

Response ID ANON-YN5Q-NB3C-K

Submitted to Airspace change masterplan: scoping the environmental assessments Submitted on 2023-05-10 14:23:50

About you

- A. Are you responding in an official capacity on behalf of an organisation?

Yes

Organisation:

Aviation Environment Federation

- B. What is your name?

Name: Deborah Lovatt

- C. What is your email address?

Email: deborah@aef.org.uk

- D. Are you answering as:

National (or international) organisation (excluding GA organisations and industry trade associations), e.g. NGO other category:

- E. Where do you live or where is your organisation based?

South East

- F. Is there anything else that you would like us to know about you in connection with your response?

any other information about you:

- G. Do you consent to us contacting you by email about the outcome of this consultation?

Yes

- H. Do you consent to your response being published?

yes, with personal identifying information (we will publish your organisation, name, respondent category, location, and any additional information – please note your email address will NOT be published if you choose this option)

What this consultation is about

SEA Scoping Report

1. Are you satisfied with the environmental aspects we have scoped out and in of the SEA, and the objectives, targets and indicators?

Yes

2. Are you satisfied with how any significant effects will be identified?

Don't know

Reasons:

We are confused by the proposed methodology for identifying significant impacts for air pollution, which relies on the UK Air Quality Strategy and the established Local Air Quality Management regime. Under the regime, every local authority must carry out

regular reviews and assessments of air quality in its area to identify whether air quality objectives have been, or will be, achieved at relevant locations, by the applicable date. Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs), which you intend to use to assess the likely significant effects of the Masterplan on AQ, are put in place when objectives have already been missed, requiring action plans to bring air quality back up to standard. Surely then, the correct methodology would be to use LAQM, which identifies areas that are failing to meet objectives, as the appropriate sensitivity receptor to assess the likelihood of the UK AQS objectives being met. In addition, since you refer to the new air quality targets set out in the 2021 Environment Act, it is unclear why the proposed methodology doesn't include monitoring

of particulate matter for the Annual Mean Concentration Target and the Population Exposure Reduction Target.

On the environmental aspect of carbon emissions and climate change, you intend to review the likelihood of the UK meeting GHG emissions reduction targets for aviation as set out in Jet Zero. You will be aware that Jet Zero is currently subject to judicial review. Should Jet Zero be found unlawful, a further delay to the 3rd Masterplan iteration will be necessary, pending an amended Jet Zero document.

Regarding noise impacts, the 3rd Masterplan iteration will need to factor in the Department for Transport's new overarching aircraft noise policy statement issued on the 27th March, the same day as this consultation opened:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/aviation-noise-policy-statement/overarching-aviation-noise-policy>

3. Are you satisfied with the definition of the future baseline, assessment case and alternatives?

Yes

Reasons:

Yes, but please see our comment on the cumulative impacts of flightpaths associated with more than one airport (Q6).

4. Are you satisfied with the proposed Zones of Influence for each environmental aspect?

No

Reasons:

Regarding air quality, your proposed ZOI is 6 km from an airport. However, studies carried out at Schipol and Los Angeles Airports revealed that PM associated with jet engine combustion can drift as far as 40km from an airport. This being the case, and in the context of your expressed concern about the public health impacts of USPs, your ZOI for the AQ environmental aspect should be at least 20 km from an airport.

Regarding noise, you have adopted a threshold of 4,000ft or below equating to a ZOI of 15km. This is inadequate. The Government's Lowest Observed Adverse Effect Level (LOAEL) is itself underpinned by altitude-based (noise and CO2 emissions) priorities. The list of altitude based priorities makes it clear that noise should still be prioritised above 4000 feet and below 7000 feet, stating: "the priority is to limit and, where possible, reduce the number of people affected by aircraft noise – unless the airspace change sponsor can demonstrate that this would disproportionately increase CO2 emissions". Your proposed generalised ZOI of 4,000 or below makes no sense in this policy context.

In addition, you state that: "Baseline environmental noise levels vary across the UK with the primary sources being road, rail and aviation which are associated with the movement of goods and people to or from areas of consumerism or demand. As such, the populations in these nodes of transport are typically more exposed to prolonged high noise levels. Less populated areas and/or protected areas such as National Parks or AONB, experience lower noise levels typically due to there being less demand for servicing these areas or statutory protections which act as a barrier to traversing these areas."

We are not aware of any statutory protections that prevent aircraft from traversing National Parks or AONBs for environmental reasons. While it is a statement of fact that rural areas often have a lower environmental noise baseline, we hope the above statement does not suggest that less populated areas, including AONB and national parks should bear the brunt of aircraft noise in the future. As AEF's members have told us, and as we have advised the DfT during our contributions to its research design to study night-time aircraft noise impacts, the adverse effects of aircraft noise intrusion are heightened when experienced in areas of low ambient noise.

Indeed, such a view would be contrary to the acknowledged importance of tranquillity in areas of low population density. You state: "Tranquillity is defined as a state of calm, which therefore could be experienced in settings comprising of natural features and / or historic character such as AONBs and National Parks", before going on to say that "tranquillity is largely affected by the perception of aircraft noise". For this reason, under the category of "landscapes and visual" your proposed ZOI for AONB and National Parks is 7000 feet. We welcome this recognition, but believe that there is a strong case for setting the ZOIs for AONBs and National parks significantly higher than 7,000 feet:

1. Your proposed ZOI of 7000 feet for "landscapes and visual" is informed by the DfT's view that: "Where practicable it is desirable that air space routes below 7,000 feet should seek to avoid flying over Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and National Parks." However, and as you will know, the list of altitude-based priorities (between noise and CO2 emissions) set out in the ANG

includes two references to situations where prioritising CO2 emissions over noise might not always be appropriate above 7000 feet. The first reference is to National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The second is to "local circumstances", including height of ground levels beneath proposed flightpaths.

2. In addition, and as you say, the Government is "committed to designating and protecting 4,000 sq. km of new land in England by 2030" and 925 sq km of national parks are set to be improved and/or restored. You also acknowledge that "the designation of dark sky parks has increased significantly, and the UK has the largest concentration of Dark Sky Areas in the world."

3. National Parks and AONB are living and working spaces that are also well-used visitor attractions providing crucial health and wellbeing benefits while contributing significantly to local economies. As just one example, 37,000 people live within the Surrey Hills AONB and 1.5 million live within 10km of it. According to its website, millions of people visit the AONB each year.

Since (as the altitude based priorities acknowledge) adverse impacts caused by noise can happen when aircraft are flown higher than 7,000 feet, the ZOI for "landscape and visual" should be 10,000 feet.

Regarding biodiversity, studies have shown that birds, amphibians, invertebrates, fish, mammals and reptiles can be very sensitive to noise and light pollution, and that even low levels of human noise disturbance can severely impact the ability of some animals to communicate and breed. Light pollution

can harm biodiversity by interfering with natural day-night rhythms and night habits, affecting the reproduction, feeding, and migration cycles of many different animal groups. Artificial lighting can confuse migratory birds, depleting their energy sources and threatening their survival rates. By extending the hunting time of daytime feeders, light pollution can also lead to over-predation of some nocturnal species. When combined, noise and light pollution – from roads, shipping, urban sprawl as well as from aviation – can throw the lives of animal populations out of balance.

<https://environmentalevidencejournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13750-019-0146-6>
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/47634612_Light_Pollution_as_a_Biodiversity_Threat.

Owing to the above, your proposed ZOI of 18 km linear distance from the airport boundary needs to be robustly tested against potential impacts, and appears inadequate and unjustified: for example, an 18 km radius from the boundary would equate to an aircraft altitude of about 3,000 feet on approach, which is less than your proposed ZOI of 4,000 feet for noise impacts. We suggest a ZOI of 7,000 feet at the minimum. The UK is currently one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world. And, as you state: "Despite commitments made in 2010, biodiversity has further declined over the past decade, with none of the 20 Aichi targets set in 2010 being fully achieved." This observation alone should prompt you to make bold decisions when drawing up the ZOI for biodiversity.

5. Do you have any comments about the type and use of available regional data for each geographical 'cluster'?
6. Do you have any other points you would like to raise in relation to the SEA Scoping Report?

Yes. You state that the 3rd iteration of the Masterplan will "explain the specific airspace design trade-offs between interdependent airspace change proposals in greater detail than Iteration 2, with more information about the cumulative impacts of different design choices and the methods used to calculate them."

To date, the issue of communities that are impacted by aircraft operating from and to more than one airport has been poorly addressed by the Airspace Modernisation Strategy, including any consequential impacts for general aviation activity in largely uncontrolled airspace. Communities would certainly welcome greater clarity on interdependent airspace change design choices, but what has been lacking is an undertaking to tackle the problem in a way that's both fair and logical. The Masterplan must set out how airspace modernisation will remedy what has been an ad hoc and thus inadequate approach to date.

The extent to which the Government's new overarching aircraft noise statement impacts the 3rd iteration of the Masterplan must be set out.

HRA Screening Report

7. Are you satisfied that the HRA Screening Report correctly identifies all potential significant effects on European Sites?

Don't know

8. Are the precautionary Zones of Influence applied to each potential effect to determine which European sites may be affected by the implementation of the masterplan appropriate for the purposes of screening?

No

Reasons:

Please see our response to Q4.

9. Do you consider that the CAA's proposed approach to applying the scientific evidence referenced in appendices B, C and D of the HRA Screening Report to stage 2 of the assessment is appropriate?

Don't know.

10. Do you consider that the CAA's proposed approach to subsequent stages (2, 3 and 4) of the Habitats Regulations assessment:

Don't know

11. Which plans and projects do you think might act in combination with the masterplan?

As the proposed Zones of Influence make plain, there are no sharp distinctions between airspace change and land use in terms of environmental impacts. The 3rd iteration of the Masterplan must show how ACOG will work with the legislative and policy framework for land use planning, and cooperate with local planning authorities going forward.

12. Do you have any other points you would like to raise in relation to the HRA Scoping Report?

Approach to SEA and HRA

13. Are you satisfied that the overall approach to SEA (set out in paragraph 1 of the 'Approach' document) will ensure that the environmental effects of the masterplan are fully assessed?

Yes

If no, in what ways could the approach be improved?:

14. Do you have any comments on the timing of the SEA (stages 1.B – 1.F and Figure 1 in the 'Approach' document) during the development of each masterplan Iteration?
15. Do you have any other comments you would like to make on the approach to SEA of the masterplan (set out in paragraph 1 and Figure 1 of the 'Approach' document)?
16. Do you agree that it is not possible to rule out significant effects on European sites (or offshore marine sites) as a result of the masterplan? (paragraph 2.A of the 'Approach' document)

Don't know

17. Do you have any comments on the intention to deliver any required mitigation for adverse effects on the integrity of European sites (or offshore marine sites) at the project level, through the approval process for individual airspace change proposals - rather than at the strategic level through the masterplan? (paragraph 2.C of the 'Approach' document)
18. Do you have any other comments you would like to make on the approach to HRA of the masterplan (set out in paragraph 2 and Figure 1 of the 'Approach' document)?

Submitting additional supporting material

19. Are you submitting additional material via email?

No