



# Preventing airspace infringements of Controlled Airspace

## NOTICES TO AIRMEN (NOTAM) RELATING TO CONTROLLED AIRSPACE DEACTIVATION

This infringement update is the seventeenth in a series of narratives focusing on helping pilots avoid airspace infringements in the UK. It has been written by a number of industry partners to help pilots better understand NOTAM relating to the deactivation of controlled airspace.

We are all experiencing strange times in aviation; COVID-19 and the associated overseas travel restrictions have reduced commercial air transport (CAT) to all but a trickle with freight flights outnumbering the previously packed airport schedule of passenger flights. With demand for air transport low and many Air Navigation Service Provider (ANSP) and airport staff furloughed, several airports are operating revised or reduced hours. Consequently, the need for H24, Class D Control Zones (CTR) and Control Areas (CTA) has reduced and many airports are deactivating controlled airspace to Class G when the airport closes.

A thorough check of the NOTAM validity is essential as some of these can be changing daily with short-term notification of activity. Some NOTAM are providing guidance to use the Frequency Monitoring Code [FMC] (sometimes referred to as a "Listening Squawk") and monitor the appropriate frequency, even when the ATS is closed as a defensive measure just in case the airspace is activated between the time you plan and fly.

As a result of these deactivations, some Moving Map applications depict the airspace boundaries in rarely seen colours and may visually show airspace being deactivated throughout the NOTAM period, when in fact the airspace is only classified as Class G for certain periods of time (the schedule) within the NOTAM period.

In the first 2 weeks of the resumption of GA sport and recreational flying (beyond that permitted for maintenance flights), there were 47 airspace infringements, 40 of which involved GA aircraft. A number resulted from the mis-interpretation of NOTAM relating to the deactivation of controlled airspace. If you are unsure about the NOTAM, its content or how to interpret some of the information, this narrative should help to make the NOTAM more understandable.

### NOTAM structure

A NOTAM comprises several Fields (A-G) and a Q Line. The NOTAM is constructed in accordance with Operating Procedures for AIS Dynamic Data (OPADD) defined in ICAO Annex 15. The [current OPADD](#) is Edition 4.

The NOTAM's Q line is a coded line which contains the reference FIR and a series of letters denoting the type of activity. It also contains the central point in Degrees and Minutes and the radius in nautical miles (NM) of an area which encompasses the entire activity. This is why, on some Moving Maps, an activity area such as a polygon is sometimes depicted as an even larger circle. The Q line is used for Aeronautical Information Management purposes and offers little flight planning information to pilots.

The fields (all or some which may be used depending on the NOTAM series being used) relate to:

A	ICAO code for FIR or aerodrome
B	Start time in UTC
C	Ends time in UTC
D	Daily Schedule
E	Free text field describing the activity iaw OPADD
F	Lower level of activity
G	Upper level of activity

All NOTAM use UTC. Care must be taken in the summer months due to the one-hour time difference in the UK between UTC and local.

## NOTAM Series

There are currently 18 NOTAM series in use in the UK; they can be found in the UK AIP at GEN 3 .1 (Aeronautical Services) table 3.6.3.4. Each series covers a specific content. For example, a NOTAM relating to London Heathrow will be an A series NOTAM, a similar one for Birmingham would be a C series. Unusual Aerial Activity (UAA) is notified using an H series NOTAM as it relates to a navigation warning. The establishment of a volume of Restricted Airspace (Temporary) (RA(T)) or a Temporary Danger Area (TDA) would be promulgated by a J series NOTAM.

## Controlled Airspace Deactivation NOTAM

A number of CTA/CTR are deactivated at certain times through the day; these changes in classification are notified by NOTAM which is then annotated on Moving Map displays. One such volume of airspace subject to declassification is the airspace around Birmingham. An example is NOTAM C3627/20 which **deactivates Birmingham's CTR and CTA between 2259 hours UTC and 0559 hours UTC on each day starting on 2 June 2020 and ending on 30 June 2020** (see FIGURE 1).

In decoding this NOTAM, the following information is provided:

Q Line	Birmingham Airport and the subject airspace (CTR/CTA) encompassed in a 20nm radius centred at 5225N 000152W	
A	ICAO code for Birmingham Airport	EGBB
B	Start time in UTC	2259 hours UTC on 2 June 2020
C	Ends time in UTC	0559 hours UTC on 30 June 2020
D	Daily Schedule	Each day from 2259 hours UTC to 0559 hours UTC
E	Free text field	Description of activity in clear words or using abbreviations in OPADD
F	Lower level of activity	Not used in this series
G	Upper level of activity	Not used in this series

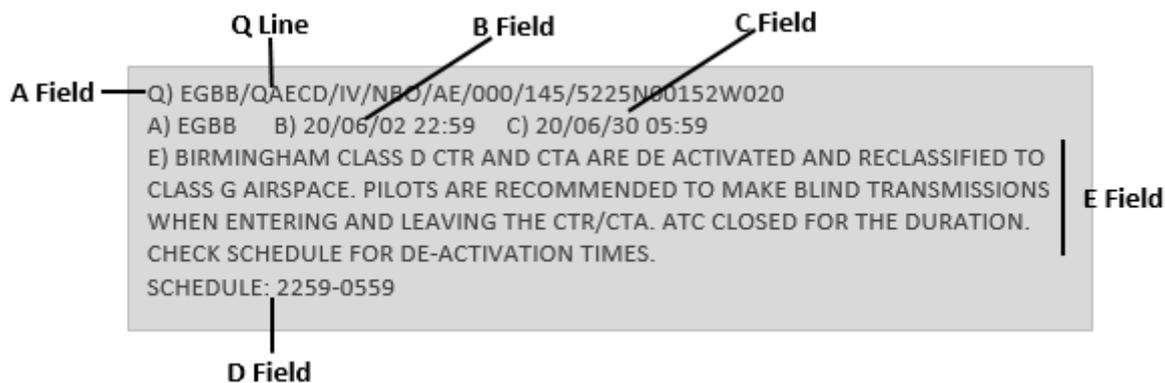


FIGURE 1

**If the airspace was deactivated for the entire period from 2259 hours on 2 June 2020 until 0559 hours on 30 June 2020, the NOTAM would not contain a schedule (D field)**

Some locations that need to open ad hoc will add extra information for pilots such as listening out on the appropriate FMC frequency, and squawking the appropriate FMC code. Note that you should listen out FIRST, THEN set the squawk code with altitude [ALT] (MODE A and C). This will allow the Air Traffic Service Unit (ATSU) to quickly identify aircraft within the lateral/vertical confines of the airspace in the minutes running up to reactivation of controlled airspace. An example of the extra information that a NOTAM might contain in these circumstances is shown below:

PILOTS ARE REQUESTED TO MAKE BLIND CALLS ON SOLENT 120.230 AND MONITOR UNTIL CLEAR. SQUAWK MONITOR 7011 FOR SOLENT/SOUTHAMPTON IS ADVISED. IF DEPARTING FROM A SITE WITHIN THE ATZ/CTR, TRY CALLING SOUTHAMPTON ATC ON THE LANDLINE OR MAKE BLIND CALLS WHILST ON THE GROUND TO SOLENT 120.230 MHZ.

When there is overlapping airspace with neighbouring units, pilots should be aware that there is a possibility of different ATC unit operating hours. Even if CTAs are deactivated, airspace delegated to neighbouring units might still be active. An example of this is in the Solent area with Southampton and Bournemouth ATSUs. In FIGURE 2, NOTAM B1353/20 clearly guides pilots which FMC to use in the area. This also acts a reminder that part of the Solent CTA is routinely delegated to Bournemouth. The line Stoney Cross–Beaulieu–Needles is the published FMC boundary and when using an FMC and flying west of that line, pilots should select the Bournemouth radar frequency of 119.475MHz and squawk Bournemouth’s FMC (0011) irrespective of Solent opening hours and any deactivation of CTA/CTR.

Q) EGTT/QAEXX/IV/NBO/AE/000/055/5050N00132W023  
 A) EGHI  
 B) FROM: 20/06/15 05:30 C) TO: 20/06/30 21:45  
 E) FOR PILOTS OPERATING OUTSIDE THE SOUTHAMPTON ATZ/CTR AND SOLENT CTA NOT REQUIRING A SERVICE, PLEASE SQUAWK MONITOR 7011 AND MONITOR SOLENT 120.230MHZ. IF A TRANSIT OF THE SOUTHAMPTON ATZ/CTR OR SOLENT CTA IS REQUIRED, PLEASE REQUEST ON SOLENT 120.230MHZ, REMAINING OUTSIDE OF CONTROLLED AIRSPACE UNTIL ATC CLEARANCE IS ISSUED. AIRCRAFT OPERATING WEST OF A LINE STONEY CROSS–BEAULIEU–NEEDLES SHOULD SQUAWK MONITOR 0011 AND MONITOR BOURNEMOUTH 119.475MHZ. FOR AMENDED AIRSPACE OPENING TIMES REFER TO NOTAM COVID-19 B1349/20 AND C3397/20 FOR FURTHER INFORMATION.)

FIGURE 2

## Moving Map Depiction

Not all Moving Map depictions for airspace deactivation NOTAM are the same. For example, SkyDemon uses a colour coding system. When airspace is activated it is outlined in red/orange and when deactivated it is outlined in green. The associated NOTAM has a similar colour banner shown in FIGURE 3.

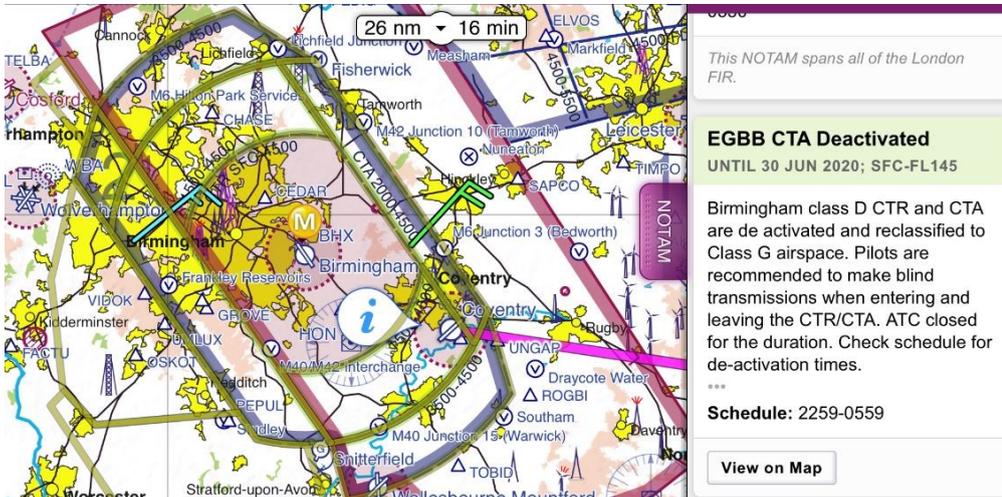


FIGURE 3

Care must be taken to review and decode the NOTAM correctly. The Green boundary will be shown H24 until 0559 hours UTC on 30 June 2020 because a NOTAM exists to deactivate the Class D airspace; it does not indicate that the airspace is declassified H24 unless that is stated in NOTAM. Only by expanding the NOTAM as shown in FIGURE 4 will you see the scheduled times of '2259 – 0559'.

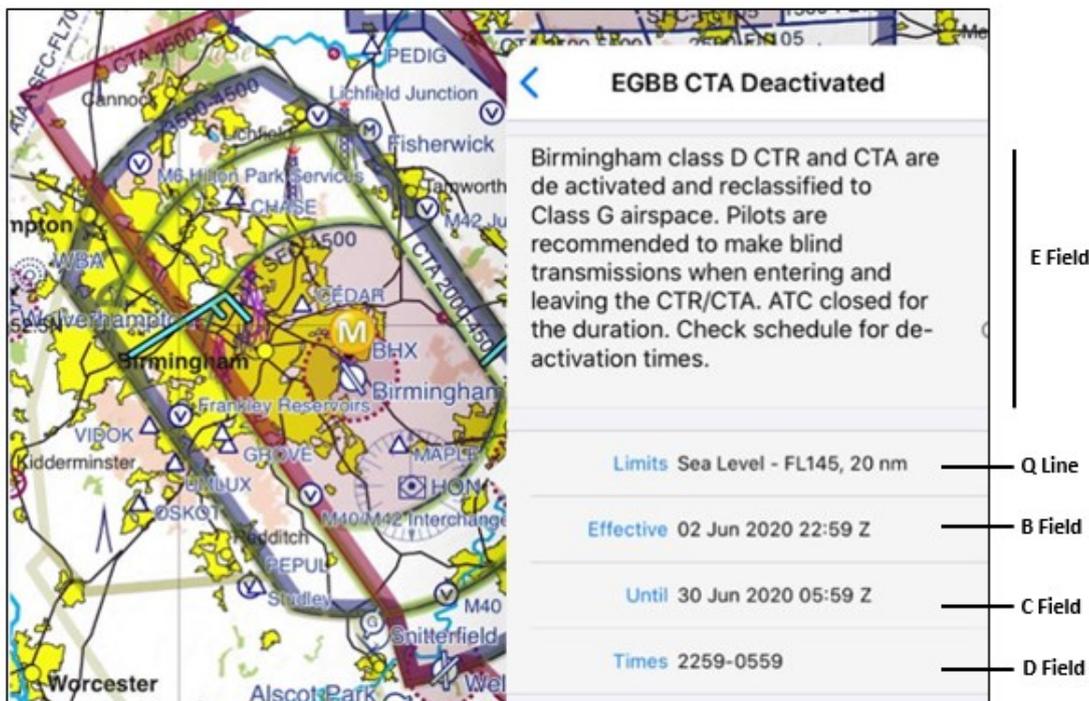


FIGURE 4

**REMEMBER** when planning and carrying out your flight that the existence of a green boundary does not necessarily mean that the Class D airspace is deactivated. It is vital that the schedule is referred to so that you are aware whether a clearance to enter the CTR/CTA is required due to the airspace being Class D.

## Other Information in the E Field

A **telephone number** will be included in many H series NOTAM relating to unusual aerial activity (UAA). This is an agreed contact number of the activity sponsor that will be available while the NOTAM is effective. On occasions, for example, a 15-minute flying display may be subject to a 2-hour window for a variety of reasons ranging from weather contingencies, transit from previous displays or finalisation of the event programme at the point when the NOTAM was submitted into the European AIS Database. During the pre-flight planning stage of your flight, you can call the sponsor to establish a more accurate time of the activity thereby possibly negating a re-route to avoid the activity. If the sponsor is contacted who states that the activity the NOTAM refers to has either been cancelled or has a later start time, or an earlier finish time, then it is perfectly permissible to accept these as the new start/finish times for the NOTAM concerned.

Some **parachuting activity** takes place in an inverted **cone** of airspace. The E field of the NOTAM will contain a number of values showing the radius of the activity at different altitudes. The Q line, and possibly the depiction on Moving Maps, will show a circle based on the highest altitude (and therefore largest radius) where the parachutists will vacate the aircraft and then drift to the drop zone (DZ) whilst descending through the cone of activity. The NOTAM is depicted as a circle with the centre based on the DZ since at the time of NOTAM submission the winds will be unknown. However, in reality the activity will usually take place in the upwind part of the depicted circle.

The NOTAM in FIGURE 5 relates to one such parachute jumping exercise (PJE). If you are planning to fly at 3,000 feet amsl, good airmanship dictates that you should remain 4NM from the DZ at 515246N 0011320W as you may encounter parachutists between 1100 hours UTC and 1800 hours UTC; if you are planning to fly at 1,500 feet amsl, the radius is only 2NM.

Should you wish to speak to the event sponsor to check on the status of this activity, you could do so on 07970 363xxx. On Moving Maps, this NOTAM would be displayed with a circle of 10NM as that is the maximum radius of the activity but only between 6,001 feet amsl and 15,000 feet amsl.

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Q) EGTT/QWPLW/IV/M /W /000/150/5153N00113W010
A) EGTT B) 2006081100 C) 2006081800
E) PJE WI 10NM RADIUS 515246N 0011320W (WESTON ON THE GREEN,
OXFORDSHIRE). DROP CONTAINED WI FLW CONE (ALL HGT AMSL): SFC-2000FT
2NM RADIUS, 2001-4000FT 4NM RADIUS, 4001-6000FT 6NM RADIUS,
6001-15000FT 10NM RADIUS. DROP HGT SUBJECT TO ATC CLEARANCE. FOR INFO
07970 363xxx. 2020-06-0169/AS4
F) SFC G) 15000FT AMSL)
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FIGURE 5

## Prevent an airspace infringement

The Airspace & Safety Initiative website (<https://airspacesafety.com/>) provides extensive advice on how to avoid infringing airspace; hot-spot narratives are at: <https://airspacesafety.com/local-area-information/>; reviewing them as part of your pre-flight planning will offer a great deal of useful advice.

Pilots are strongly encouraged to:

- **Pre-flight plan** that incorporates all aspects of the flight including the departure, en-route and arrival phases of the flight should be detailed, unrushed and focussed. The planning should incorporate Threat and Error Management (TEM). Make a **Plan B** as part of your TEM. There is a requirement to plan for every flight even if you are getting airborne to fly visual circuits; NOTAM and weather must be briefed.
- **Use a Moving Map** which will provide a profile along your planned route showing the controlled airspace boundary. Know exactly how your chosen Moving Map depicts airspace, UAA and alerts and pay attention to, and note, the alerts before cancelling/accepting them.
- **Take 2.** When able [Take 2](#). Apply TEM when planning your route and altitude. By 'Taking 2' you will have time to recover from distractions and external threats such as conflicting aircraft prior to infringing airspace.
- **Make use of an Air Traffic Service.** Note the frequencies along your route, print off a PLOG and plan your transmissions.
- **Use a Frequency Monitor Code (FMC).** Rather than squawking 7000/2000, and if you do not want to obtain a service from ATC, use an FMC appropriate to the direction of flight. FMCs have proven to prevent infringements and reduce the severity of such occurrences.