



31 August 2010

Policy Statement

THE APPLICATION OF ICAO AIRSPACE CLASSIFICATIONS IN UK FLIGHT INFORMATION REGIONS

1 The Purpose of Controlled Airspace (CAS)

1.1 The purpose of CAS in the UK is to enhance the protection of Air Transport Movements (ATMs) operating under Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) during en-route flight and the critical stages of an Instrument Arrival or Departure, and to permit the safe and effective integration of such traffic with other IFR flights and flights operating under Visual Flight Rules (VFR). Such protection is principally established by means of a “known traffic” environment.

2 Airspace Policy

2.1 ICAO requires that airspace is classified and designated according to the ICAO ATS Airspace Classifications as detailed in References A to C. The UK currently applies the Airspace Classification System subject to such Differences that may be detailed at Reference D.

2.2 The application of each of the ICAO ATS Airspace Classifications and of the services within each of those in use in the UK FIRs will be in accordance with the harmonisation principles of the ECAC Airspace Strategy and any measures that emanate from the European Commission’s Single European Sky policies.

2.3 The airspace classification to be applied to a particular volume of airspace will depend principally upon the number of ATMs operating within it, the complexity of IFR operations within it and also upon the safety hazards posed to public transport flights operating under IFR. The following principles are central to its application:

- a. The volume of controlled airspace shall be the minimum necessary for the effective protection of the whole ATC operation as defined by the ATS provider within a particular airspace, subject the need to avoid over complication of airspace structures and any environmental considerations.
- b. The airspace classification shall be selected to permit safe access to as many classes of user as possible.
- c. The Flexible Use of Airspace (FUA) concept will be considered at every opportunity to allow maximum integrated usage of UK airspace by all users. Every effort will be made to ensure that airspace sharing arrangements are not overly complex and that such arrangements do not reduce flight safety or render the affected airspace (or sharing arrangements) unusable. Segregation of aerial

activities by use of airspace classifications will only occur where no other viable alternatives exist and safety cannot be assured by any other means.

- d. CAS is to be classified in accordance with Reference B thus:
1. Airspace allowing IFR operations only – Class A.
 2. Airspace allowing for both IFR and VFR operations in a controlled environment – Class C or D.
 3. Airspace allowing for both IFR and VFR operations wherein VFR operations are not controlled – Class E (see also paragraph 3.5).
 4. Advisory Routes – Class F (see also paragraph 3.6).
 5. All other airspace – Class G.

3 Application of Airspace Classes

- 3.1 Class A will normally only be applied to airspace where the complexity of the ATM task justifies a permanent IFR-only environment. Within the UK FIRs, Class A is normally specified for airways, major Terminal Control Areas (TMAs) and Control Areas (CTAs). In the case of TMAs and CTA the application of Class A will be based upon the complexity of the route structure and interface procedures (particularly interaction with en-route services) together with associated ATC operations. Class A may also be specified for certain Control Zones (CTRs), based upon the historic and future mix of traffic, complexity of IFR operations and the density of operations.
- 3.2 Class B is not currently applied within UK airspace.
- 3.3 Class C applies to the UK FIRs between FL 195 and FL 660 in accordance with the European Commission's Airspace Classification Regulation (Reference E). Within the UK FIRs below FL195, Class C may be specified for airways (or portions thereof) and TMAs (or portions thereof). It is a long-term aspiration of the CAA for current Class D airways to be progressively specified where appropriate as Class C where this reflects actual operational conditions associated with each of the airways in question, and in accordance with principles outlined in section 2 above.
- 3.4 Class D is to be specified for locations where a known traffic environment is necessary in both Visual Meteorological Conditions (VMC) and Instrument Meteorological Conditions (IMC). Within the UK FIRs, Class D is normally specified for CTRs and CTAs in the vicinity of aerodromes (unless there is an overriding need for a more restrictive classification) and TMAs (or portions thereof). Within the UK FIRs below FL195, Class D may also be specified for TMAs (or portions thereof) and exceptionally for certain airways (or portions thereof).
- 3.5 Class E airspace is exceptionally specified at locations where a known traffic environment is necessary only in IMC. It is the intention of the CAA for Class E to be progressively replaced where appropriate within the UK FIRs by airspace classes that are considered to be better suited to the operational conditions associated with the airspace structures in question, and in accordance with principles outlined in section 2 above. Enhancements to the requirements of Class E airspace, such as transponder and/or radio carriage and operation requirements, may be considered where replacement by a more restrictive classification (i.e. Classes A-D) cannot be justified.

3.6 Class F is specified for UK Advisory Routes only. It is the intention of the CAA for UK Advisory Routes to be progressively replaced by airspace classes better suited to the operational conditions associated with each of these, and in accordance with principles outlined in section 2 above. The CAA seeks to complete this action by the end of 2011.

3.7 Class G applies to the remainder of the UK FIRs.

4 Changes to Airspace Classes

4.1 Changes to the dimensions or classification of UK airspace are to be undertaken in accordance with References F and G.

5 Air Traffic Services

5.1 Airspace classifications applied to a particular volume of airspace should be supported with the requisite navigational infrastructure and air traffic services. It is important therefore that changes to airspace classifications are co-ordinated with the relevant areas within the CAA and in particular Spectrum and Surveillance and Air Traffic Standards Department.

6 DAP Point of Contact

Head, Controlled Airspace Section
Directorate of Airspace Policy
CAA House
45-59 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6TE

Telephone 0207 453 6510

References:

- A. ICAO Annex 2 - Rules of the Air.
- B. ICAO Annex 11 - Air Traffic Services.
- C. ICAO Doc 4444 PANS-ATM.
- D. UK AIP GEN 1.7.
- E. European Commission Airspace Classification Regulation 730/2006 dated 11 May 2006.
- F. CAP724 The Airspace Charter.
- G. CAP725 CAA Guidance on the Application of the Airspace Change Process