

**AERONAUTICAL INFORMATION
CIRCULAR****VISUAL REFERENCE POINTS.****1 Introduction**

1.1 Visual Reference Points (VRPs) may be established in the vicinity of an aerodrome located within Controlled Airspace in order to facilitate access to and from aerodromes located within, and transit of, the airspace in question by VFR traffic. They may also be used to assist pilots to plan routes around or beneath Controlled Airspace when traffic conditions require. Additionally, VRPs may be established around aerodromes located outside Controlled Airspace for which an instrument approach procedure is published. Finally, VRPs may be created in association with airspace that is temporarily established for special events.

1.2 Responsibility for the identification of the need for, establishment and continuing suitability of, VRPs lies with the Air Traffic Services Unit (ATSU) acting as controlling authority for a particular Controlled Airspace (normally a Control Zone or Control Area), an ATSU providing air traffic services for published instrument approaches to aerodromes outside Controlled Airspace, or the operators of aerodromes located wholly or partially within Controlled Airspace (other than the controlling aerodrome), at which either Aerodrome Flight Information Service or Air/Ground Service only is provided.

2 Purpose and Use of VRPs

2.1 The purpose of VRPs is to provide a datum, or series of datums, which enables ATC to recommend a route or routes not conflicting with traffic using instrument approach or departure procedures. VRPs may also be created in association with airspace that is temporarily established for special events.

2.2 ATC will use VRPs for the tactical and expeditious management of traffic in the vicinity of an aerodrome. VRPs may also be used to:

- a. Define a route;
- b. Assist radar identification.

2.3 ATC instructions relating to VRPs located outside Controlled Airspace are advisory; however, pilots are requested to comply with instructions associated with a particular route if it is safe for them to do so in order to assist in traffic integration, and in particular to remain clear of traffic making instrument approaches or departures. **Controllers should avoid directing VFR traffic to route overhead a VRP or VRPs unless the position of traffic making an instrument approach or departure specifically demands it.**

2.4 In all cases, controllers and pilots should be aware of the danger of creating traffic congestion at a VRP. Pilots are reminded of their obligations under the Rules of the Air and in particular the 'Right Hand' and 'Give Way' rules. To reduce congestion, pilots should as far as practicable avoid direct overflight of a VRP; similarly, controllers should consider other traffic which may be using a VRP and route aircraft by reference to it, rather than overhead it.

2.5 Pilots of aircraft, including gliders, hang-gliders and balloons (radio and non-radio alike) are recommended to plan transit routes to take into account as far as possible the location of VRPs serving aerodromes which have instrument approach and departure procedures outside Controlled Airspace. Such planning is likely to assist in reducing the risk of conflict with IFR arrivals and departures to and from such airports.

3 Selection and Establishment of VRPs

3.1 In considering the need for VRPs, care should be taken in identifying prominent natural or man-made features that will be readily identifiable from the air. To that end, features that could be considered transient in character (such as woodland or housing estates) should not be considered suitable.

3.2 Prominent or major road or rail junctions, masts, buildings, lakes, river confluences and reservoirs are likely to be best suited as VRPs. The use of towns or villages as VRPs should be avoided where possible as their size and shape will alter with time. In addition, the provisions of Rule 5 of Rules of the Air should be borne in mind when selecting prominent features in or adjacent to settlements as VRPs. Furthermore, care should be taken to ensure that there is no conflict with VRPs associated with adjacent aerodromes.

3.3 The use of disused aerodromes as VRPs may in some cases be appropriate, however sponsors of such VRPs must remain aware at all times of land use changes that will, over time, eradicate evidence of a disused aerodrome's former purpose (e.g. the construction of housing or industrial estates, removal of paved surfaces, etc).

3.4 It is strongly recommended that, prior to the establishment of any VRP, an airborne assessment of the proposed point be undertaken to assess its suitability from a pilot's perspective, including ease of reference on VFR charts.

3.5 VRPs should, ideally, be visible both by day and by night. Day and night use should be determined by VRP sponsors when identifying suitable features as VRPs. It is recognised that not all VRPs may be suitable for use at night, in which case ATSUs should ensure that procedures based upon reference to VRPs take this into consideration.

4 VRP Naming Conventions

4.1 Clear, distinctive and unambiguous names are to be assigned to VRPs. Ideally, such names are to be as short as feasible without detriment to ease of reference to the salient feature from the air:

- a. When using disused aerodromes as VRPs, the word 'disused' shall be included in the VRP name. If referring to a disused aerodrome depicted on VFR charts, an assessment of the visibility of vestigial aerodrome features is to be undertaken in advance of selecting such features as VRPs.
- b. Names of VRPs based upon road junctions are to start with the road number followed by the junction number (e.g. M1 Junction 9), or - if not numbered - name (e.g. A40 Northleach Roundabout). Salient features other than junctions are to be similarly named (e.g. M5 Avon Bridge);
- c. Names of VRPs based upon road junctions and referring to adjacent settlements, physical features or other roads are to be avoided as far as possible. Where employed such names will be presented in parenthesis (e.g. A1(M) Junction 57 (A66(M)), M9 Junction 2 (Philpstoun)) in AIP AD2 entries but may not appear in full on VFR charts due to charting constraints;
- d. To avoid possible confusion with mainland UK road numbers, the names of VRPs based upon the Northern Ireland road numbering system will start with a place name followed by road and junction number (e.g. Glengormley (M2 Junction 4));
- e. AIP and VFR chart depictions of VRPs shall use the letter 'J' in lieu of the word 'Junction' (e.g. M1 Junction 9 = M1 J9, Glengormley (M2 Junction 4) = Glengormley M2 J4). Exceptions to this convention will be considered on a case-by-case basis, for example when they may result in overly complex or potentially confusing depiction on charts. For example, A1(M) Junction 57 (A66(M)) may be better presented as A1(M)/A66(M) rather than A1(M) J57, as A1(M) junction numbers are not shown on 1:500000 scale VFR charts (but are shown on 1:250000 charts);
- f. Lighthouse names shall be those promulgated in the Hydrographic Office's 'Admiralty List of Light and Fog Signals (British Isles and North Coast of France)'.

5 Application Process

5.1 Requests to establish or disestablish VRPs should be submitted in the first instance to:

Airspace Regulation
Directorate of Airspace Policy
CAA House
45-59 Kingsway
London WC2B 6TE.

Telephone: 0207-453 6512
Fax: 0207-453 6565
E-mail: airspace@caa.co.uk

5.2 Applications for the establishment of VRPs are to include:

- a. A statement of operational requirement;
- b. An assessment of anticipated operational impacts upon local airspace users arising from the selection of potential VRPs;
- c. An assessment of anticipated environmental impacts arising from the selection of potential VRPs;
- d. WGS84 co-ordinates of the proposed VRP. Where lighthouses are selected as VRPs, the co-ordinates shall be those promulgated in the Hydrographic Office's 'Admiralty List of Light and Fog Signals (British Isles and North Coast of France)';
- e. VOR/DME and/or NDB/DME fixes where possible, including an assessment of suitable navaid coverage to confirm applicability.

6 Depiction and Promulgation of Visual Reference Points

6.1 VRPs are depicted in charts supporting aerodrome entries at UK AIP AD2. In some instances they may also be depicted in terminal Controlled Airspace charts at ENR 6. In addition, they are depicted on the CAA's 1:250000 and 1:500000 VFR charts by a blue box surrounding the name which is linked to the location identified by a cross within a circle.

6.2 Details of VRPs established at individual aerodromes are published in individual aerodrome entries at UK AIP AD2 at section AD 2-22 (Flight Procedures).

6.3 A single consolidated list of all published VRPs is available under 'VFR Charting Resources' on the VFR Charts page of the AIS website (www.nats-uk.ead-it.com).

6.4 Aerial photographs of a limited number of VRPs can be found in VFR Guide Supplements found under 'Visual Flight Rules' in the 'Operations and Safety - Airspace' section of the CAA website at www.caa.co.uk.

6.5 An online VFR Guide can be found on the CAA website at http://www.caa.co.uk/docs/64/VFR_Guide_2011.pdf.

7 Review of Visual Reference Points

7.1 VRPs are to be subject to periodic review by their establishing authorities, not less than five yearly, in order to determine the continuing suitability of VRPs established within or around that airspace for which they act as controlling authority. Such reviews are necessary given that selected VRPs may be rendered less visible, or indeed invisible, from the air as a result of factors such as landscape and/or land use change, demolition, or urban development. Wherever possible, an aerial assessment of the VRPs in question should be undertaken as part of the review process.

7.2 Pilots are to report any difficulty in identifying the location of a VRP, or where changing physical surroundings render the use of a feature as a VRP inappropriate (for example, as result of landscape and/or land use change, demolition, or urban development), to the controlling authority of airspace concerned.

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