Minutes of "Modernising Midlands Airspace" (ACP-2025-013)
Assessment Meeting held on Teams on 11th June 2025

Participants	Appointment	Representing
[redacted]	Airspace Implementation Manager	NATS
[redacted]	Airspace Change Specialist	NATS
[redacted]	Airspace Change Account Manager	CAA
[redacted]	Airspace Regulator (Environmental)	CAA
[redacted]	Airspace Regulator (Technical)	CAA
[redacted]	Airspace Regulator (Engagement and Consultation)	CAA
[redacted]	Airspace Regulator (Economist)	CAA
[redacted]	Principal ATM Inspector	CAA

CAA Assessment Meeting Opening Statement

CAA noted that the statement of need, agenda and presentation were received in advance of the Assessment Meeting and confirmed that the documents must be published by the sponsor, together with minutes of the meeting, on the Airspace Change Portal page. CAA explained the purpose of the meeting and confirmed that the meeting was an Assessment Meeting and not a Gateway. The CAA reinforced that the sponsor was required to provide a broad description of their proposed approach to meeting the CAA's CAP 1616 requirements, but the CAA was not deciding whether the proposed approach met the detailed requirements of the CAA's process at this stage. The purpose of the Assessment Meeting (set out in detail in CAP 1616) was broadly:

- for the Sponsor to present and discuss their Statement of Need,
- to enable the CAA to consider whether the proposal concerned falls within the scope of the formal airspace change process, including determining whether the proposal falls within the scope of a pre-scaled ACP process/Level 3,
- to enable the CAA to consider the appropriate provisional Level to assign to the change proposal.

Additionally, the sponsor was required to provide information on how it intended to proceed to fulfil the requirements of the airspace change process and to provide information on timescales. Lastly, the sponsor was required to provide information on how it intended to meet the engagement requirements of the various stages of the airspace change process.

	ACTION
Item 1 – Introduction Introductions made and opening statement read by CAA	
Item 2 – Statement of Need (discussion and review) NERL presented assessment meeting slide pack. SoN reviewed: No questions or comments.	
Item 3 – Area of scope Slide showing the primary area of change. CAA ([redacted]) asked if FRA was within scope of the proposal. NERL ([redacted]) explained currently FRA is within scope but not yet determined if it will be included within the design.	
Item 4 – Current day scenario Slides presented of current day scenario. Description given on airspace usage and sectorisation of airspace. No additional comments.	

Item 5 – Opportunities and issues arising from the proposed change NERL described the opportunities this change could bring: Systemisation – separation by design will reduce complexity, increase predictability with less tactical intervention, and reduced radio transmissions between controllers / pilots. It will optimise airport connectivity and increase capacity within the airspace. Potential Issues to be considered: The design will need to ensure compatibility with existing arrivals and departure routes, no traffic below 7,000ft will be amended. The realignment of airport STARs is within scope of this project. Widescale systemisation can be challenging for environmental efficiencies – the design will seek to optimise capacity and efficiency. Discussion on the potential design: CAA ([redacted]) - envisages that the systemisation will introduce parallel tracks – and reminded the sponsor of the guidance and policy contained within CAP 1385 and SARG Policy 126 NERL ([redacted]) described that parallel tracks north/south is the likely design. We will determine from data the traffic demand e.g. Manchester airport outbounds (approx. 30,000 p.a; Heathrow 47,000 arrivals). Will need to determine how many routes can be fit in the airspace, with PBN separation standards as per CAP1385. Routes will be designed and allocated traffic to routes to facilitate the optimal design for capacity and efficiency.	
Item 6 – Level, process requirements* and provisional timelines** Proposed this meets the criteria for a Level 2 ACP. CAA would provisionally allocate this as a Level 2 ACP. Engagement/Consultation requirements: NERL propose a 2 week engagement for Stage 1 with limited relevant stakeholders. NERL should provide a clear rationale of engagement & consultation durations / limited selection of stakeholders. CAP1616f para 2.36 – 2.56 details the requirements for Stage 1. For Stage 2, NERL propose to engage dynamically with stakeholders, and the engagement will be ongoing with relevant stakeholders throughout the Stage. The CAA agreed this is acceptable. Inclusion of all relevant engagement is necessary and should be evidenced. Consultation at Stage 3 should be conducted via Citizen Space and in line with CAP1616f guidance. Economic requirements: Comply with CAP1616 & CAP1616f. (Sections 3.15 and 3.18 are of particular relevance for the development of the baseline and IOA process. For further information on the options appraisal process and requirements by stage, see 3.38 in CAP1616f). Stage 2 IOA can be qualitative as a minimum. Environmental: The environmental requirements are detailed in CAP1616i. As this airspace change will be above 7000ft the priority is on greenhouse gas emissions over noise. NERL can scope out environmental assessments for noise, local air quality and tranquillity. The Habitats Regulation Assessment can be easily screened out based on the fact that no change is expected below 3000ft; this can be recorded in Stage 2 submission without the requirement to submit a form.	

The airspace change sponsor must assess and quantify the change as regards fuel burn and CO_2 emissions, as per the requirements of CAP 1616f and CAP 1616i.

The CAA recommend using actual rather than planned data for Year 1, as per CAP1616i (Chapter 6) guidance.
For year 1 provide Actual – For Year 10 compare planned vs planned. If NERL identify a reason to deviate from this, a rationale and discussion with the CAA would be required. The CAA can provide guidance regarding the fuel burn and CO2 modelling requirements once the ACP reaches the relevant stage in the process.

TIMESCALES
DFT Call-In – CAA stated it is unlikely this would be called in but NERL should ensure we are content with stakeholder selection.

Discussion was held on the proposed submission dates. Given the Bank Holiday in August the August gateway would require additional time for assessment, as 2 weeks is the absolute minimum.

Stage 4/5: Decision period of 10 weeks is unlikely to be met due to CAA resource. NERL asked to consider extending this to 16/17 weeks.

Timelines proposed:

Activity	Proposed Date	Revised Date
Submit Stage 1	15th August 2025	8th August 2025
Stage 1 Decision	29th August 2025	29th August 2025
Submit Stage 2	13th February 2026	13th February 2026
Stage 2 Decision	27th February 2026	27th February 2026
Submit Stage 3	16th October 2026	11th September 2026
Stage 3 Decision	30th October 2026	25th September 2026
Submit Stage 4	4th June 2027	16 April 2027
Stage 5 Decision	13th August 2027	13th August 2027
AIRAC Submission	27th August 2027	27th August 2027
Target AIRAC	November 2027	November 2027

Post Assessment Meeting Note by Account Manager:
The "Revised Date" timeline proposed was agreed by the CAA.

When the sponsor submits their gateway materials for each Gateway at the agreed submission deadline, the period between this and the gateway decision will be an analysis by the CAA Airspace Regulatory team (Airspace Regulation) of the documentation submitted, for the purposes of making a recommendation to the CAA Gateway decision maker(s). In conducting the gateway assessment, the CAA is assessing the process employed and its compliance with the guidance stipulated within CAP 1616. It is not an assessment of the merits of the submission itself, which is reviewed at Stage 5 - Decision. We may request documentation from the sponsor that is referred to in the gateway submission but has not been provided as part of the Gateway submission materials. We may also request the sponsor to provide information by way of clarification relating to statements or assumptions made in the submission. Any further information sought by Airspace Regulation at this stage is for clarificatory purposes and is only for determining compliance with the CAP 1616 process.

In any instance where a sponsor has not met the requirements of the process, we will inform them after the gateway decision and advise of next steps.

Please note that this text does not apply to airspace change proposals involving the sole implementation of RNP Instrument Approach Procedures (IAPs) without an Approach Control, as Gateway Assessments are not required. Therefore, this text can be removed from the Assessment Meeting minutes.

*** The timeline agreed may become subject to change by the CAA. As outlined in CAP 2541 it is not the CAA's intent to conduct a re-prioritisation of all ACPs currently in progress, but only to prioritise when we believe this is required. Such prioritisation will be conducted on a case-by-case basis and in accordance***

with the principles outlined in CAP 2541. Should it be considered necessary to reprioritise an ACP a member of the Airspace Regulation team will contact the sponsor directly.	
Item 7 – Safety Case requirement[1] Safety case – confirmed standard safety process will be followed.	
Item 8 – Next steps Timeline to be taken away by CAA for review. Draft minutes to CAA by 18th June 2025. Minutes finalised by CAA by 25th June 2025.	
Item 9 – Any other business CAA stated that the need for this change is clear.	

Actions arising from "Modernising Midlands Airspace" (ACP-2025-013) Assessment Meeting

ACTION	OWNER
Timeline to be reassessed by NERL by 18/06/25	NERL
Timeline to be reviewed and agreed by CAA by 25/06/25	CAA
Draft minutes to be sent to CAA by 18/06/25	NERL
Minutes to be finalised by 25/06/25	CAA

[1] *The default position is that if the safety case contains proprietary information which is commercially sensitive in nature, it may be agreed by the CAA not to have it published in its entirety at stage 4. However, it must be submitted to the CAA, labelled accordingly and a Plain English summary of the final safety assessment explaining why the proposal will maintain a high standard of safety, must be published on the Portal, in accordance with CAP1616 para 1.31'.*