

EGR323 North West Transit Corridor – Reviewing the Effectiveness of the Change

CAP 3302

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Executive Summary

The review found that the North West Transit Corridor has successfully achieved the objectives set out in CAP3027. Evidence gathered from operational data, stakeholder engagement, infringement statistics and user feedback indicates that the change has maintained a high standard of safety, simplified the airspace structure, reduced infringement-related issues, maintained access for General Aviation and aligned the airspace classification with current policy. Traffic usage has remained broadly consistent with pre-implementation levels, suggesting that accessibility has been preserved.

Feedback from Manchester Airport, NATS, LAIT attendees and NWTC users was overwhelmingly positive, with approximately 90% of survey respondents supporting the change and around three quarters reporting an improvement in safety. No ABANL reports relating to NWTC restrictions and no FCS1522 airspace access reports were recorded during the review period. Airspace infringements associated with the former MLLR ruleset have been eliminated.

The review also considered concerns raised by Liverpool ANSP (ATCSL) regarding TCAS Resolution Advisories involving Liverpool arrivals and aircraft operating at the upper limit of the NWTC. Whilst these occurrences remain relevant to future airspace design considerations and should continue to inform future airspace modernisation activity, the available evidence does not currently demonstrate a systemic safety deficiency within the NWTC. No associated loss of separation or other safety occurrences were identified.

Overall, the review concludes that the North West Transit Corridor is operating as intended and has successfully delivered the objectives for which it was introduced. Any longer-term consideration of interactions between NWTC traffic and commercial air traffic is more appropriately addressed through future North West FASl airspace modernisation programmes.

Chapter 1

Introduction and Context

- 1.1 On 20th February 2025 the UK Civil Aviation Authority introduced Restricted Airspace EGR323 – North West Transit Corridor (NWTC) which replaced the Manchester Low Level Route (MLLR).
- 1.2 The MLLR previously operated as an exemption to standard Class D airspace rules. This allowed pilots to enter the Class D airspace of the Manchester Control Zone (CTR) by adhering to a “ruleset” in lieu of obtaining a verbal clearance from ATC prior to entry. Failure to adhere to this ruleset meant an aircraft was not in receipt of a clearance to enter and resulted in an infringement of controlled airspace.
- 1.3 The introduction of the NWTC also repealed the ORS4 exemption which had previously permitted the non-standard Class D operation of the MLLR which then ceased to exist.
- 1.4 With the introduction of the NWTC a portion of the Class D airspace of the Manchester CTR was amended, and reclassified as Class G uncontrolled airspace. The reclassified Class G volume contains the NWTC and is coincident with its lateral and vertical dimensions.
- 1.5 To avoid a reduction in safety margins by larger and fast aircraft operating in this size limited volume, this Class G airspace became EGR323 NWTC and restricts aircraft entry to only those operating in accordance with the restrictions laid out in the UK AIP ¹.
- 1.6 Following a number of issues identified in [CAP2654](#), a review of the MLLR published by the CAA, a decision was made to progress an airspace change to address these concerns. Following the successful approval of an Airspace Change Proposal under CAP1991 (Procedure for the CAA to review and amend the classification of airspace), the change was introduced to improve safety, simplify the airspace structure, reduce airspace infringements, whilst maintaining access for General Aviation (GA) wishing to transit between the Manchester and Liverpool control zones.
- 1.7 This review will consider feedback provided by Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSP), airport operators, and the GA community, as well as

¹ Full details available in [UK AIP ENR5.1](#) EGR323 NORTH WEST TRANSIT CORRIDOR. For most crewed aircraft (exemptions apply as per UKAIP) the restrictions applicable are; Max 140kt indicated airspeed, in-flight visibility 5km or more, operating vertically with reference to Liverpool or Manchester QNH, max certified take off mas of 40,000kg.

evidence gathered from variety of other sources detailed later in this report. This data will then be evaluated against the project objectives provided at the time of submission in [CAP3027](#).

- 1.8 The review will refer to EGR323 NWTC as “NWTC”.

Chapter 2

Objectives of the Proposal

- 2.1 This document will assess the effectiveness of the introduction of the NWTC against the objectives that supported its introduction.
- 2.2 The NWTC proposal was submitted via CAP3027 to Airspace Regulation. This submission document detailed the change to airspace design which created the NWTC as well as the reasons behind, and expected impacts, of the change. CAP3027 listed the following as the “Aims of the Proposal” in Chapter 4 of the document:
- A. Maintain a high standard of safety
 - B. Simplify airspace in the region
 - C. Reduce airspace infringements
 - D. Meet the objectives of the CAA’s Airspace Modernisation Strategy (AMS)
 - E. Adhere to the Air Navigation Directions
- 2.3 CAP3027 describes each objective in further detail as replicated below (*note: MLLR is referred to in the present tense – as it was written in the document at the time of writing. The MLLR no longer exists as of 20/02/25*):

Objective A – Maintain a high standard of safety

- 2.4 In the case of the MLLR we are looking to minimise MAC risk and increase the options for a pilot to land safely in an emergency, should they be required to do so, thus reducing the risk associated with an emergency landing.
- 2.5 In addition to this, we also want to facilitate a safe, simple crossing solution for pilots to operate between the CTR controlled airspace volumes of both Manchester and Liverpool airports. Without this solution it would be necessary for pilots to fly either over high ground of The Pennines to the east or over the Irish Sea to the west, both of which increase risk to GA traffic.
- 2.6 To maintain the safety of traffic operating within the surrounding CAS, all elements of our proposal have been discussed at length with, and achieved the support of, the ATC units at both Manchester and Liverpool Airports.

Objective B – Simplify airspace in the region

- 2.7 As stated above, the proposed solution aims to offer a safe and simple solution for aircraft wishing to transit the region without having to fly over

high ground to the east or over water to the west. For over 50 years there has been a way to do this without speaking to ATC and we are aiming to maintain this simplicity for pilots, whilst adhering to standard UK regulations on the provision of ATS in differing classifications of airspace. This proposal will remove the requirement for an ORS4 exemption in order to operate the airspace.

Objective C – Reduce airspace infringements

- 2.8 Airspace Infringements are an enabler to a MAC and a key focus area of the CAA. Reducing infringements will lower risk within the ATC operation in the surrounding airspace.
- 2.9 As stated in the CAA's MLLR report published in July 2023, there has been an increase in the number of airspace infringements within the Manchester CTR since 2021. According to our data, non-adherence to the current ruleset has been identified as a causal factor in over two thirds (31 from a total of 45) of Manchester CTR infringements during 2023.
- 2.10 The design solution will incorporate both internal and external experience and guidance to create a design which minimises the likelihood of an infringement occurring.
- 2.11 To achieve this objective, we will also take into account guidance within the European Action Plan for Airspace Infringement Risk Reduction.

Objective D – Meet the objectives of the CAA's Airspace Modernisation Strategy (AMS)

- 2.12 The AMS is at the forefront of the CAA's vision for UK airspace between now and 2040. One of the core values within the strategy is that all UK airspace is a state asset and as such, access to it should be fair and reflect the needs of all airspace users on an equitable basis.
- 2.13 Currently, the airspace known as the MLLR is accessible to pilots through the application of an exemption to standard Class D airspace rules, which negates the requirement to obtain a verbal ATC clearance to enter controlled airspace prior to entering.
- 2.14 This exemption will expire, and it is not permissible or legally justified to extend the exemption ad infinitum.
- 2.15 This design objective will be achieved by proposing a solution which will maintain current levels of access to this airspace i.e. maintain access without the requirement to obtain a clearance from an ATC unit.

Objective E – Adhere to the Air Navigation Directions

- 2.16 Currently the MLLR sits within the Class D CTR of Manchester airport. [CAA Policy for the Classification of UK Airspace section 5.1 \(e\)\(iv\)](#) states, in relation to Class D airspace:
- 2.17 *“Within the UK FIRs, CTRs and CTAs in the vicinity of those aerodromes where an ATC service is provided to aerodrome traffic are normally notified as Class D airspace, except where the design principles identified by the airspace change sponsor identify the need for a more restrictive classification”.*
- 2.18 Within the MLLR no service is provided to aerodrome (Manchester Airport for whom the CTR exists) traffic and therefore its designation as Class D airspace is not aligned with this policy. The CAA, under section 3 of the Air Navigation Directions 2023 (AND 2023), must ensure classification of airspace is in line with published policy and seek to ensure that the amount of controlled airspace is the minimum required to maintain a high standard of air safety and, subject to overriding national security or defence requirements, that the needs of all airspace users is reflected on an equitable basis.
- 2.19 Therefore, this proposal will adhere to both the AND 2023 and the CAA’s Policy for the Classification of UK Airspace. This proposal will ensure that the airspace classification accurately reflects the types of aircraft and flights within it, promoting safety and efficiency.

Chapter 3

Data Gathering

- 3.1 Following the one-year anniversary of the implementation of the NWTC the CAA began requesting data and feedback on the airspace change.
- 3.2 This was achieved by contacting relevant ANSPs (Air Traffic Control Services Limited – ATCSL – for Liverpool airspace and NATS for Manchester airspace), Airport Operators, attendees at the North West Local Airspace Infringement Team (LAIT), as well as contacting any member of the GA community or general public that either responded to the ACP consultation or attended the NWTC information evening held at Manchester Airport’s Runway Viewing Park in March 2025. The CAA’s Airspace Infringement Team were liaised with for details of any airspace infringements (AI) affecting the new airspace design, and the CAA Airspace Analyser Tool (AAT) was also used to provide detail of traffic movements.

ANSP Feedback

- 3.3 Both ATCSL and NATS were contacted to request feedback on the change. ATCSL and NATS views were also taken to represent those of the relevant airport operator. Manchester Airport Group (MAG) also responded independently to the online survey detailed in the next section of the review.

NATS (Manchester ANSP)

- 3.4 NATS Manchester Manager ATC provided feedback in strong support of the change. This quote was received from management resulting from the (“rare”) absence of any comments provided by air traffic controllers at the unit in the comments book provided to capture any issues or feedback in relation to the change when implemented:
- 3.5 “I think that’s an excellent indicator that the change has been wholly welcomed as a complete success from the Manchester perspective. I very much doubt there would be any appetite for further changes from Manchester.”
- 3.6 After a further specific prompt and chase from management, feedback was received from 2 air traffic controllers at the unit giving the following responses:
- “Don’t lower the base”

- “Both as a controller, and as a PPL holder who transits the NWTC regularly, having class G up to 1500ft AMSL has been a very good change. Subjectively, actual infringements seems far less common now that there is more margin for "taking two hundred feet" without getting uncomfortably low over populated areas, and no technical infringements due to using the wrong mode A code which was incredibly frustrating to have to monitor and manage as a radar controller. It would be a mistake to have anything other than class G or to lower the base of controlled airspace through the NWTC”
- 3.7 Manchester ATC also report a large risk reduction in the area having observed a large fall in the numbers of airspace infringements affecting their operation. Specific numbers will be detailed later in this report.
- 3.8 NATS Manchester are the Special Use Airspace (SUA) Authority for EGR323 NWTC and as such are responsible for ensuring accurate occurrence reporting within the volume. Non-adherence to the restrictions would constitute an Alleged Breach of Air Navigation Law (ABANL) and be reported as such or via the MOR reporting scheme. There were zero ABANL or MOR reports made of aircraft not adhering to restrictions applicable within the volume.

ATCSL (Liverpool ANSP)

- 3.9 ATCSL provided a comprehensive post-implementation review of operational impacts, attached as Annex A. The review was not conducted against the original design objectives of the airspace change but rather examined the operational effects of the NWTC on Liverpool operations.
- 3.10 The review acknowledges that the NWTC has successfully delivered several of the intended benefits of the proposal, including a simpler airspace structure, improved accessibility for General Aviation, increased operating flexibility within the region, and an airspace classification aligned with the nature of operations taking place. These findings are broadly consistent with the objectives of simplifying airspace, maintaining access for all users, and supporting the principles of the Airspace Modernisation Strategy.
- 3.11 The principal concern identified by ATCSL relates to the interaction between Liverpool IFR arrivals and VFR traffic operating at or near the upper limit of the NWTC. Following implementation, Liverpool recorded four TCAS Resolution Advisories involving aircraft operating within the NWTC. This cluster of events occurred during a two-month period shortly after the introduction of the NWTC. This period also coincided with the commencement of what would be traditionally expected to be the summer flying season for GA aircraft, a period when MLLR usage had been noted

to increase in past years (and therefore likely that NWTC use would also increase).

- 3.12 ATCSL's analysis concluded that the increase in the corridor upper level from 1,300 ft to 1,500 ft reduced the vertical separation between NWTC traffic and Liverpool arrivals in this common interaction between these traffic types. (Small numbers of TCAS RAs have been evidenced within Liverpool airspace previously but not typically in the location of these instances – overhead the NWTC/MLLR).
- 3.13 No associated loss of separation or further safety events were reported, but ATCSL considered the occurrences indicative of increased operational complexity at the interface between the NWTC and Liverpool arrival procedures which may increase controller workload. Following targeted engagement with the GA community and CAA promotion of the "Take 2" initiative, no further TCAS events were reported for almost a year. Two subsequent occurrences have been reported to the CAA by ATCSL in the same seasonal period this year, one in May and one in June. ATCSL indicates that the reduction in vertical separation has reduced safety margins and has recommended further consideration of measures to increase separation between NWTC traffic and Liverpool arrivals.
- 3.14 Overall, the ATCSL review suggests that the NWTC has largely achieved its objectives relating to accessibility, simplicity of operation and airspace classification, whilst also identifying an unanticipated operational issue at the interface between the NWTC and Liverpool arrival procedures.
- 3.15 Airspace infringement data is considered separately within the review and is therefore not discussed further in this section. ATCSL included some infringement data in their review document, but these statistics will be included within the data obtained from the Airspace Infringement Team discussed later in this report.

Airport Operator and ANSP Feedback

Liverpool Airport

- 3.16 ATCSL as the ANSP for Liverpool Airport are a Liverpool airport function and therefore additional feedback was not received in a separate response to that discussed in 3.1.

Manchester Airport

- 3.17 Feedback received Manchester Airports Group (MAG) gave the following feedback as part of the online data:

“The Manchester Airport Director of Aerodrome Operations and Manager ATC Manchester Airport have both been asked for their input. We can confirm that there have been no responses on the Northwest Transit Corridor feedback form and nothing from their Tech Forum.

We must comment that this is unusual and perhaps provides an indicator of how welcome and successful the change has been.

MAG believe that the safe and successful change from the Manchester Low Level Route to the Northwest Transit Corridor owes a lot to the proactive and collaborative approach taken by almost all parties invited to contribute in a smooth/safe transition. The collaboration between Manchester Barton Aerodrome, NATS EnRoute, NATS Manchester ATC, the Civil Aviation Authority, MAG Manchester Airport, and the GA community has been successful in creating a deep understanding of the airspace change and avoiding issues that might otherwise have affected Manchester Airport.”

- 3.18 Additionally, a response was received from Manchester Airport Counter-UAS team which indicated that Drone infringements were monitored 24/7 and no pattern or significant number of event changes had been identified since the introduction of the NWTC. It was reported that an almost constant number of UAS were observed above the legal limit of 400ft with some UAS indicating as high as 1650ft. Whilst the NWTC was not introduced with the expectation of reducing UAS infringements, it is noted that these occurrences are still present in the area.

Airspace Infringements

- 3.19 In the 12 months preceding the introduction of the NWTC, there were 26 airspace infringements of the MLLR coming from non-adherence to the ruleset in place for entry at the time.
- 3.20 The introduction of the NWTC means that airspace infringements are now technically impossible to occur as the airspace is no longer a volume of controlled airspace (Class D). As stated previously in the review, it is possible to breach the restrictions applicable to the airspace which would be reported as an ABANL or MOR. There have been 0 reports of non-adherence of the NWTC restrictions in the year following its introduction.
- 3.21 When the MLLR was in operation there were 6 infringements in the CTR airspace surrounding the volume in the 12 months preceding the change.
- 3.22 With the introduction of the NWTC the airspace directly above the NWTC was re-designated as Manchester CTA 6. CTA 6 and surrounding CTRs were infringed by aircraft 11 times in the 12 months post implementation.
- 3.23 The CAA Airspace Infringements Team is responsible for the review and actions relating to infringements in accordance with [CAP1404](#). Following liaison with this team it was reported that no contributory factors relating to airspace design or the introduction of the NWTC have been identified during the reviews of airspace infringements of controlled airspace surrounding the NWTC.

Safety Data

- 3.24 In the 12 months following the introduction of the NWTC the following safety data reports (excluding Airspace Infringements already covered above) were filed in relation to the NWTC:
- 0 FCS1522 - UK Airspace Access or Refusal of ATS Reports
 - 0 ABANL reports files
 - 4 TCAS RA reports from aircraft inbound to Liverpool against traffic operating within the NWTC at the maximum level. These occurred in April and May of 2025, in months 2 and 3 of operation. There were also 2 further additional occurrences reported in post implementation months 16 and 17.
 - Airspace Infringement data already covered in this report:
 - 32 infringements 12 months prior to implementation
 - 11 infringements 12 months post implementation

LAIT Feedback

- 3.25 The Northwest LAIT was attended by members of the NWTC design and implementation team within the CAA on several occasions from conception, through implementation and beyond to ensure maximum visibility of plans and encourage open and transparent feedback.
- 3.26 Post implementation feedback has been conversational during meetings and has demonstrated strong support for:
- The increased altitude and width
 - Ability to radio call other agencies whilst within the dimensions of the NWTC and the associated workload reduction when approaching local airfields
 - Increased handling options in abnormal and emergency circumstances
- 3.27 In addition, it was also suggested by some that further increases to altitude, width and a directional traffic flow may see even greater improvements. During the discussions within this forum, it has allowed for direct feedback to be provided to LAIT members on the reasoning behind the decisions taken during the design and engagement phases of the ACP process. The reasoning provided has been in accordance with that set out in CAP3027 and has been widely accepted and understood by members following discussion.

Online Feedback

- 3.28 The CAA launched an online questionnaire (attached as Annex??) and distributed this to all respondents to the engagement activities held prior to implementation as well as attendees to the NWTC information evening held at Manchester Airport in February 2025 as well as members of the NW LAIT. Additionally, the questionnaire was open and available to anybody wishing to provide feedback including the general public.
- 3.29 142 responses were submitted, and the following key themes were identified within the responses:

Safety Perception and Support

Safety perception	Count	%
Significantly improved safety	~55	39%
Slightly improved safety	~52	37%
No noticeable change	~27	19%
Slightly reduced safety	~5	3%
Not sure	~3	2%

Support level	Count	%
Strongly support	~80	56%
Support	~48	34%
Neutral	~12	8%
Oppose	~2	1–2%

- 3.30 Support level broadly mirrors safety perception with a direct correlation demonstrated between positive supporter and increased perception of safety.
- 3.31 The introduction of the North West Transit Corridor is strongly supported by respondents and is widely perceived to have delivered a net safety benefit. Approximately 76% of respondents report that safety has improved, with nearly 40% describing the improvement as significant. In parallel to this, around 90% of respondents either support or strongly support the change, which suggests a high level of confidence in both the concept and its implementation.
- 3.32 The perceived safety improvement is driven primarily by the increase in available altitude, which respondents consistently identify as the most significant contributing factor. The additional 200ft available over the previous MLLR design, to a new ceiling of 1500ft, is frequently described as improving glide range in the event of engine failure, increasing vertical clearance over built-up areas, and providing more time for decision making in abnormal situations. For many general aviation operators, particularly those flying single-engine aircraft, respondents indicate that this additional vertical space provides a meaningful increase in safety margins.

- 3.33 The widening of the NWTC over the MLLR is also highlighted as providing a greater overall volume of airspace, especially when considered in conjunction with the extra altitude. Respondents suggest this contributes to improved separation between aircraft and a reduction in the funnelled nature of traffic flows. While not universally regarded as a significant transformation on its own, the increased space is generally described as a positive step in reducing traffic density and improving operating conditions.
- 3.34 In addition to these physical changes, respondents frequently referred to operational benefits. The transition from a rules-based system, where adherence to a defined set of requirements constituted a clearance to enter the MLLR, to the current arrangement is described as reducing pilot workload and simplifying decision-making. Under the previous environment, pilots were required to interpret and apply specific entry conditions and procedural requirements prior to and during transit. Respondents indicate that current access and airspace design is more straightforward, allowing greater focus on lookout and aircraft handling throughout the transit. The ability to select and monitor an appropriate frequency, and where necessary communicate with other agencies/parties (for example, local airfields such as Barton), while remaining within the NWTC, is also highlighted as a practical improvement. This is associated with improved situational awareness, reduced distraction, more flexible operations, and improved integration with surrounding traffic. Overall, respondents describe the NWTC as more intuitive and predictable, with clearer access expectations, a simpler airspace classification, and a standardised altitude limit that is easier to understand and apply. This improved clarity is consistent with the alignment of the route with identifiable ground features and a defined line of longitude.
- 3.35 Further safety related benefits identified by respondents include a reduced risk of controlled airspace infringement, with increased vertical separation below controlled airspace overhead providing additional buffer against inadvertent level busts and allowing pilots to better manage the effects of turbulence and thermals. The continued use of Frequency Monitoring Codes (FMC), enabling ATC to contact pilots if required, is also noted by many as a useful supporting safety measure within the more flexible operating environment.
- 3.36 However, strong support does not universally indicate an absence of concern. Across the responses, including among those who report improved safety and support the change, there is a consistent recognition that some risk remains present within the NWTC. A recurring theme is that traffic continues to operate within a relatively confined volume of airspace and may cluster at similar altitudes and along similar tracks, meaning that the practical benefit of the increased space can be limited by operational behaviour. As a result, many respondents suggest that further safety gains

could be achieved through improved traffic organisation, such as the introduction of directional flows or altitude stratification, alongside enhancements to situational awareness. This suggestion was identified during the design process and the rationale behind its exclusion provided within the original ACP submission.

- 3.37 A small minority of respondents (approximately 5%) report that safety has been reduced. Comments from this group consistently highlight concerns that the reclassification away from Class D airspace has reduced structured ATC oversight, resulting in a greater reliance on pilot self-separation. These respondents also note that the absence of defined traffic structures (based upon level or direction of travel etc), combined with traffic operating within a constrained corridor, may sustain or increase the risk of conflict. In addition, it is suggested that situational awareness may be reduced where pilots are not aware of traffic information being passed to others, particularly where different listening squawks or frequencies are in use.
- 3.38 Despite these concerns, the issues raised by this group broadly align with suggestions made elsewhere in the responses, particularly in relation to improving traffic organisation, enhancing communication, and increasing visibility of other aircraft.
- 3.39 In summary, respondents indicate that the North West Transit Corridor represents an improvement over the previous arrangement, delivering benefits in terms of increased altitude, greater available airspace, and reduced pilot workload. These factors are widely viewed as enhancing margins for error, improving emergency options, and supporting more effective visual lookout. At the same time, responses across all groups suggested building on these gains through a number of ideas discussed below.

Suggestions Made

- 3.40 Respondents put forward a range of suggestions to improve the operation of the North West Transit Corridor, with a strong degree of consistency across the dataset. The most prominent theme is the introduction of greater traffic organisation, particularly through lateral and vertical structuring. A significant number of respondents propose the use of directional lanes (e.g. northbound and southbound segregation) or 'keep left/right' conventions to reduce the risk of head-on encounters. These are frequently complemented by suggestions for altitude-based flow, such as assigning different flight levels based on direction of travel. These proposals are typically motivated by concerns that traffic currently operates in both directions across the full width of the NWTC and often at similar altitudes, resulting in perceived clustering and reduced separation. In addition, respondents suggest improvements to situational awareness, including the

introduction of a dedicated frequency, greater provision of traffic information, or mandating electronic conspicuity. Further comments suggest increasing the size of the NWTC, particularly raising the ceiling (commonly to 2000 ft) and widening the available airspace, with the aim of reducing congestion, improving separation, and increasing options in the event of an emergency.

- 3.41 While these suggestions reflect genuine operational concerns, many were explicitly considered and discounted during the development of the airspace design. For example, the introduction of defined traffic flows or directional lanes was assessed but rejected due to the constrained dimensions of the airspace and interaction with local operations, particularly at Barton Aerodrome, where aircraft arrivals and departures would be required to cross any defined flow, potentially increasing conflict risk rather than reducing it. Additionally, Class G does not establish “routes” for travel and therefore any flow could be at maximum, guidance. Guidance is not mandatory and pre-set expectations could reduce pilot lookout, meaning an encounter with an aircraft not in convention with guidance may be unexpected and therefore more impactful. Similarly, the implementation of a dedicated air-to-air frequency or mandatory communication measures was considered but not adopted, as this would conflict with the objective of simplifying airspace, increase pilot workload, and be difficult to enforce, particularly given aircraft equipment variability and the potential requirement for pilots to monitor multiple frequencies simultaneously. The proposal instead prioritises simpler Class G operations supported by recommended, rather than mandated, use of frequency monitoring codes.
- 3.42 Suggestions to further widen or raise the NWTC were also evaluated in detail and, in several cases, constrained by external operational and safety requirements. Lateral expansion is limited by adjacent controlled airspace and the need to maintain safe containment of commercial traffic, particularly Liverpool arrivals, where further westward expansion would compromise required vertical separation and approach procedures. Vertical expansion beyond 1500 ft is similarly constrained by controlled airspace design policy and the need to maintain minimum separation from instrument flight procedures. In other cases, potential widening was not progressed due to interactions with ongoing airspace modernisation work, meaning that further changes could not be implemented without impacting separate regulatory processes – something explicitly not permitted within the CAP 1991 process this change was made under.
- 3.43 Overall, while the suggestions made by respondents are consistent and can be perceived to have some operational benefit, particularly in relation to increasing traffic structure and awareness, the change proposal documentation submitted to the CAA does cover the ideas. CAP3027

indicates that many of these measures were considered during the development of the proposal. Some were not taken forward because they fell outside the scope of a CAP1991 change, particularly where they affected existing operations or planned future airspace changes. Others were discounted because they would have introduced additional complexity, conflicted with the principles of Class G airspace, reduced accessibility, or created new safety risks in adjacent airspace operations. The final design was not the result of overlooked opportunities, but of balancing competing operational, safety and regulatory considerations.

Traffic Usage

- 3.44 The CAA Airspace Analyser Tool (AAT) was used to evaluate the number of aircraft operating in the NWTC volume in both the 12 months prior to, and the 12 months following, the introduction of the NWTC. The AAT does not detect all flights using the NWTC as it relies upon the detection of electronic conspicuity (EC) equipment on board aircraft. Carriage of this equipment is not currently mandatory in UK airspace and therefore these numbers are indicative only and based upon aircraft that are equipped with EC.

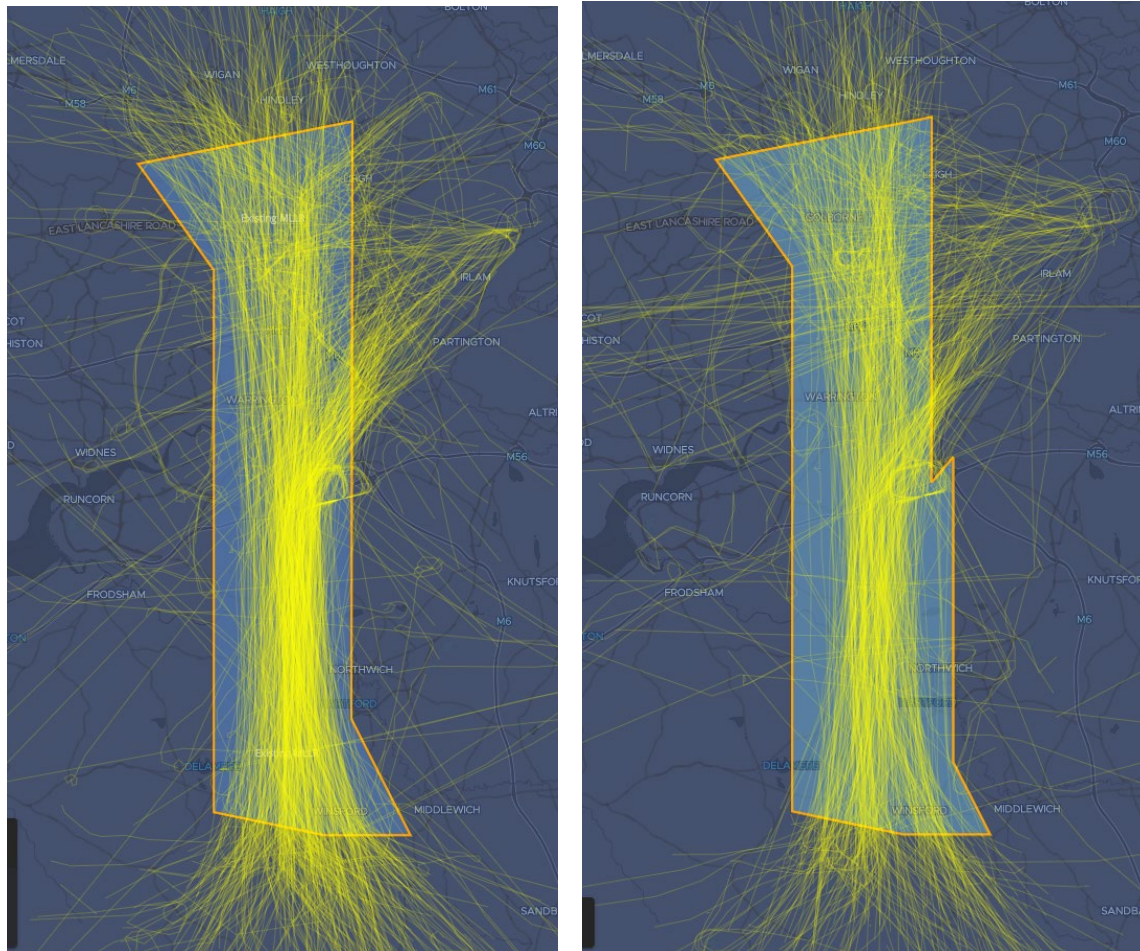
Period	Number of flights recorded	Change	% Change
20/02/2024 – 20/02/2025	5196	-	-
20/02/2025 – 20/02/2026	5652	+ 456	+ 8.7%

- 3.45 The number of flights recorded does not indicate a significant rise in traffic in the volume. Just over one flight per day more was recorded in the year post compared to the year pre implementation. Such a small increase could be down to many reasons such as more ADS-B aircraft equipage or a number of better weather days compared to previous years.
- 3.46 EC equipage is rising within the GA community and therefore traffic numbers detected with the AAT may appear to falsely show traffic increasing as the equipment is adopted by increasing numbers of GA aircraft.
- 3.47 The increase shown, even if not representative of an increase in EC equipage, would represent only 1.25 extra flights per day. This number is in line with pre-implementation expectations that NWTC usage will be broadly similar to that seen in the MLLR.

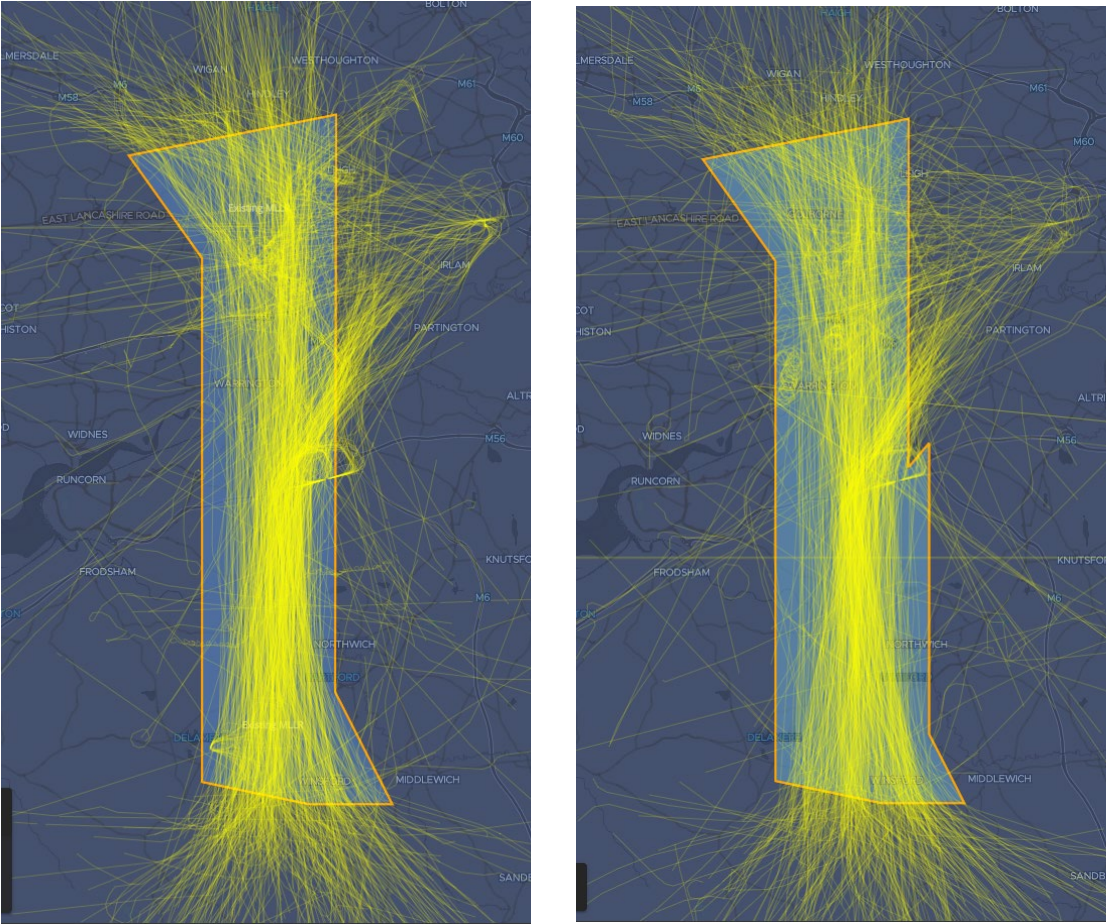
Traffic dispersion

- 3.48 The following images are from the CAA Airspace Analyser Tool and reference the traffic dispersion within the previous MLLR and compare side by side with the NWTC images from the same period following implementation. Peak summer months of June July and August are shown. Annex B contains month by month images from the 12 months either side of implementation.

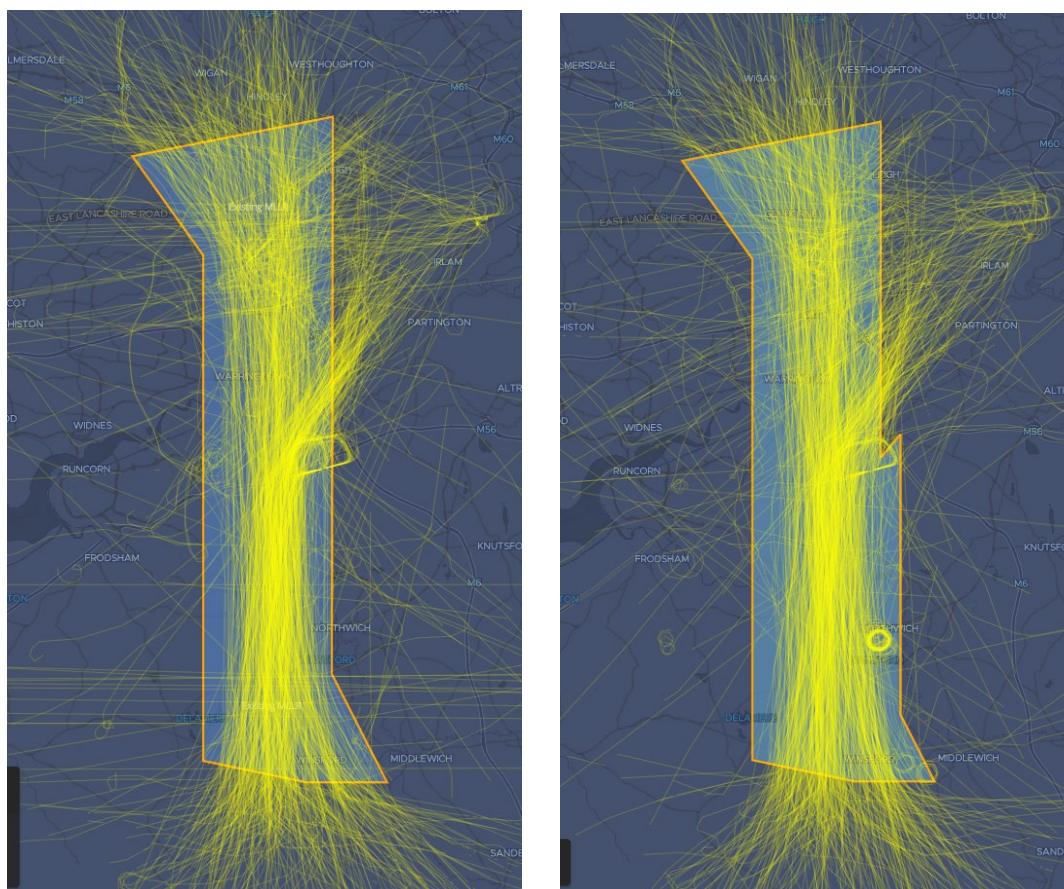
June 2024 (left) vs June 2025 (right):



July 2024 (left) vs July 2025 (right):



August 2024 (left) vs August 2025 (right)



- 3.49 The images of traffic dispersion see the same patterns occurring in both years and that as expected the dispersal of GA traffic over the area has remained broadly consistent both before and after implementation.
- 3.50 In alignment with this consistency the distribution of noise and environmental effects also aligns with anticipated impacts as stated in CAP3027.

Service Provision

- 3.51 Within the NWTC, no air traffic service provision is mandated. Pilots may request services from adjacent ATC units; however, provision is subject to controller workload.
- 3.52 This airspace change was intended to maintain the ability of GA aircraft to transit the airspace volumes surrounding Liverpool and Manchester airports without requiring an ATC clearance. As a result, no FCS1522 reports have been filed (form FCS1522 references issues relating to UK airspace access or the refusal of ATS) relating to the NWTC.
- 3.53 It is also noteworthy that zero FCS1522 reports were filed in the surrounding Liverpool or Manchester CTRs. This indicates that the airspace change has preserved the level of access it was designed to maintain and has not generated an increase in Class D airspace crossing requests to a level at which controller workload has resulted in the denial of service.

Chapter 4

Additional Information

- 4.1 In relation to TCAS RA events, it was felt prudent to examine further, and consultation was made with TCAS experts at EUROCONTROL. Through this communication it has been established that at the level involved (2000ft AMSL) TCAS only provides an RA if **both** another aircraft is within 600ft of the aircraft, AND the vertical trajectory indicates collision risk. An RA is NOT generated routinely or consistently when aircraft are only present within the 600ft window.
- 4.2 This airspace change has however created a situation whereby, if an aircraft operating within the NWTC is not maintaining level flight, it may increase the risk of a TCAS RA being triggered on a commercial aircraft above inside CAS.
- 4.3 To counter this the CAA has taken positive steps to remind pilots of the “Take 2” initiative in a number of forums, including at Local Airspace Infringement Team (LAIT) meetings around the country, as well releasing a “Skywise” alert in June of this year. Take 2 encourages pilots operating outside CAS, where able and appropriate, to use a 2nm lateral and 200ft vertical buffer against the boundaries of CAS.
- 4.4 The above action taken by the CAA throughout 2025, appeared to limit the issues recurrence and following the initial cluster of 4 events, no others occurred inside the data period this report covers.
- 4.5 Within its report, ATCSL states that ***“the ‘Take 2’ initiative [is not considered] a reliable and robust mid to long-term safety solution”*** (page 3). This position is broadly consistent with the context in which the NWTC was introduced. While not a specific objective of the airspace change, it was recognised throughout the design process that the NWTC was not intended to represent the long-term airspace solution for the North West region.
- 4.6 Future Airspace Strategy Implementation (FASI) programmes at Manchester and Liverpool provide the mechanism through which longer-term airspace designs can be developed, considering the requirement to provide equitable access to airspace while ensuring that volumes of controlled airspace are no greater than necessary.
- 4.7 Commitments to consider these principles were included within documentation submitted as part of the relevant FASI CAP1616 airspace change processes. As a result, the NWTC should be viewed as an interim design that maintains access and addresses the immediate issue created by the expiry of the MLLR exemption, while allowing future airspace modernisation activity to consider an equitable access solution that works around future designed flight paths and controlled airspace structures.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

- 5.1 The evidence collected during the first year following implementation indicates that the North West Transit Corridor has been successful in achieving the objectives that supported its introduction.
- 5.2 The available safety evidence suggests that the change has maintained a high standard of safety whilst improving operating conditions for General Aviation users. Stakeholder feedback from Manchester Airport, NATS, members of the North West Local Airspace Infringement Team attendees, and survey respondents was overwhelmingly positive and recognising of safety improvements and risk reduction. Approximately three-quarters of survey respondents reported a perceived improvement in safety, with many highlighting the increased altitude available within the NWTC, greater emergency landing options, improved clearance over built-up areas, and reduced pilot workload. Following implementation, traffic levels recorded within the NWTC remained broadly comparable with those of the former MLLR, demonstrating that access has been maintained without generating a significant increase in demand.
- 5.3 The objective of simplifying the airspace structure has also been achieved. The introduction of a Class G corridor replacing the previous exemption-based arrangement has removed the need for pilots to comply with a bespoke set of operating rules in order to enter controlled airspace. Feedback consistently identified the simplicity of the new arrangement as a positive outcome, particularly the reduced requirement to interpret and apply unique procedural conditions and the increased flexibility to communicate with other agencies whilst operating within the NWTC.
- 5.4 The data also demonstrates a significant reduction in the number of airspace infringements that contributed to the original review of the Manchester Low Level Route. In the year prior to implementation, 26 infringements were attributable to non-adherence with the “MLLR ruleset”. Following implementation, such occurrences are no longer possible and no ABANL or MOR reports relating to breaches of NWTC restrictions were recorded during the review period. This supports the conclusion that the change has successfully addressed one of the key drivers behind the original proposal. Airspace infringements in the airspace surrounding the NWTC do continue and the CAA remains committed to reducing these through the work of the Airspace Infringements Team and their risk reducing activities, initiatives and education.
- 5.5 The evidence further indicates that the change has met the objectives of the Airspace Modernisation Strategy and the Air Navigation Directions. Access for General Aviation has been preserved without the requirement for an ATC

clearance, while the airspace classification now more accurately reflects the nature of operations taking place within the corridor. No airspace access reports (FCS1522) associated with the NWTC, or either CTR surrounding it, were recorded, providing further evidence that accessibility has been maintained.

- 5.6 Notwithstanding the overall positive outcome, the review has identified one area relevant to ongoing regulatory oversight and important to future airspace design consideration. ATCSL reported a small number of TCAS Resolution Advisories involving Liverpool arrivals and aircraft operating at the upper limit of the NWTC. While no losses of separation or other associated safety events were identified, these occurrences indicate that the reduced vertical distance between the corridor and Liverpool arrival profiles can increase operational complexity in certain circumstances. The reduction in occurrences following targeted awareness activity suggests that pilot operating practices may influence the likelihood of such events, although the issue should be taken into account should further related occurrences indicate an emerging trend.
- 5.7 The review has also considered whether the evidence gathered supports further modification to the North West Transit Corridor at this stage. While stakeholder feedback identified a number of potential enhancements or changes, ranging from changes to altitude, increased width and greater traffic structuring, these proposals were either considered during the original design process and decisions justified in CAP3027. In many cases, the design ultimately adopted was constrained to its current dimensions by wider operational, regulatory and airspace design considerations. The evidence therefore suggests that the final design was not the result of overlooked opportunities, but of balancing competing operational, safety and regulatory considerations.
- 5.8 The evidence contained within the review does not demonstrate a safety deficiency requiring immediate intervention. The review considered the implications of introducing further amendments to the NWTC in the short term. In aviation, changes to airspace design must take account not only of the intended outcome but also the safety implications of users failing to be aware of, or fully understanding, the change. The current NWTC design has now been established and is widely understood by its user community. Any subsequent amendment that reduced available airspace, particularly through lowering vertical limits, would introduce the potential for pilots operating in accordance with previously understood procedures to inadvertently infringe adjacent controlled airspace, with consequential impacts on other airspace users, increasing operational risk. By comparison, changes that increase the amount of available airspace are inherently more tolerant of user unfamiliarity, as pilots continuing to operate in accordance with previous limits would not be expected to infringe adjacent controlled airspace. The introduction of the NWTC therefore represented a lower-risk transition than any future amendment that reduced the available dimensions of the airspace volume.

- 5.9 Given the evidence contained within the review, the absence of a demonstrated safety deficiency requiring immediate intervention, and the prospect of further airspace modernisation activity in the medium and into long term through the North West FASI programmes, there is a strong argument that maintaining a stable operating environment provides greater overall safety benefit than pursuing further short-term amendments to the NWTC.
- 5.10 The review recognises the concerns raised by ATCSL regarding TCAS Resolution Advisories involving Liverpool arrivals and aircraft operating at the upper limit of the NWTC. These occurrences are relevant to understanding the interaction between NWTC traffic and Liverpool arrival procedures and should continue to inform future airspace modernisation activity within the region. However, the available evidence does not currently demonstrate a systemic safety deficiency within the NWTC.
- 5.11 The occurrences were limited in number, no associated loss of separation or other safety occurrence was identified, and they must be considered alongside the wider body of evidence demonstrating that the NWTC has maintained access, simplified the airspace structure, reduced infringement-related risk and achieved the objectives for which it was introduced. Accordingly, the review does not identify a justification for further airspace design changes at this time.
- 5.12 Overall, the review concludes that the North West Transit Corridor has successfully achieved the objectives established within CAP3027 and that the available evidence supports maintaining the current design pending future consideration through future airspace modernisation programmes (FASI) currently ongoing within the north west of the UK.

Chapter 6

Feedback

- 6.1 Following publication of this document a feedback window will be opened for a minimum of 28 days.
- 6.2 Feedback welcomed at Airspace.Regulation@caa.co.uk