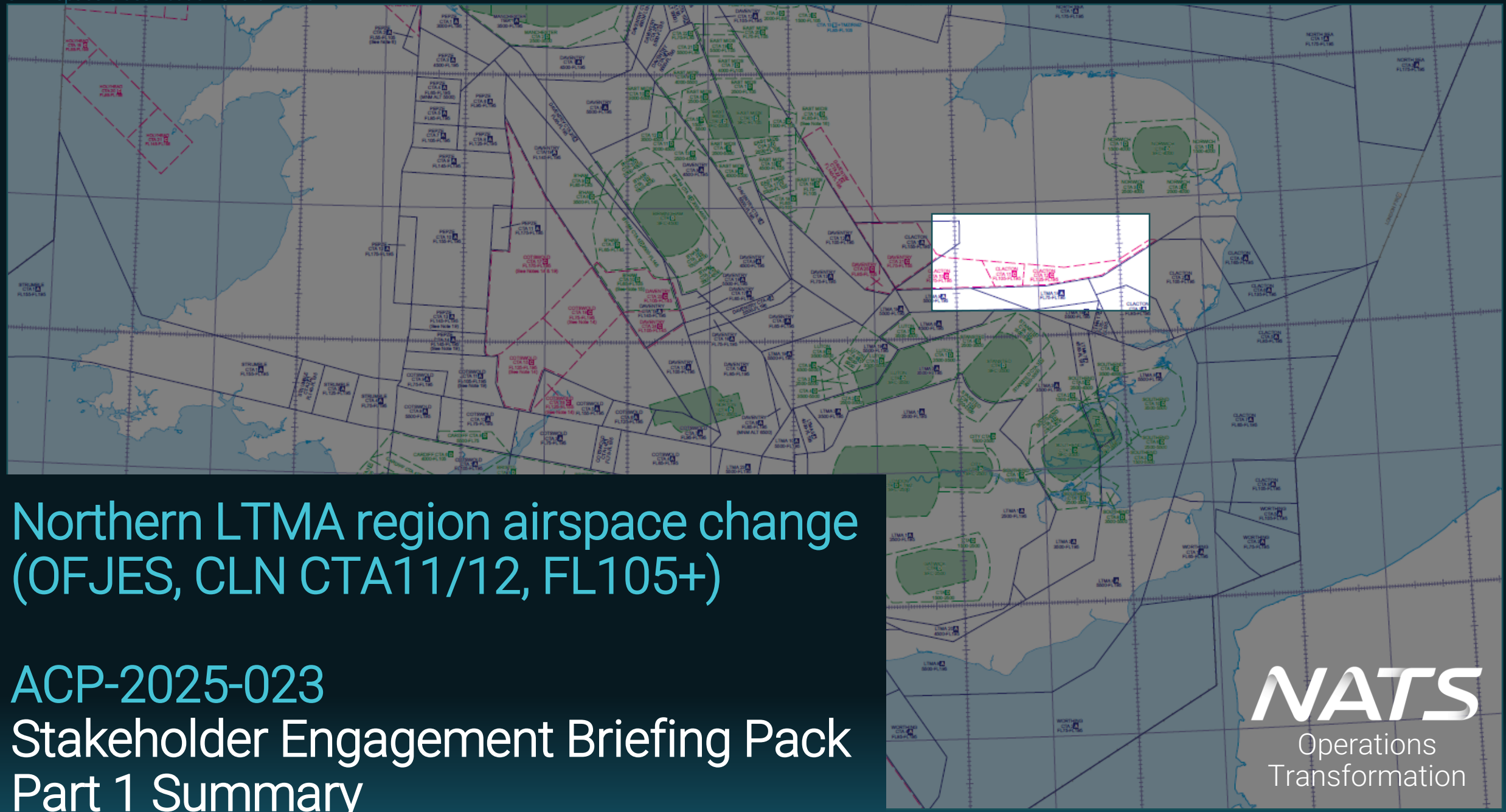


Northern LTMA region airspace change (OFJES, CLN CTA11/12, FL105+)

ACP-2025-023
Stakeholder Engagement Briefing Pack
Part 1 Summary

NATS
Operations Transformation

Issue 1.0

Introduction, background, and driver for change

- The first 5 slides are Part 1 of this briefing pack, with a summary of the proposed change and a feedback form. This is sufficient for most readers to understand the change, and its potential impacts. More details are supplied in Part 2.
- On 24 February 2022, an airspace change known as SAIP AD6 (ACP-2018-65) delivered new airspace and STARs for London Luton Airport (LLA) and new CAS volumes at the northern edge of the LTMA. This was successful, and improved safety in the region.
- As the air traffic recovery from COVID continues, the base-step between CAS volumes CLN CTA11 (FL105) and CLN CTA12 (FL125) constrains controllers in their management of descent profiles, as they integrate arrival flows from the east (via waypoint OFJES) and from the south (via waypoint OXDUF).
- This impacts ATC and cockpit workload because this CAS base constraint makes it more complex to merge the two flows.
- We believe the way forward is an airspace change to amend the CAS base-step boundary between CLN CTA11 and CTA12, which would provide two more flight levels for the OFJES arrival flow. This would give ATC more flexibility to safely merge the two traffic flows.
- If we do not do this now, traffic will continue to increase and ATC complexity will build, with the potential for a future increase in safety risk.
- There were 2,100 LLA arrivals more in 2024 than 2023. In the first six months of 2025 there were already 600 more LLA arrivals than the same period in 2024, before the main summer holidays start, with the trend expected to continue. UK traffic is expected to increase by 5.3% from 2026 to 2035 (source: NATS June 2025 Base Case Forecast extended to 2035)
- We are targeting implementation on Thursday 19th March 2026 (AIRAC 03/2026).
- The driver for change is to reduce ATC complexity/workload where this flow interaction occurs.
- Safety is at the heart of everything we do, so when we identify a potential future safety issue, we act.

Proposed CAS change: Option 2* (FL105 and above)

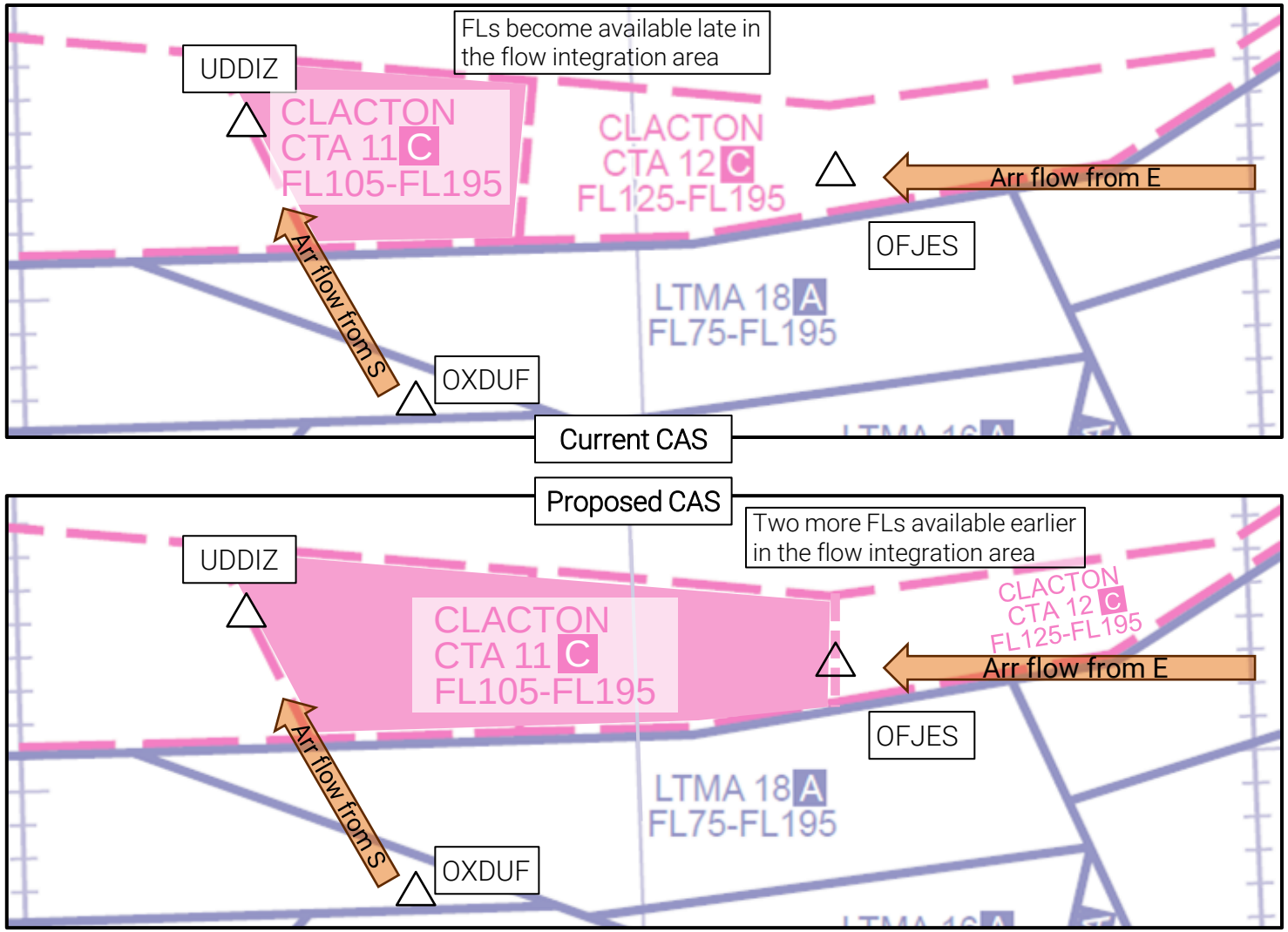
Design intent: provide more levels for ATC to integrate OFJES arrivals with OXDUF arrivals (which would not change)

Concept: extend CLN CTA11 (base FL105) east to OFJES, reduce CLN CTA12 (base FL125) by equivalent volume

Outcome: two more levels would be available to ATC, west of OFJES

Impacts: Minimised on other airspace users – least CAS required, least impact on USAF operations at RAF Lakenheath and RAF Mildenhall, least direct impact on GA, and least consequential impact on GA if USAF operations were slightly lower in the new area

Simple: minimal change to overall lateral dimensions, with which users of this region are familiar. No change to STARs.



*Option 1 was previously rejected – see Slide 9 for summary

VFR chart illustrating the proposal (FL105+)

Relevant stakeholder sites in the region (not inc farm strips)

MoD sites (inc USAF) and Cambridge Airport are stakeholders

<u>Powered GA:</u>
Duxford EGSU

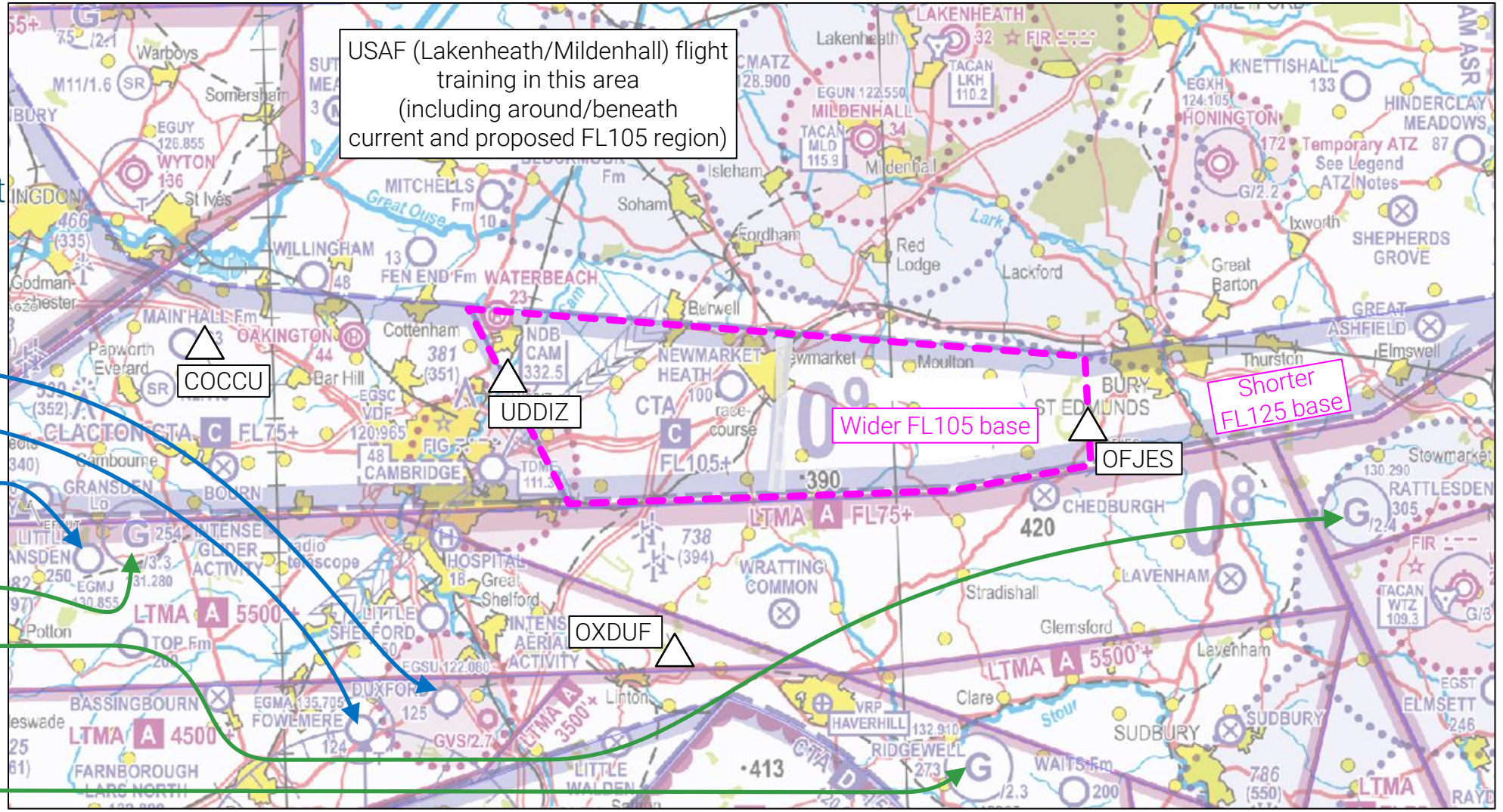
Fowlmere EGMA

Little Gransden EGMJ

<u>Gliding GA:</u>
Gransden Lodge

Rattlesden

Ridgewell



1:500k Southern England VFR chart Ed 51

How to provide feedback – by Tues 30th Sept 2025

Please answer the questions in the Microsoft Form via ***this link*** or use your smartphone to read this QR code

If you are **unable** to use the form, please email AirspaceConsultation@nats.co.uk with your name, contact details and your responses to the following:

Q1 To what extent would this airspace change benefit, or adversely impact, your aviation activities?
1 major benefit, 2 minor benefit, 3 no benefit or impact, 4 minor adverse impact, 5 major adverse impact

Q2 Please provide reasons for your answer

For more details of the proposal (including a rejected design option), see Part 2 of this briefing pack on the following pages

The engagement period closes at 5pm on Tuesday 30th September.

Thank you for taking the time to provide your feedback

Northern LTMA region airspace change (OFJES, CLN CTA11/12, FL105+)

ACP-2025-023
Stakeholder Engagement Briefing Pack
Part 2 Further details

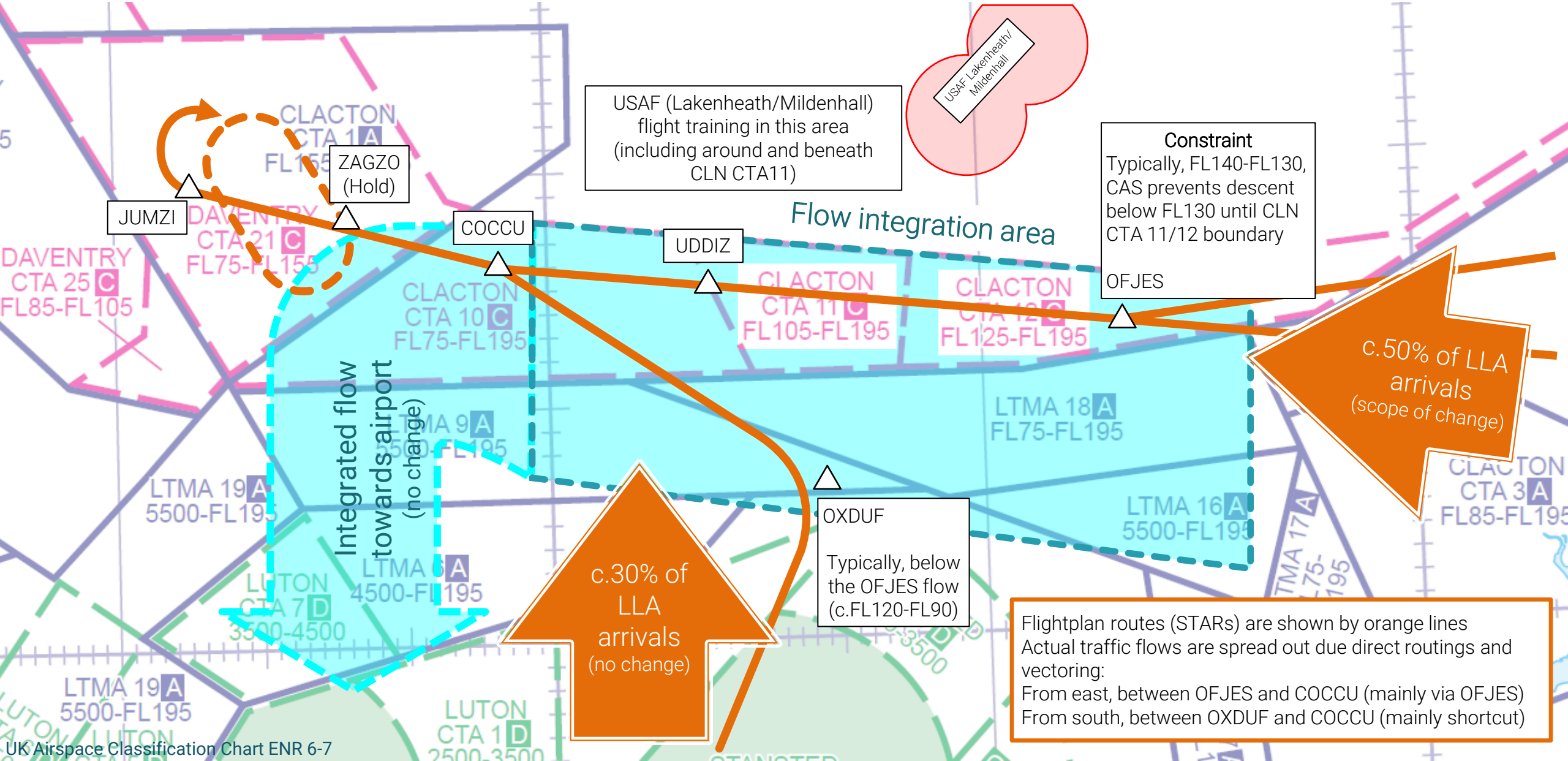
NATS
Operations Transformation

Part 2: Further details

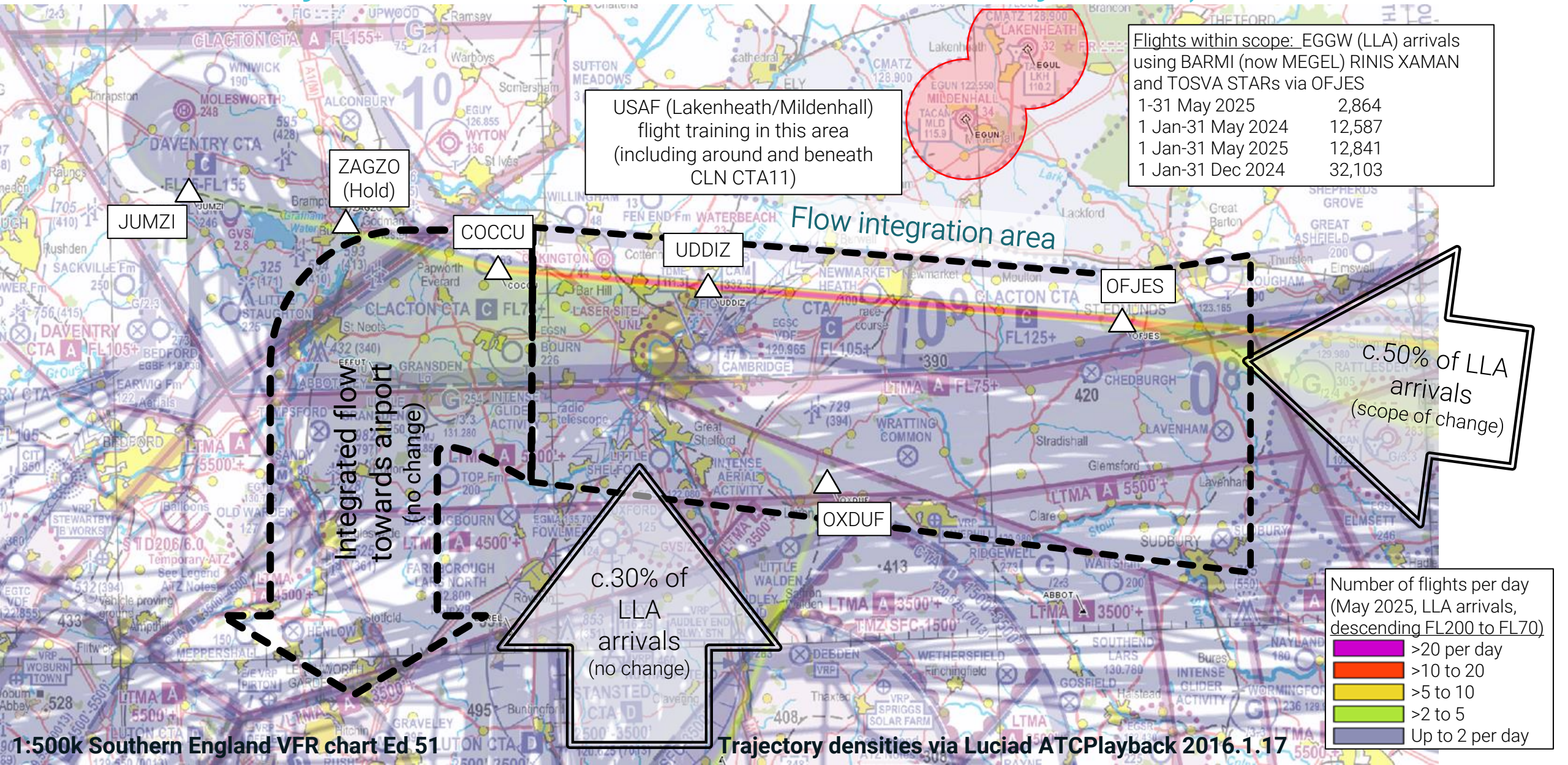
- This part presumes Part 1 has been read and understood. It provides further details of:
  - How we identified our stakeholders, and the justification for doing so (see below)
  - The current airspace arrangements – operational diagrams of relevant flows, and a radar trajectory density illustration
  - The rejected Option 1 (CAS extension below FL100), with reasons
  - Evidence of how the proposed FL105+ CAS region was occupied over the last year
  - An abridged options appraisal, illustrating our assessment of potential impacts on standard topics
  - Next steps and key dates

- Stakeholders: we are targeting engagement at our key stakeholders USAF (RAFs Lakenheath and Mildenhall), and the MoD (who both have the most potential for impact due to their type and proximity of their operations).
  Other stakeholders include:
  - Relevant airports
    - London Luton Airport LLA (the CTAs contain 50% of their arrivals) and Cambridge City Airport (adjacent/beneath the relevant CTAs)
  - Relevant airlines and fleet mix (data based on 2024 calendar year)
    - Wizzair Group made up 58.8% of the arrival flow using Airbus A320 variants, EasyJet 17.7% of that flow also using A320 variants, and Ryanair 7.1% of that flow, using Boeing 737 variants
      These three airlines covered 83.6% of the arrival flow where the CAS change is proposed
  - Most GA occurs below 6,000ft and would not be impacted by this proposal. GA airfields in the region where users may fly above 6,000ft are considered stakeholders (see Slide 4 in Part 1 above)
  - We will target member organisations of the National Air Traffic Management Advisory Committee (NATMAC) representing the interests of GA which may fly higher than 6,000ft:
    - General Aviation Alliance (GAA), British Gliding Association (BGA), British Business and General Aviation (BBGA), PPL/IR Europe, Light Aircraft Association (LAA), British Skydiving

Current Day Scenario (relevant flows shown)



Current Day Scenario (LLA arrivals 1-31 May 2025)



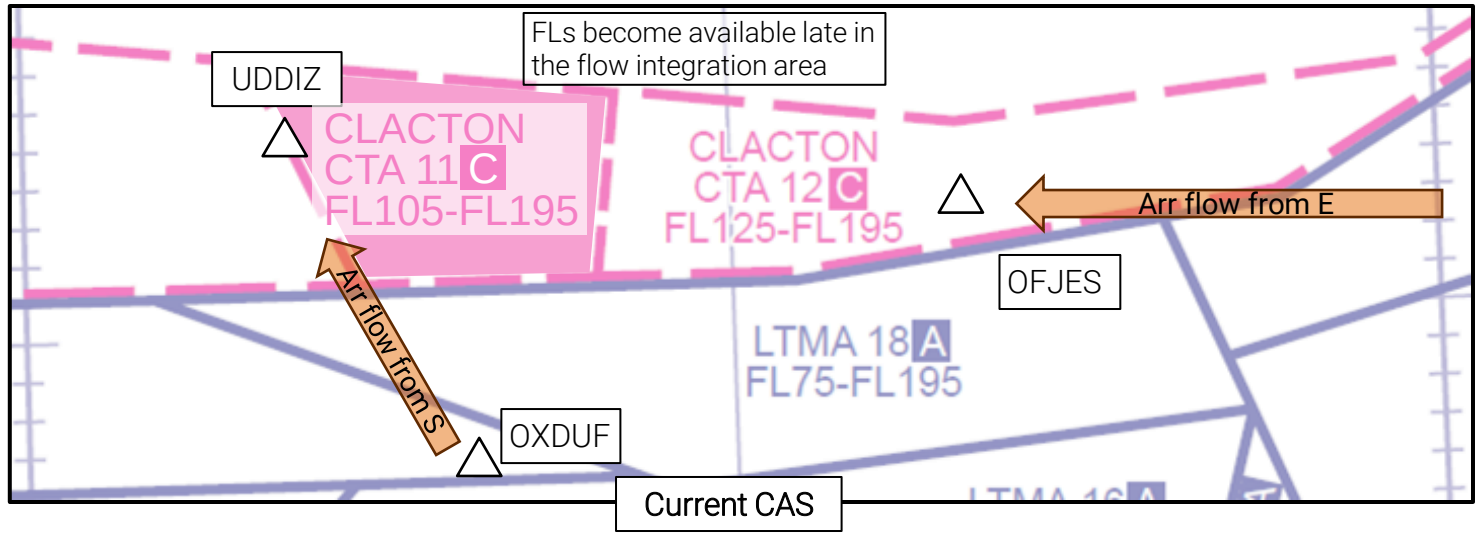
Airspace design Option 1 (below FL100) REJECTED

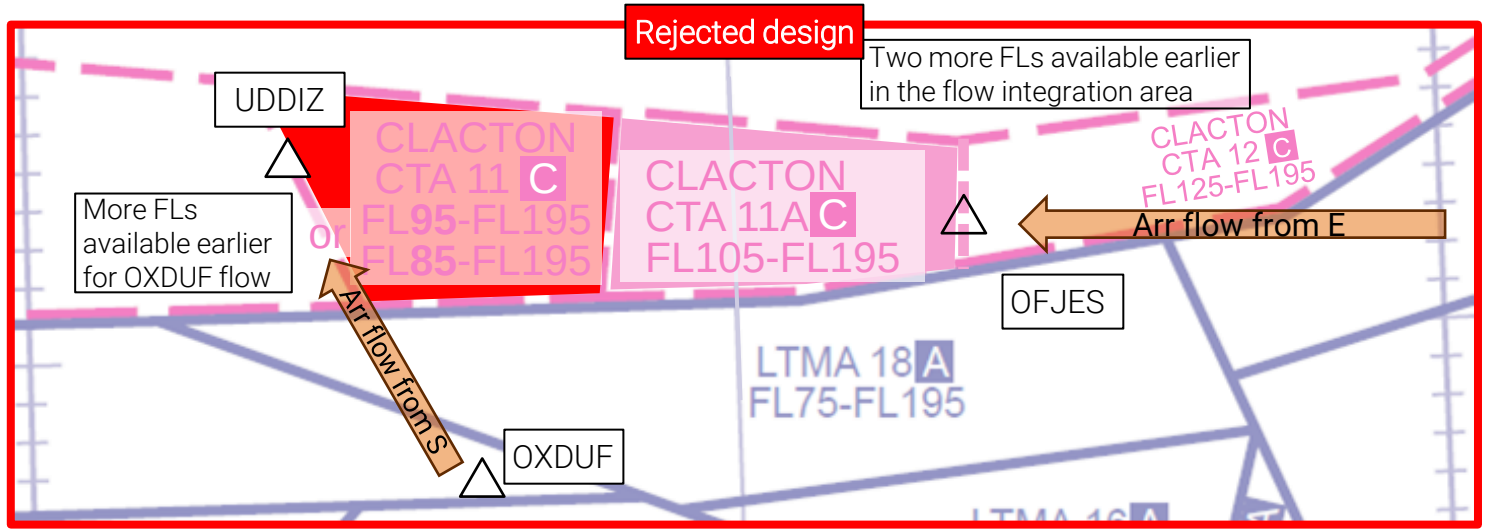
Design intent: provide more levels for ATC to integrate OFJES arrivals with OXDUF arrivals, which could also descend earlier

Concept: Lower the base of CLN CTA11 to FL95 or FL85, add a new CTA base FL105 west of OFJES, reduce CLN CTA12 by equivalent volume

Outcome: two more levels would be available to ATC, west of OFJES, and one or two further levels for both flows (UDDIZ)

Impacts: Making CLN CTA11 base FL95 or lower would significantly adversely impact USAF operations at RAF Lakenheath and RAF Mildenhall which have multiple flight procedures beneath the current FL105 base. If USAF ops were forced to be this low across a wider area, then there would be a potentially significant increase to GA interactions.





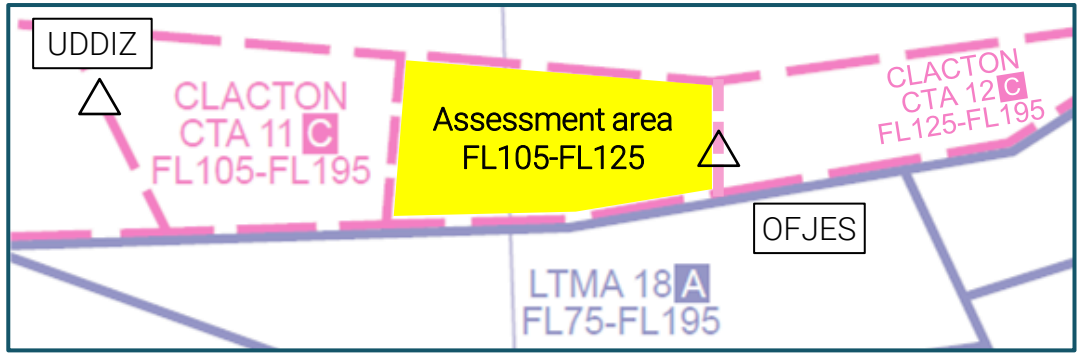
Option 1 was rejected at Stage 2 and is provided for illustration of design progress only

Radar occupancy evidence of traffic in the region

We identified and assessed the observed radar trajectories (ARTAS data) for the 12-month period from
01 Aug 2024 to 31 July 2025, occupying the proposed FL105-FL125 CAS extension.
All flights FL100+ are required to be electronically conspicuous on radar.

We determined the type of flight, and predicted the impact this CAS extension would have.

There were **58 flights** in the assessment area over the year, of which **54** (93%) were airways traffic known to be receiving a radar-based air traffic service.
The remaining **4** (7%) were receiving a radar-based air traffic service from RAF Lakenheath.
There were no other flights in the region that would've been impacted.



UK Airspace Classification Chart ENR 6-7

Traffic type	Number	Impact of proposed change on those flights
Flights via air route network leaving CAS for Norwich EGSH	34	Minor benefit, airways flights would leave CAS slightly later
Flights via air route network leaving CAS for another destination	6	Minor benefit, airways flights would leave CAS slightly later
Flights joining CAS to continue along the air route network	6	Minor benefit, airways flights would join CAS slightly sooner
Traffic known to be receiving a radar-based service from RAF Lakenheath	4	Additional coordination required, or would need to operate below FL105, or avoid the lateral extent Could cause reduced headroom (GA beneath) USAF and MoD previously stated these impacts are acceptable
Other flights known to be receiving a radar-based air traffic service, such as routing around weather or other excursion	8	Minor benefit, e.g. airways flights avoiding weather would remain in CAS for longer and would re-enter CAS sooner
Traffic providing a radar return otherwise unknown to radar-based air traffic services in the area, such as high-flying GA	Nil	Would need to operate below FL105, or avoid the lateral extent (There were no radar records of this traffic type)

Consolidated options appraisal (abridged)*

Impact type	Option 0 (Do-nothing) assessment	Option 2 (add small area of CAS FL105+)
Noise, local air quality, tranquillity, biodiversity	Not applicable (too high to change these impacts)	Not applicable (too high to change these impacts)
Fuel burn Greenhouse gas emissions	Airlines: potential for adverse impacts over time due to continued lack of ATC flexibility (increase in stepped descents and constant changing of thrust settings is more likely as traffic grows, leading to decrease in flight efficiency) Other airspace users such as GA: no change in impact	Airlines: increase in ATC flexibility would allow for reduction in stepped descents as traffic grows, offsetting a proportion of slightly earlier descents, likely to be broadly neutral overall Other airspace users such as GA: unlikely to cause a change in impact
GA access	No change in impact	Minimal impact (see Slide 11)
Airspace capacity/resilience	Resilience would continue to erode over time as traffic grows, a potential increase in risk leading to increased safety impact Likely to have negative impact on capacity	Resilience would increase, offsetting against the additional complexity caused by traffic growth Broadly neutral impact on capacity
Airline training costs, other costs, Airport/ANSP infrastructure costs, operational costs, other costs	No change in impact	No change in impact
Airport/ANSP deployment costs	No change in impact	Updates to radar maps and associated systems

*See separate Stage 2 document (*direct portal link*) for full details

Next Steps and Key Dates

- Please provide your feedback by Tuesday 30th September – see Slide 5 for how to do so
- We will study the feedback and consider it in our final design decisions
- We write the formal ACP, collate supporting material and submit to the CAA in early October 2025
- The ACP and supporting material will also be published on the CAA airspace portal (link) in a redacted form
- The CAA will aim to decide by early December 2025
- Presuming approval, deployment activities such as engineering/system updates will occur behind the scenes, and the AIP amendment will be published by AIS on 5th February 2026
- Implementation of the change is planned for 19th March 2026, as part of AIRAC 03/2026

Additional information

- If implemented, is the proposal reversible?
  - We have thoroughly thought through this proposal and its impacts
  - However, it is *always* possible that unforeseen issues or consequences could arise following the implementation of *any* airspace change
  - If this should occur, we would discuss with the CAA how to address those issues
  - This may be by NOTAM, by the inception of a new airspace change proposal, or there may be other solutions depending on the specific situation
  - This proposal was designed to address a potential future safety issue therefore it is highly unlikely that it would be reversed once implemented
- Does this proposal align with the UK's Airspace Modernisation Strategy CAP1711?
  - This proposal, and Option 2 specifically, was designed to align with the highest priority 'ends' of the AMS, which reads
    Maintaining and, where possible, improving the UK's high levels of aviation safety has priority over all other 'ends' to be achieved by airspace modernisation

Thank you for providing your feedback on this ACP

NATS