Spelthorne Borough Council's Response to the Civil Aviation Authorities' consultation report 'Draft Airspaces Modernisation Strategy' (CAP 1690)

Background Information

Purpose of the consultation
The CAA is seek views on their draft 'Airspace Modernisation Strategy' (AMS) which will supersede and replace the current 'Future Airspace Strategy'.

The AMS defines airspace modernisation as "changing and developing its structural design, and the operational concepts and technology that are used to fly and manage air traffic". It clarifies that "airspace capacity must not be a constraint on the growth of commercial aviation. Constraint should instead be the number of runways, or restrictions imposed on the use of runways by government or planning authorities as a condition of growth".

The AMS sets down the ends, ways and means of modernising a space.
* The ends are derived from relevant UK government and international policy.
* The ways of achieving modernisation include new airspace design, new operational concepts and new technologies. This includes a three dimensional explanation of future airspace usage (UK and international).
* To establish the means of delivering modernisation this strategy will require deployment plans to be drawn-up.

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The Consultation asks 6 questions:-

Question 1: Do you agree with the overall approach taken in the strategy, as described here?

      Yes   Mostly   No

      Free text – none to add

Question 2: Has the CAA identified the right Government policies in this strategy?

Yes	**Mostly, but some Government policies are not relevant**	**Mostly, but some existing Government policies are missing**	**No**

Free text - No answer provided to this question as we do not actually know if any policies are missing or irrelevant.

Question 3: Do you agree with the 14 initiatives set out in the strategy?

Yes   Mostly, but some   Mostly, but some other   No
                   initiatives are not   initiatives are missing
                   relevant

Free Text – The initiatives are a start but these largely centre on aviation growth. There must be the inclusion of solid initiatives that address the impacts of aviation on people and the environment, putting them on an equal footing of importance as aviation growth, as required by the balanced approach.

Perhaps, improvement in this area should be encouraged by the introduction of a health impact tax on the industry made payable to the NHS to contribute to the cost of dealing with health impacts of polluting effects of the aviation industry.

Question 4: Have we identified the right gaps? Are there any that we have not identified?

Free Text – The AMS does not give sufficient weight to the impacts of noise on those living close to airports.

- Many of the policies highlight noise as being a significant impact to those living close to airports. Many of these policies acknowledge that noise disturbance will increase as an impact of airspace redesign.

  While acknowledging this, the policies that do discuss noise impacts provide no definitive answers to this important issue. This is demonstrated by the final sentence of paragraph 3.22 which states *"… the aviation industry is required to consider options when designing airspace to find ways to manage the distribution of noise …"*

- The language used in the draft AMS gives the 'growth of the industry' primacy over the 'minimisation of noise'.

  For example, section 5.8 states *"opportunities for noise improvements should be explored through the Airspace Modernisation Strategy and deployment plans **where these are not in conflict with growth** …"* This primacy was not set down within any policies or guidance, however, it is perhaps indicative of a serious bias within the CAA. This bias must to be addressed further as it raises the question as to whether ICCAN should be part of DfT rather than DEFRA.

- Section 5.10 of the AMS recognises the possibility of reductions in noise, and the potential for these to be enforceable. Again, the language being used around this is very loose (possibly, potential, might, may) suggesting that this is unlikely to happen or be taken seriously.

Question 5: Do you agree with our approach of asking those organisations tasked with delivering the initiatives to set out deployment plans to identify the means (resources) necessary?

Yes   No

Free text –Mostly, we agree with the overall approach taken in the strategy but see response to questions 3 and 4.

Question 6: The draft governance structure in this document was developed by the Department for Transport, CAA and NATS working together. Do you agree with the approach set out here?

Yes **Mostly** No

Free text

- **Accountability for decision making** - Historically, the responsibility for identifying when airspace change is needed has been neither robust nor accountable. A prime example of this is the highly non-compliant Compton Route. HAL, NATS and the CAA have been aware of the issues and impacts associated with this route for a long time, however, these issues have not brought forward the requirement for airspace change, the need for a redesign of airspace has only been brought forward in tandem with HAL's proposal for a third runway.

  It is difficult to see how the proposed future governance structure will change this, the accountability of the CAA's role in identifying and ensuring airspace redesign remains unchanged. There needs to be greater accountability in place to highlight where and when required airspace redesign is needed and the reporting this upwards to the UK Airspace Strategy Policy Board and the SoS.

- **Ensuring 'the use of a balanced approach'** - comments for question 4 also apply.