ground or to the West over water. The airspace controlling authority (ACA) for the MLLR is Manchester Airport and their ATS provider NATS Services Ltd (NSL). Air Traffic Services Liverpool (ATCSL) operate the airspace to the west of the MLLR and also, through the delegation of air traffic services (ATS), a significant portion of the airspace immediately above it.

The Low-Level Route is Class D airspace however no verbal clearance is required to operate within it providing, in accordance with ORS4 No.1545, that a set of conditions prescribed in the UK AIP, PT3 EGCC AD2.22 section 7 are adhered to. Pilots are responsible for determining in flight conditions, can transit without contacting ATC day and night, VFR, with or without a transponder, with or without

radio. The airspace is currently an anomaly within UK class D airspace by not requiring a verbal clearance to enter.

The location of the airspace is shown in the map below. The pink highlighted piece of airspace is wholly contained within the Manchester CTR, however, has differing vertical dimensions as described above to those of the CTR. Based on the data available to us, we estimate the number of flights operating within the MLLR to be in the region of 5000 - 6000 per annum. This is not expected to change significantly.

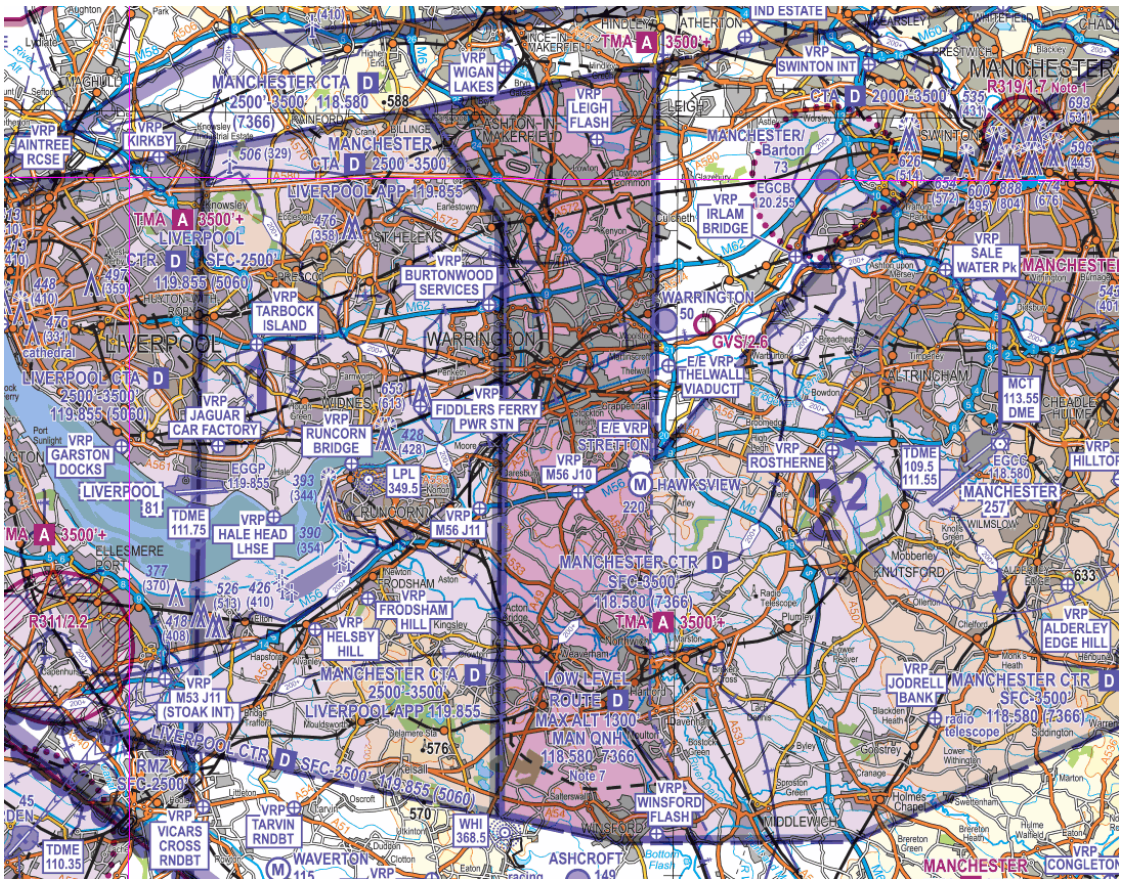

Figure 1 Map showing the location of MLLR airspace which is highlighted with pink shading in the centre of the image

Issue to be addressed

The purpose of the Amend stage is to analyse each identified airspace volume in more detail, and, working closely with the designated ACA and other relevant stakeholders, to develop an amendment to the classification that satisfies our statutory duties, including the requirements of the Air Navigation Directions and the factors in section 70 of the Transport Act 2000.

The risk areas identified in the MLLR report were the chance of a mid-air collision (MAC) and the ability of a pilot to land clear of populated areas should such a need arise.

Therefore, a need exists to amend the airspace in such a way as to reduce the risk to both pilots and those on the ground should either of these eventualities occur.

An additional finding of the report is that currently there are a high number of Airspace Infringements (AI) in the area and that this is contributed to by the conditions specified in both the ORS4 exemption and the EGCC AD 2.22 section of the UK AIP. It is therefore an aim of this amend process to make the airspace compliant with standard UK airspace policy (i.e. no exemptions required for operation within it). In doing so it is anticipated to simplify access to the airspace and improve safety.