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for Transport

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From the Secretary of State
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Your Ref:

Thank you for your email of 23 January 2019 requesting some information on the links between the planning and airspace change processes ahead of your meeting with the CEO of Bristol Airport.

Similar concerns to yours have been raised in connection with Heathrow expansion, and I appreciate that it can be difficult for members of the public to understand the complex linkages between the planning and airspace change processes. This is particularly the case when, as we know, aircraft noise can be disturbing and few people are keen to suddenly find themselves under a busy flightpath. In addition, precise details of the future flightpath arrangements may not be known for some years.

Firstly, I hope you will welcome the fact that my department has taken steps to improve significantly the UK's airspace change process following a major consultation exercise that was carried out in early 2017. In October 2017 I provided new air navigation directions and guidance to the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) which is now reflected in the CAP1616 process you mentioned in your email. I have required that airspace change sponsors must carry out options appraisal, assess those options against my department's WebTAG tool, and to consult widely on those options which are considered realistic. Sponsors will then have to explain to communities and the CAA why a specific option has been progressed.

As you say, the planning process and the CAA's airspace change process are separate. In the planning process, any application for development

consent involving an airport needs to contain information about flightpaths that are sufficient for it to produce an environmental impact assessment. The airport will need to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the noise impacts of the project as part of its environmental statement. The applicant must set out details of the existing noise environment, how noise will change, and measures to mitigate the effects of noise. The examination during the planning process will include a study of the airport's environment assessment and consideration of the interactions between the planning proposals and the applicant's indicative airspace design. This indicative design will be based on the best information available to the airport at the time the planning application is submitted.

When assessing the information, the planning authority will be aware that there is a separate process for dealing with airspace changes.

An airport can commence its CAP1616 process in a similar timeline as the planning application, but it will almost certainly be concluded sometime later. A typical airspace change can take at least two years to work through, and many take much longer than this.

In the case of Bristol Airport, its statement of need was submitted to the CAA on 11 October 2018. Part of the rationale given in its submission, is to align the airport's airspace change within the wider UK airspace modernisation programme which is overseen by the CAA and NATS, the UK's main provider of en-route air traffic services. It is therefore not just about increasing capacity at the airport but also to improve its efficiency and reduce aircraft emissions. A key design objective is also to reduce overflying of populated areas below 7,000 feet and to reduce aircraft noise impacts, an objective which I hope your constituents will welcome. It is also worth noting that the airport also said that airspace change "was not a requirement for growth to 12mppa".

Finally, I would like to assure you that CAP1616 is a fully transparent process and all documents and details are published on the CAA's website. As part of its regulatory role, the CAA will check to see that the airport has been engaging with communities to define its design principles. The airport should now be commencing this work and once it has agreed its design principles it can then develop its flightpath options prior to the CAP1616 statutory airspace consultation. It is this statutory consultation which is the principle flightpath consultation, and I would encourage your constituents to respond to it in due course. The CAA will subsequently check to see that the airport has responded appropriately to the consultation feedback. If the CAA is not

satisfied, it can require the consultation to be run again. The CAA may, if it considers it appropriate, carry out a public evidence gathering session to help with its determination of the proposal.

I hope this is helpful.

Will best wish



Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT