

GENERAL AVIATION ALLIANCE

Partnership in Aviation

Release of Controlled and Segregated Airspace Change Proposal

Solent CTA-6: Reclassify to Class G below 3000ft



Reference: GAA 20150921 Solent CTA-6 ACP V 3.0

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Executive Summary

Solent CTA-6 is a narrow triangle of Class D airspace with a base that is 500ft below the adjacent CTA to the north and some 3000ft below the base of the adjacent TMA to the south. This forms a thin curtain of CAS extending to the east from the main body of the Solent CTA. The lower 500ft of CTA-6 is not needed for IFR traffic using Southampton or Bournemouth airports. 97% of traffic using it does so transiting to or from the adjacent Class G airspace.

Reclassification of the lower 500ft of this sector to class G would simplify the airspace, reduce infringement risk, reduce the need to overfly congested areas and increase airspace safety generally.

Following a 12 week consultation, all respondents including Southampton Airport, NATS, MOD, Fleetlands and Lee-on Solent supported the proposed change.

It is proposed that this change be implemented at the earliest opportunity using the RCSA process.

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1.0 Description of the change

1.1 This proposal seeks to improve safety for aircraft flying VFR in the vicinity of Portsmouth by reclassifying the lower 500ft of Solent CTA-6 to Class G in accordance with the CAA policy on Release of Controlled and Segregated Airspace.

2.0 Rationale for the change

2.1 Solent CTA-6 is a narrow triangle of Class D airspace with a base that is 500ft below the CAS to the north and some 3000ft below the base of FL55 the CAS to the south. This forms a thin curtain of CAS extending to the east from the main body of the Solent CTA. This lower 500ft of CTA-6 is not needed for IFR traffic using Southampton or Bournemouth airports with 97% of traffic using it flying in or out of the adjacent Class G airspace. The airspace is not used by any procedure.

2.2 Reclassification of the lower 500ft of this sector to Class G would simplify the airspace and provide room for transit aircraft to pass underneath without risk of infringement of the Solent CAS, of the Fleetlands ATZ or the Lee on Solent Glider launching site. Removal of the need for clearance would reduce workload for Solent Radar and pilots transiting the airspace. At the same time it would reduce the need for VFR aircraft to fly over the Portsmouth conurbation thereby reducing intrusion and environmental impact.

3.0 The safety and operational impact

3.1 A consultation resulted in 16 responses from organisations and 121 responses from individuals all supporting the change. Copies of the responses are at Annexes A and B.

3.2 Airports and ANSPs who would be affected by the change supported it. These included Southampton International Airport Ltd, NATS, MOD, Fleetlands (Vector Aerospace) and operators at Lee-On-Solent.

3.3 Whilst Southampton International Airport Ltd (SIAL) (Annex A page 4) did not object to the change they averred that the change sponsor did not take up their offer of a meeting and noted that responding to the consultation incurred "significant commercial cost" to SIAL and NATS. Importantly SIAL proposed that to avoid confusion and minimise infringement risk, the change should be deferred and come into force at the same time as any airspace changes imposed by the CAA following the current airspace infringement project. Whilst that might reduce the number of changes it is the CAA's policy that the imposition of further airspace regulation would be a last resort and only where other local infringement reduction measures had failed. As there is no timetable for any other associated airspace changes and this change would itself contribute to infringement reduction as part of the project, SIAL agreed at a meeting with the CAA on 11 Sep 2015 that it would not object to it being taken forward now.

3.4 Phoenix Aviation based at Lee-On-Solent offered a particularly useful analysis of traffic in the area (Annex A page 13). It supports the proposal but noted that CTA-6 with a base of 2500ft overlays its glider launching site (to 2100ft) and aero towing operation as well as the Fleetlands ATZ and that complexity of airspace tends to force transit aircraft to avoid the area to the East. It notes that the purpose of CTA-6 is clearly not to force traffic to avoid Lee and Fleetlands but it does tend to have that effect. Nonetheless Phoenix Aviation supported the proposed change but noted that

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there may be a resulting safety issue for them. However, if the base of CTA-6 is raised by 500ft as is proposed, traffic overflying the vicinity of Lee-On-Solent will tend to be higher which tend to increase airspace safety and provide a simpler structure to support the establishment of an ATZ which we understand is likely.

3.6 GATCO (Annex A page 15) set out a wide ranging response discussing the advantages generally of CAS over Class G and commenting on the way the proposal had been developed. However they noted that Solent controllers considered that the airspace was little used by IFR traffic and so it did not object to the change.

3.7 Overall we assess that safety and operational impact of the change would be positive because the airspace will be simpler and there would be a greater volume of Class G airspace available in a busy VFR area. Unnecessary RT exchanges would be removed resulting in lower pilot and controller workload, revised charts would be easier to interpret and the pilot lookout would become more effective.

4.0 Activity that might be experienced in the released airspace

4.1 The overall volume of aircraft using the area would be unaltered by this airspace change but there will be the opportunity to fly higher on more direct routing.

5.0 Environmental Statement

5.1 We anticipate that ground tracks of aircraft will be largely unaltered save that there would be a greater opportunity for avoiding overflight of congested areas. Aircraft which had previously flown below 2500ft altitude to avoid the base of CTA-6 would now be able to fly up to 3000ft altitude. Aircraft which had avoided CTA-6 laterally and overflown the Portsmouth conurbation would have the option of a direct track to avoid that.

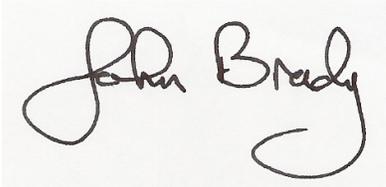
5.2 The environmental impact of the change would be wholly positive.

6.0 Arrangements with adjacent aerodromes

6.1 No further arrangements are anticipated.

7.0 Implementation Timelines

7.1 If this change is to have an impact on the local airspace infringement reduction project it should be introduced as soon as practicable within the AIRAC Cycle. We await guidance from the CAA following consideration of the proposal.



John Brady
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21 September 2015