

The Kemble and Ewen Parish Council has prepared this article with the guidance of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and Cotswold Airport (Kemble) to help local people understand some aircraft activities around the villages within the Parish, and around the airport.

The airspace above Kemble and the surrounding area is designated by the CAA as ‘Class G’, their brief description of this is as follows: -

“In the UK, Class G airspace is uncontrolled. This means there are no restrictions on:

- *which aircraft can enter it*
- *what equipment the aircraft must carry (i.e. some may not have a radio and be able to talk to Kemble’s tower)*
- *the routes taken by the aircraft*
- *No flight plan is required*

However, aircraft should still operate to the regulations as laid out by the Air Navigation Order¹ and should not fly lower than 500 feet unless taking off or landing. For Kemble (and Culkerton), aircraft are on the landing or take-off phase, so they could be lower than 500ft.

Cotswold Airport (Kemble) operates a ‘Flight Information Service (FIS)’, which means the control tower is manned by Flight Information Service Officers, or FISOs – they are NOT Air Traffic Controllers and only have full authority over aircraft on the ground. Although many aircraft that fly in the vicinity of our villages do take off and land at Kemble, some maybe transiting through the area, or even landing in private gardens (helicopters) or at Oaksey Park Airfield. In flight the FISOs supply advice and information to pilots, useful for the safe and efficient conduct of flight, together with pertinent information about:

- 1 Weather
- 2 Conditions at aerodromes
- 3 Other information likely to affect safety

In addition, Cotswold Airport (Kemble) has its own Noise Abatement Procedures (recently updated), these are not a legal requirement, but the Airport has put them in place and published them to help reduce the inevitable impact and noise our villages experience due to our proximity to the airport. However, these procedures are not mandatory, and the onus is on the pilot in command to make themselves familiar with and recognise them, if it is safe to do so. This does mean that on some occasions, the pilot may fly through noise abatement

¹ The Navigation Order 2016 is the act of Parliament governing all airborne activities

areas to avoid a potential collision with, or flying too close to, another aircraft. The airport can and will point out where pilots have flown irresponsibly but has no powers to take action against a pilot. It is worth bearing in mind many are students pilots learning to fly at Kemble and so education is usually the best action.

The airport employs a significant number of local people and supports a wide variety of businesses, not all aviation related. As many know from seeing the large airliners, it is home to ASI, who salvage, recycle and maintain these big airliner aircraft. It is also home to 2 helicopter flying schools and 5 aeroplane flying schools; many of these students progress on to commercial flying.

As some of you may know, the Airport Director is working with the CAA to propose a defined approach for Kemble. For the larger jets, this will specify exactly where and at what height they approach to land at Kemble, rather than the pilots choosing their own approach. Because these jets are too large to follow the circuit and avoid noise abatement areas, this will allow the airport to further limit the noise and intrusion these larger airliner size jets currently have on Kemble and other villages. However, the smaller aircraft will still need to follow the circuit and avoid the noise abatement areas whenever possible.

It has been suggested that overflying of Kemble village could be improved by the displacement of the runway threshold (i.e. mark the runway so that aircraft land further down its length), and by changing the circuit pattern which is currently to the south of the airport. Most of the large airliners that come into Cotswold Airport require the full length of the runway to land. This means for a threshold to be displaced only for smaller aircraft would require a secondary set of runway lighting and markings – a huge expense and potentially a confusing safety issue, particularly for inexperienced students (there is a grass runway in use, parallel to the tarmac one, but with a displaced threshold. However, the circuit pattern remains the same to avoid confusion and risk a mid-air collision, which has occurred elsewhere in the past).

The circuit pattern is not flown to the north of the airport for two main safety reasons. Firstly, there is a bank of trees on the airport ground that obstructs the view to the north from the control tower; secondly, a circuit pattern in that direction would potentially bring Kemble aircraft into conflict with aircraft from nearby Aston Down, whose circuit would intersect a northerly Kemble circuit. It is also worth noting a change in circuit pattern would not have much influence on aircraft over the village as they are already on final approach or have just taken off when over the village.

The Kemble and Ewen Parish Council hopes that this information has helped you to understand more of the airfield activities, and encourages you to get in touch with us if you require more information.