

Airspace change masterplan – CAA acceptance criteria

CAP 2156a



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Civil Aviation Authority
Aviation House
Beehive Ring Road
Crawley
West Sussex
RH6 0YR

Revision history

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Enquiries regarding the content of this publication should be addressed to: airspace.modernisation@caa.co.uk

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Purpose of this document

The purpose of this document is to set out the criteria against which the CAA will make the decision whether to accept the airspace change masterplan into the Airspace Modernisation Strategy

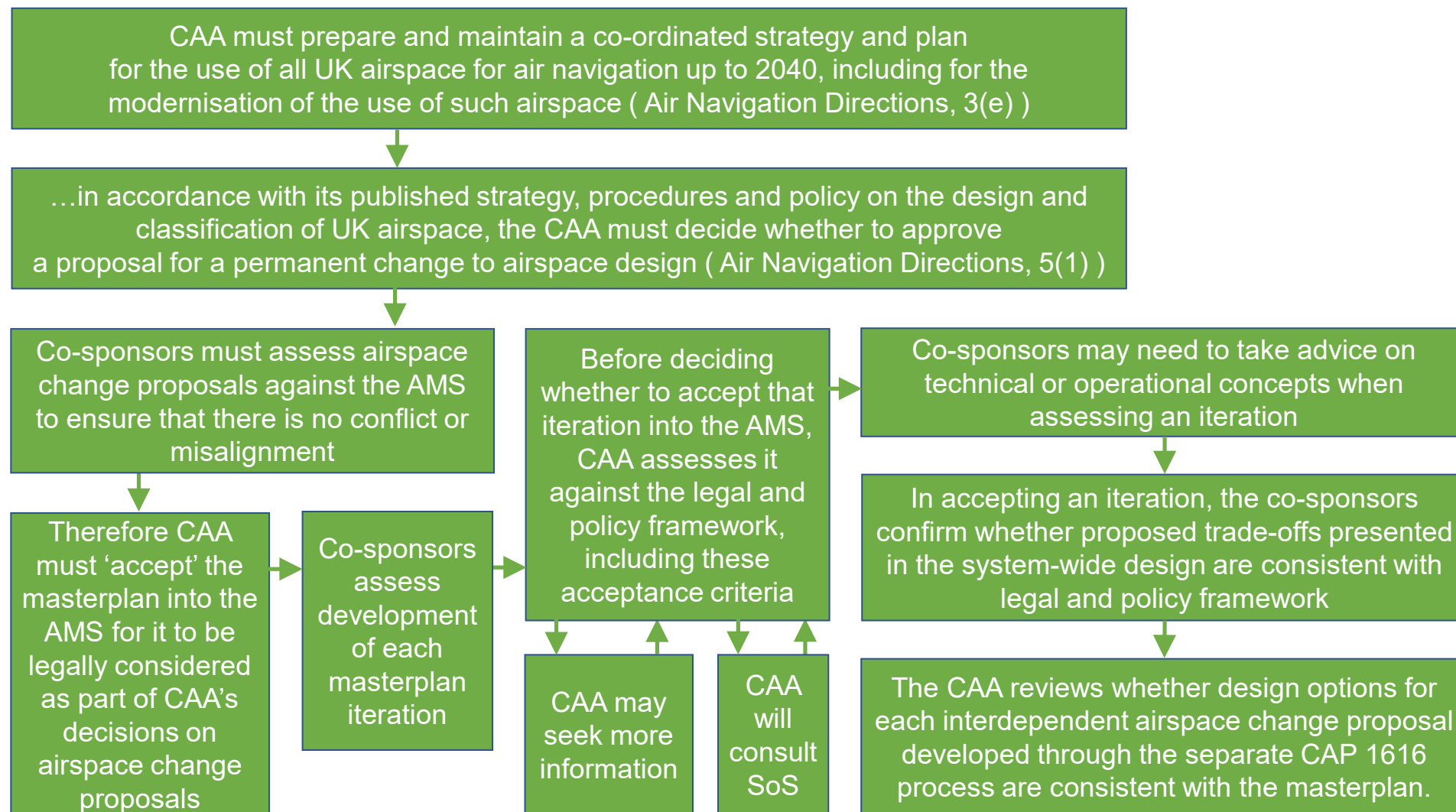
1. This document is published pursuant to Direction 4 of The Civil Aviation Authority (Air Navigation) Directions 2017 (as amended).
2. The **airspace change masterplan** is a single coordinated implementation plan for airspace changes in the UK to cover the period to 2040.
3. The CAA and Department for Transport, as **co-sponsors** of airspace modernisation in the UK, commissioned NATS (En Route) plc (NERL) to create the masterplan. The co-sponsors required NERL to set up an impartial body to coordinate between NERL, in its role as a 'sponsor' of airspace change, and the individual airports who must sponsor the airspace changes needed to deliver airspace modernisation. This body is known as the **Airspace Change Organising Group (ACOG)**.
4. The co-sponsors assess ACOG's progress to **confirm that the masterplan is consistent with the masterplan commission, government policy and the CAA's own statutory airspace functions**. Based on that assessment, and before the masterplan can be implemented, the CAA must decide to formally **accept** the masterplan into our **Airspace Modernisation Strategy**, having consulted the Secretary of State.
5. The CAA's acceptance of the masterplan into the Airspace Modernisation Strategy makes the masterplan, together with [CAP 1616](#), the legal basis against which individual airspace change decisions are made by the CAA. Therefore, the CAA's decisions on airspace change proposals will need to ensure that there is no misalignment with the masterplan.

6. **The masterplan does not include the detail of individual airspace designs.** The masterplan is a separate regulatory decision-making process to the CAP 1616 process applied by the CAA for individual airspace change decisions. The interaction between these two processes is shown in Figure 5. Sponsors are required to follow the process in this document and CAP 1616.
7. ACOG envisages a minimum of four iterations of the masterplan. The iterations broadly align with certain gateways of the CAP 1616 process that each airspace change proposal which is being taken forward as part of the modernisation programme (referred to here as ‘constituent airspace change proposals’) will follow. **Each iteration must be accepted separately**, except Iteration 1, which has already been assessed and [published](#).

Criteria for accepting the masterplan – overview

For the CAA to accept a masterplan iteration into the Airspace Modernisation Strategy, we need to be satisfied, having consulted the Secretary of State, that the criteria set out in this document have been met

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| <p>8. The criteria in this document for accepting the masterplan cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ overall aim and purpose of the masterplan (page 7)▪ content of the masterplan overall (pages 8–14)▪ expected content by iteration (page 15–27). <p>9. We will use as our reference point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ the criteria set out in this document▪ the assessment framework set out in the accompanying document, <u>CAP 2156b Airspace Change Masterplan – assessment framework</u>▪ the requirements of any existing or future commissions from the CAA and Department of Transport as co-sponsors. | <p>10. The co-sponsors will assess and, if satisfied, the CAA will accept an iteration of the masterplan into the Airspace Modernisation Strategy. The length of time needed will vary depending on a number of factors including the scope, detail and clarity of the documentation provided by ACOG. With a requirement to also consult with the Secretary of State, the CAA estimates that the assess and accept process could take between 6-12 weeks overall.</p> <p>11. Airspace modernisation is a long and complex programme. We expect the masterplan to be flexible and sufficiently agile to accommodate the evolving context for airspace modernisation, such as any changes or additions to co-sponsor commissions to produce elements of the masterplan, or unanticipated external events.</p> <p>12. The CAA will therefore need to update the acceptance criteria over the lifetime of the masterplan as iterations are developed.</p> |
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Figure 1: Summary of the process for CAA acceptance of the masterplan

Note: AMS = CAA Airspace Modernisation Strategy; SoS = Secretary of State

Overall aim and purpose of the masterplan

The purpose of the masterplan as defined by the co-sponsor commission is to set out a single coordinated implementation plan to deliver the objectives of airspace modernisation, including sequencing and phasing

13. The masterplan will, in particular:

- identify where and when **airspace changes** are required to support delivery of the objectives of the Airspace Modernisation Strategy¹
- identify potential **interdependencies** between airspace change proposals and the coordination of those proposals
- identify potential **conflicts** between individual airspace changes
- determine **trade-offs** proposed by ACOG to resolve those conflicts.

14. These aims will be achieved over a minimum of four iterations of the masterplan. Iteration 1 was only a high-level plan and has already been assessed and published.

An **interdependency** can be described as two or more airspace change proposals that are linked together either because there is a potential conflict in their design options that must be solved, they enable each other at a system level, or there is a potential cumulative impact on stakeholders on the ground.

A **conflict** can be described as two or more airspace change proposals that cannot both proceed in their proposed form (for example, they intersect with one another in a way which is not technically possible for both to proceed).

A **trade-off** is the choice or decision to resolve a conflict, and could be between two sponsors of separate airspace changes, or between two objectives (such as achieving noise reduction and achieving fuel efficiency).

¹ The objectives are set out in [CAP1711](#), page 23.

Content of the masterplan overall

Acceptance criteria for the masterplan overall – categorised as A, B, C for ease of reference

A: Where, when and why airspace changes are needed, and in what sequence

The requirements in section A are those set out in paragraphs 6 and 7 of the commissioning letter from the co-sponsors to NERL of 2 November 2018, as amended by subsequent commissioning letters of 30 July 2019 and 12 May 2021, in accordance with NERL's economic licence condition 10a (paragraph 3b).

The commissioning letters, which are consistent with the objectives of the Airspace Modernisation Strategy, are reproduced at Appendix A.

The co-sponsors may need to update these requirements in future commissions to reflect the evolving context for airspace modernisation, such as future changes in government policy.

B: Information on the airspace changes needed

B1: A programme plan of airspace changes needed to deliver airspace modernisation, including a list of airspace changes in specific volumes of airspace with identified sponsors and anticipated timescales, including dates, sequencing, delivery assumptions and a clearly identified critical path of delivery.

B2: Strategic environmental assessment and Habitats Regulations assessment

To ensure that environmental and sustainability impacts are integrated into the modernisation programme, a strategic environmental assessment and a Habitats Regulations assessment are a fundamental part of, and therefore must inform, development of the masterplan. The assessments must comply with legal requirements. More information is in [CAP 2156b Airspace Change Masterplan – assessment framework](#).

The CAA is legally responsible for ensuring that these assessments are carried out in respect of the masterplan. We will, in due course, set out what ACOG's role is in these assessments, and where in the process this occurs. We will

seek ACOG's advice on how these assessments should be scoped proportionately so as to best inform the masterplan.

Certain public authorities must be consulted on the scope and level of detail of the information to be included in the strategic environment assessment. Once the strategic environment assessment has been prepared, a wider consultation exercise must take place to give the public and certain public authorities an early and effective opportunity to express their opinions.

B3: Potential interdependencies between airspace changes in the masterplan, meaning:

- that there is a **conflict** between two or more design options (for example they cannot both be achieved), or
- that they **enable** one another.

The masterplan may require sponsors to work together:

- to solve a conflict between two or more of their potential design options, or
- to improve the current airspace structure, for example by removing bottlenecks or holds

and in doing so any proposed trade-offs are to be made transparently with the coordination of ACOG (and assessed by the co-sponsors) and not via private bilateral agreements between airports.²

² Impacted stakeholders will be consulted on proposed design options – and therefore solutions to conflicts – when airspace change sponsors

consult on each airspace change proposal through the CAP 1616 airspace change process.

B4: Potential solutions to interdependencies, which might include decisions on trade-offs between the objectives of one sponsor or one airspace change proposal and another (see **B5** below); solutions such as:

- the sequencing of proposed changes
- moving routes vertically, laterally or the time/day they are used, to resolve a conflict
- a sponsor proposing to no longer pursue one of its design options to resolve a conflict
- other potential solutions identified by ACOG and sponsors.

B5: Trade-offs, meaning a choice or decision to resolve a **conflict** as part of a potential solution, which might arise between:

- the objectives of different airspace change proposals, for example, where two airports want to make use of the same volume of airspace
- the objectives of an airspace change proposal and its impact on an existing airspace design (or the potential opportunities for that design)
- multiple objectives for a single airspace design (for example, reducing controlled airspace, increasing capacity, noise reduction).

B6: At a system level, potential implications for government policy objectives of the proposed solutions, which may include:

- where interdependencies will lead one or more changes to have knock-on effects on other airports/airfields or other airspace users, including users of uncontrolled airspace
- where the resolution of a conflict will mean one sponsor or one policy objective will need to be traded-off against others in order to resolve the conflict
- where those impacted by airspace change are likely to be affected by multiple changes.

At Iteration 2 we expect the masterplan to illustrate how effective trade-off decisions between options can be made by providing example case-study assessments of the potential implications of deploying different solutions to manage interdependencies.

Later iterations of the masterplan will be developed in greater detail with more information about the cumulative impacts of different design choices and the methods used to calculate them. These will culminate in a final iteration consisting of a coordinated plan showing how effective trade-off decisions derived from the various options for a modernised airspace design will together deliver government policy objectives.

B7: A stakeholder engagement strategy, developed by ACOG and agreed through regular assessment by the co-sponsors, including agreement on how relevant material – including the strategy itself – will be published. This must show ACOG’s programme for engagement with relevant stakeholders as masterplan iterations are developed. We are not dictating the practical approach ACOG takes to stakeholder engagement, so long as that approach follows the engagement strategy that ACOG has developed and the CAA has agreed to.

‘Engagement’ is the catch-all term we use to mean developing relationships with stakeholders. Stakeholders should be told how they can best engage with ACOG in order to provide feedback that ACOG can take into account at the appropriate point. More information on engagement principles is in [CAP 2156b Airspace Change Masterplan – assessment framework](#).

The strategy should also set out how the sponsors of interdependent airspace change proposals are working together on consultation and engagement, the sort of solutions they are considering together that affect stakeholders, and the degree of commitment from sponsors.

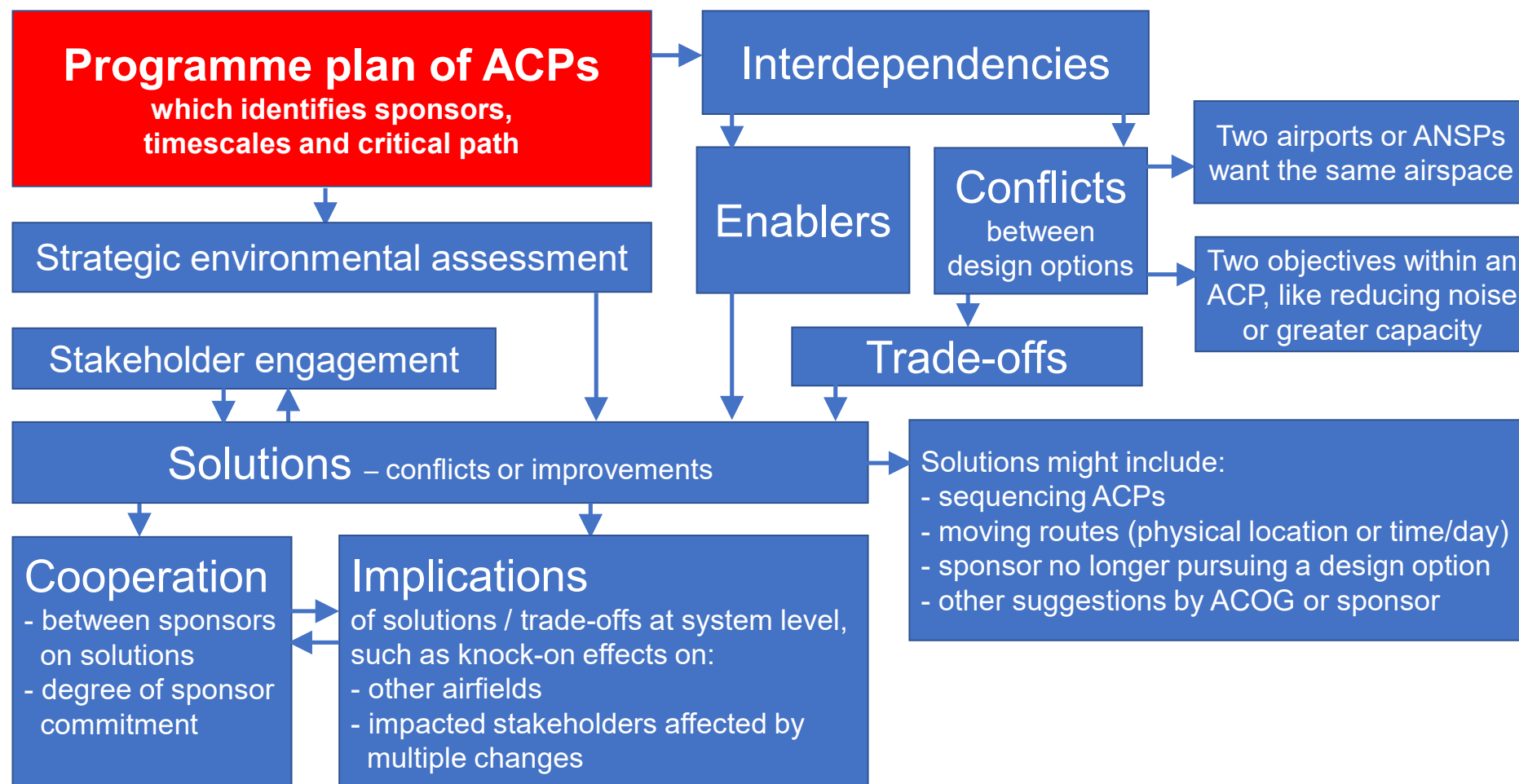
We expect ACOG to run a public engagement exercise on the content of Iteration 3 before it is submitted to the co-sponsors for assessment and subsequent acceptance by the CAA into the Airspace Modernisation Strategy. Through this engagement ACOG should make stakeholders aware of the later consultations on airspace change proposals, how they are

linked together, and how stakeholders can feed back on trade-off decisions that will have to be made that may affect them.

B8: Iterative development of the masterplan:

- each iteration must include a plan for the content of subsequent iterations, which will also be considered as part of the CAA’s acceptance decision
- the CAA and Department for Transport as co-sponsors may also offer feedback on areas where further work or more detail will be required in the next iteration, which must be taken into account
- in development of a particular iteration, ACOG may if it chooses make a case to the CAA and Department for Transport as co-sponsors during the ongoing assessment process that a particular element in the criteria should be moved between iterations, or omitted where it is no longer relevant or proportionate to the required outcome.

B9: General Aviation: To ensure that improved access benefits for different airspace users are integrated into the modernisation programme, ACOG must include in each iteration of the masterplan, an assessment of the potential positive benefits or negative impacts on airspace usability, including on the General Aviation sector overall.

Figure 2: Summary of information required in the masterplan

Note: ACP = airspace change proposal; ANSP = air navigation service provider