

Hillingdon Drone and Small Unmanned Aircraft (SUA) Policy



Putting our residents and public safety FIRST

Effective 12 September 2019 (updated 2023)

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General Policy Statement

The London Borough of Hillingdon recognises the growth and innovation in drones and SUAs for personal, recreational and commercial use. However, on 13 March 2019 the Air Navigation [Amendment Order] 2019 was made by the UK Government which means that most of the Borough's airspace is covered by expanded Flight Restricted Zones (FNZ) and Runway Protection Zones (RPZ) around **Heathrow Airport, RAF Northolt and Denham Aerodrome**. In these zones, **it is illegal to fly any drone, of any mass (including toys)**, without explicit permission from the relevant Airport or Aerodrome and then, if applicable, their Air Traffic Control (ATC).

Whilst there will still be benefits from the use of drones, given the breadth of airspace, air traffic volume and lower flying altitudes across large parts of the Borough, there is a higher possibility of an aircraft incident involving a drone impacting Hillingdon than most other areas of the UK. Therefore, this modern local policy sets a **'total airspace approach'** because it includes proportionate local measures **outside** these expanded flight restriction zones to ensure resident and wider public safety. The Council also considers it important for its residents to enjoy its award winning parks and open spaces without hazard or incident.

Therefore, it will be a general policy that the Council will prohibit personal, recreational, filming and other commercial use of drones or SUAs on its land or new developments due to the proximity to congested areas and airports. The Council understands that there will be a need for special exemptions and / or permissions it may grant in exceptional circumstances. Where these will apply, they will primarily relate to public safety activities and accredited organisations.

The Council will actively review and update this policy as the future use of drones and SUA evolve, their technology develops and if new UK regulations require any change. Currently, this local policy is aligned with and supplements regulation at a national level and is consistent with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) regulations and the UK Drone Code. Whilst the Council will seek to keep this document up-to-date, users must always visit the CAA website for the latest national regulations, guidance or advice issued:

[Link to latest CAA Guidance](#)

Drone policy scope & definition

In this policy 'drones' are defined as 'Small Unmanned Aircraft' or SUAs of any mass as set out in CAA guidelines. This definition will, therefore, cover model aircraft of any size, quadcopters and other unmanned aerial vehicles or systems for any personal, recreational or commercial use.

A) Flying in flight restriction zones around airports



National airspace “no-fly” zones now cover around 74% of the Borough, which includes any Council park and open space in these zones. This means it is illegal to fly any drone [and toy drones] in these areas, even from household gardens

The UK Air Navigation [Amendment Order] 2019 makes it **illegal to fly outside any SUA** at any time within the expanded Flight Restriction Zones and new Runway Protection Zones. These Flight Restricted Zones are active at all times and apply to all SUAs of any mass (even very small ‘toys’).

The Flight Restriction Zones (FRZ) operate up to 5km around the airports and aerodrome associated with the Borough, with an additional Runway Protection Zone (RPZ) extending 1km (or in the case of Heathrow, 1.5km). Therefore, in the areas of the Borough (as shown in zoomable map link below), it is illegal to fly any SUA over any land shown in these various zones and this may be prosecutable as a criminal offence by the Police.

This Council prepared map [right] below shows at a high-level the Flight Restricted Zones and Runway Protection Zones around Heathrow Airport, RAF Northolt and Denham Aerodrome. For the exact areas prohibited, users should visit the CAA website or alternatively there are maps available, including a zoomable Google Map.

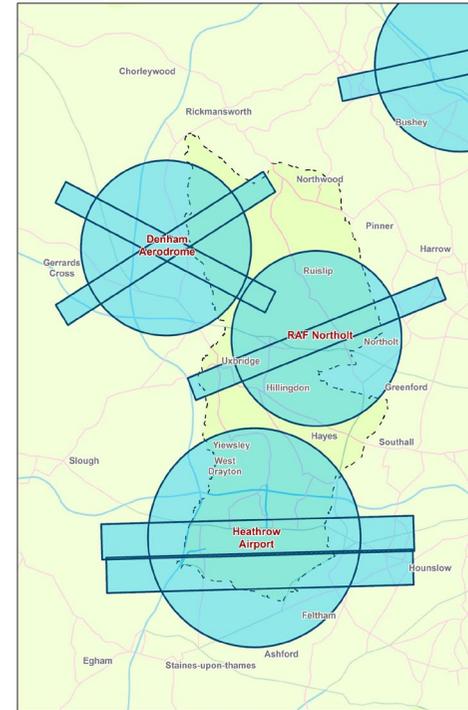
Seeking approval in restricted zones

Any personal, recreational or commercial use in these areas will first require Airport or Aerodrome approval **prior** to any Air Traffic Control (ATC) approval also required. All drone

[Link to Airspace User Portal \(AUP\)](#)

[Zoomable map to view Flight Restricted Zones](#)

[CAA website / Drone Code](#)



Map contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2019)

operators should first submit their proposed drone activity via the Airspace User Portal (AUP) which can be accessed by the link shown on this page. Once in receipt of the drone application, the airport will review and either approve or decline. If approved, then the system will automatically pass it onto ATC if applicable. If declined, then the application is sent back to the applicant with no need for an ATC review.

Hillingdon Council - promoting national drone restrictions

Where the Council's parks and open spaces fall under these nationally restricted zones, the Council will support airports and aerodromes by placing prominent signs reminding the public of these important national airspace restrictions. The Council will also promote such restrictions through its general communications, as suggested by the Department for Transport.

Indoor use in these zones

Persons intending to operate drones for **indoors use** should instead refer to the appropriate Health and Safety At Work regulations.

B) Flying on council parks and open spaces outside flight restriction zones



Outside the flight restriction zones, the flying of any drone in Council parks and open spaces is strictly prohibited and will be enforced by a fine.

[Public Space Protection Orders](#)

The designated parks and open spaces, in part or whole, outside the flight restriction zones are listed in **Annex 1 of this Policy**.

Due to their proximity to congested areas, in these public spaces, the personal or recreational (or unauthorised commercial) flying of any drone, model aircraft or SUA of any weight is strictly prohibited. There are appropriate exemptions for drone use by HM Government, Military, London Borough of Hillingdon and other Emergency Services use, as set out in this policy.

Authorised Council officers or contractors will enforce this through a Public Space Protection Order and by issuing to those contravening a Fixed Penalty Notice of £100, which may be up to £1000 upon failure to pay. Prominent signs will be displayed in these spaces reminding the public of this Order.



The updated Public Space Protection Order condition, authorised and which took effect on 12 September 2019, clearly states the prohibition as follows:

'Using drones and small unmanned aircraft of any mass without the express consent of the Council'.

C) Flying on private land outside flight restriction zones



Any personal or recreational use of SUAs, including model aircraft, taking off from and landing on private land outside the restricted zones around airports or aerodromes, is permitted by national regulations, but users must follow the national Drone & Model Aircraft Code and be aware of congested areas.

Registration

A new national registration scheme for people who fly or are responsible for small unmanned aircraft, including drones and model aircraft, came into force on 30 November 2019. The new regulations apply to drones and model aircraft from 250g in weight and require people to pass an online theory test to fly (Flyer ID) and also register as an operator (Operator ID). Drones should also display your Operator ID. More details can be found on the CAA website.

It is against the law to fly a drone or model aircraft without having the required IDs. You can also be fined for breaking the law when flying. In the most serious cases, you could be sent to prison.

[DRONE CODE](#)

[Drone Registration and CAA website](#)

[Data protection and cameras](#)



(image courtesy of the Civil Aviation Authority)

Drone flying is undertaken using different categories and most users flying will be under open category operations. However, you may need authorisation for specific category operations that fly, for example, over built up areas. More information is available on the CAA website.

The Drone and Model Aircraft Code

This can be found in full on the CAA website, but in summary:

- You are responsible for flying your drone or UAS in a safe manner; follow the manufacturer's instructions;
- You must keep it in their direct sight at all times while flying, so that it does not collide with anything, especially other aircraft;
- Must not endanger anyone, or any thing, including any articles that users drop from it;
- Must not fly it more than 400ft (120m) above the surface;
- Must not fly near people and properties – 150ft (50m);
- Must not fly near crowds and built up areas – 500ft (150m) and don't overfly such areas.

If a drone is fitted with a camera, there are also additional limitations surrounding where it can be flown, and how close users can fly it to other uninvolved people or objects. In order to be able to fly within these areas, or closer than the minimum distances that are in the regulations, you must obtain prior permission from the CAA to do so. With cameras or video attached to SUAs, users should be aware of relevant data protection and related legislation and for professional purposes, the CCTV code.

Persons intending to operate drones for **indoors use** should instead refer to the appropriate Health and Safety At Work regulations.

D) Filming with drones in the Borough



The Council will strictly not permit drones for any filming on its land, unless it is a highly exceptional case.

Any request in relation to a commercial operation to fly a SUA for filming, broadcasting or a similar media purpose will require permission from ATC or Airport and/or the CAA depending on whether within or outside the flight restrictions zones. Permission is also required from the owner of the land from which the SUA will be taking off and/or landing from.

Any request to film on Council owned land will strictly not be permitted, whether via FilmLondon or directly to the Council. Only in highly exceptional circumstances (as determined by the Corporate Director of Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Residents' Services) will any SUA activity from an accredited media organisation be considered for filming purposes.

There are no designated SUA launch or take-off areas in the Borough for filming on Council owned land.

Any exceptional authorisation by the Council will only follow the validation of relevant information, which will include, but not be limited to:

- Confirmation of any required Airport, Air Traffic Control or CAA approvals required by law if in a Flight Restriction Zone or Runway Protection Zone
- A full risk assessment
- A copy of your company's public liability insurance certificate (minimum £10 million)
- A copy of the drone pilot's CAA license / Flyer ID / Operator ID
- A map/site plan pinpointing take-off and landing points, cordoned areas and proposed flight path
- A method statement advising how you plan to manage the areas over which the drone will fly
- Confirmation of a clear radius for the area to be filmed in-line with CAA guidelines
- Traffic management plan (if applicable) and other permissions required, e.g. CAA or ATC.

[CAA website](#)

Council enquiries and applications

Via the Hillingdon Film Office:

Tel:
01895 556640

Email:
filloffice@hillingdon.gov.uk

If permitted, a commercial fee per flight/take off will be applied or increased subject to use times

Any such filming is the responsibility of the producer and they must indemnify the Council, Members and employees against any claims or proceedings arising directly in respect of any injury to persons or damage to property as a result of their activities.

If any approval is granted, the Council will charge a commercial fee of £200 per flight/take off to cover administration and technical validation costs. Any fee in this policy may be increased inline with the Council's Fees and Charges Schedule approved annually. For multiple take off points and prolonged usage, fees will be subject to negotiation as determined by the Corporate Director of Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Residents' Services. Applications will be online via the Council's website or to the designated email address shown in this policy.

E) Public safety, commercial and industrial use in the Borough



The Council will not permit commercial use of drones on its land, unless it relates to essential public safety use.

Any request in relation to a commercial operation to fly a SUA will require permission from ATC or the Airport and/or the CAA depending on whether within or outside the flight restrictions zones. Permission is also required from the owner of the land from which the SUA will be taking off and/or landing from.

Any request to fly from or to Council owned land for business or industrial use, will generally not be granted and will only be considered if it relates to essential public safety related commercial or construction activity or inspections and preferably not unduly timed to take place when flying over congested areas. Any permission by the Council will be subject to broader public safety considerations and authorised by the Council's Corporate Director of Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Residents' Services. Any authorisation will follow the validation of relevant information, which will include, but not be limited to:

- Confirmation of any required Airport, Air Traffic Control or CAA approvals required by law if in a Flight Restriction Zone or Runway Protection Zone
- A full risk assessment
- A copy of your company's public liability insurance certificate (minimum £10 million)
- A copy of the drone pilot's CAA license / Flyer ID / Operator ID
- A map/site plan pinpointing take-off and landing points, cordoned areas and proposed flight path
- Traffic management plan (if applicable) which will be reviewed by relevant Council services
- A method statement advising how you plan to manage the areas over which the drone will fly
- Confirmation of a clear radius for the area to be filmed inline with CAA guidelines

In such essential safety cases, the Council will not charge any commercial fee for individual take-offs. Applications will be online via the Council's website or to the designated email address shown in this policy.

[CAA website about commercial operations](#)

Council enquiries and applications:

Tel:
01895 558311

Email:
filloffice@hillingdon.gov.uk

F) Local model flying clubs



The Council recognises this local hobby, however, model flying clubs must apply to use any Council land and open space for this activity and this is strictly subject to any flight restriction zone approval, if required.

Model flying clubs in the Borough accredited by the British Model Flying Association will be required to apply for permission from the Council to use its land for this hobby. Express permission will also be required by the Airport first and then Air Traffic Control or the airport if proposed operations are to be located in an FRS or RPZ. Additional permissions may be required for 'Large Model Aircrafts' from the CAA. Explicit prior permission from the Council to use its land will also be required for any model aircraft operations, following the submission of the following to the Council, which will include, but not be limited to:

- Confirmation of any required Airport, Air Traffic Control or CAA approvals required by law if in a Flight Restriction Zone or Runway Protection Zone
- Current British Model Flying Association accreditation / relevant CCA accreditation or Operator ID
- A map/site plan pinpointing the model aircraft area of activity on council land;
- Any other documents the Council requires when such organisations hire its land, i.e. insurance.
- Confirmation that only club members will fly model aircraft and only on the designated council land for approved club activities and events.

Clubs seeking approval in restricted zones

Any model flying use will require Airport or Aerodrome approval **prior** to any ATC approval, if applicable. All drone operators should first submit their proposed drone activity via the Airspace User Portal (AUP) which can be accessed by the link shown on this page. Once in receipt of the drone application, the airport will review and either approve or decline. If approved then the system will automatically pass it onto ATC if applicable. If declined then the application is sent back to the applicant with no need for an ATC review.

If the Council considers the site or location to be inappropriate or if there is a conflict with other recreational, leisure or public users, permission may not be granted. Subject to validation and assessment of the above, any permission will be granted by the Green

[CAA information for model flying](#)

[Link to Airspace User Portal \(AUP\)](#)

Council enquiries and applications:

Via the Applications processing Team in consultation with the Green Spaces Team

Tel:
01895 558311

Email:
filloffice@hillingsdon.gov.uk

Spaces Manager at the Council, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Residents' Services. Requests can be made online via the Council's website or email to Green Spaces as shown in this policy.

Model aircraft enthusiasts should be aware that whilst the Council recognises this hobby, any individual flying a model aircraft who is not a member of an approved club by the Council and does not hold the necessary club permissions, or flies an aircraft irresponsibly or without air traffic control / airport authority may be committing a criminal offence. Where any model flying club does not secure the required permission to fly from both the Airport and Air Traffic Control, or if such permissions lapse and are not renewed, they must notify the Council immediately. The council will then cease its own permission to use any council land for such operations.

G) Special exemptions



Special automatic exemption using drones over Council owned land are authorised for essential Governmental, Military & Emergency Services use, however, additional permissions may still be required near airports

Prior permission to use SUAs to take off, fly over or land on Council owned land both inside and outside Flight Restricted Zones, at any time, will not be required for Emergency Services use by official Government bodies (e.g. Police, Ambulance, Fire Brigade, Environment Agency) where it is for essential safety and operational requirements. For example, this may be for accidents, major incidents, crowd control at local events, monitoring a fire or flooding.

The London Borough of Hillingdon may also use SUAs for safety related activity, such as building control or as part of any civil or emergency response. Any such use must be signed-off by the Corporate Director of Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Residents' Services.

Additional permissions from any Airport concerned, Air Traffic Control or the CAA may still be required by the above public organisations, depending on their flight plan and travel within any flight restriction zones or runway protection zones. SUA operator accreditation with the CAA may also be required. This policy does not apply or relate to any UK military or Intelligence Services use of drones, thereby these organisations are exempt from this Policy.

H) Land leased by the Council & new developments



Additional public land of significance that is leased or contracted by the Council will be restricted in the future from any drone use. The Council may also impose planning informatives on its planning decisions to instruct non-essential against drone use in high risk areas, e.g. marketing.

Large spaces leased (or contracted to be managed) by the Council

As a freeholder, the Council may lease larger land spaces or contract such spaces to be managed by third parties, e.g. schools, farms, leisure centre operators or community centres. With effect from 12 September 2019 any new property agreements or relevant contracts with such parties may include a prohibition on flying any drone or SUA of any mass on that land without the Council's explicit consent. This policy does not affect previously approved leases or contracts, unless such terms are subsequently agreed by both parties to amend after the date above. This will enable the Council to robustly challenge lessees and contractors if unapproved drone activity takes place on its land. Any decision to include such a provision in respect of new leases, agreements or contracts - or grant drone use in exceptional circumstances - will be determined by the Corporate Director of Place, or Head of Property at the Council, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Property, Highways and Transport.

New developments

Increasingly drones are used for property and land marketing or similar commercial purposes. Developers should be very aware of the flight restriction and runway protection zones in place as set out in Section A of this policy. Where proposed developments are outside these zones and in close proximity to other residential properties or council public open space, the Council may impose planning informatives, where the relevant Planning Committee or Director of Planning, Regeneration & Public Realm may wish to advise applicants to not fly drones or SUAs during the development's construction except for essential health and safety use and at all times in compliance with Civil Aviation Authority rules. Furthermore, any commercial use of drones or SUA from council land requires the Council's express consent, in accordance with Section E of this policy.

Further information

Reporting dangerous or suspicious drone activity

Should residents of the Borough or the wider public wish to report any dangerous, illegal or suspicious drone activity (in or outside Flight Restricted Zones, i.e. anywhere in the Borough), then this should be referred to the Police or Crimestoppers UK on **0800 555 111**. If you see a drone that you consider an **imminent threat to aircraft, life or property then call 999**.

If you have concerns in relation to your privacy with any drone use (e.g. through cameras or videos being taken), then this should be referred to the UK's Information Commissioner's Office using [the contact details here](#).

If you know of drones being flown in any of the Council's parks or open spaces, which is prohibited, then please inform the Council so they can take action or refer to the Police if required: **telephone the Contact Centre: 0800 694 0240 or report online at www.hillingdon.gov.uk**

Key websites

- [Map - Flight Restriction Zones around Hillingdon & the whole UK](#)
- [Drone and Model Aircraft Code](#)
- [Drone registration](#)
- [Civil Aviation Authority](#)
- [Department for Transport](#)
- [DroneSafe Register - hire an operator](#)
- [British Model Flying Association](#)
- [Link to Airspace User Portal \(AUP\) - for permission to fly within restricted airport zones](#)

Acronyms

SUA - Small Unmanned Aircraft OR drone by the Council's definition

CAA - UK Civil Aviation Authority

FRZ - Flight Restricted Zones 5km around airports or aerodromes to prohibit drones

RPZ - Runway Protection Zones to prohibit drones near each runway used

ATC - Air Traffic Control for an airport

PSPO - Public Space Protection Order issued by the Council

FPN - Fixed Penalty Notice (a fine issued by the Council to persons)

Council policy approvals and timeline status

(with links)

As provided for by the London Borough of Hillingdon's Cabinet on 30 May 2019, the Leader of the Council has the necessary delegated authority to review and update this policy in light of any local or national changes.

The named Council officer posts for approving any permissions required in this policy will apply and may also be amended by the Council's Officer Scheme of Delegations at anytime, as directed by the Corporate Director of Place of the London Borough of Hillingdon.

Policy status timeline:

1. [Draft policy approved for consultation by the Cabinet](#): 30 May 2019
2. [Policy approved by the Leader of the Council](#): 12 September 2019
3. Updated PSPOs in effect (authorised by the Deputy Chief Executive) from: 12 September 2019
4. New property lease and planning arrangements set out in this policy in effect from: 12 September 2019
5. Updated to reflect revised Cabinet/Directorate responsibilities approved - 14 January 2021
6. Minor non-material updates to reflect CAA guidance and website links - 20 September 2021
7. Updates to reflect changed officer job titles and Cabinet portfolios - 9 February 2023

This policy is fully authorised by the London Borough of Hillingdon, United Kingdom

Annex 1 - Parks and Open Spaces where drones are prohibited

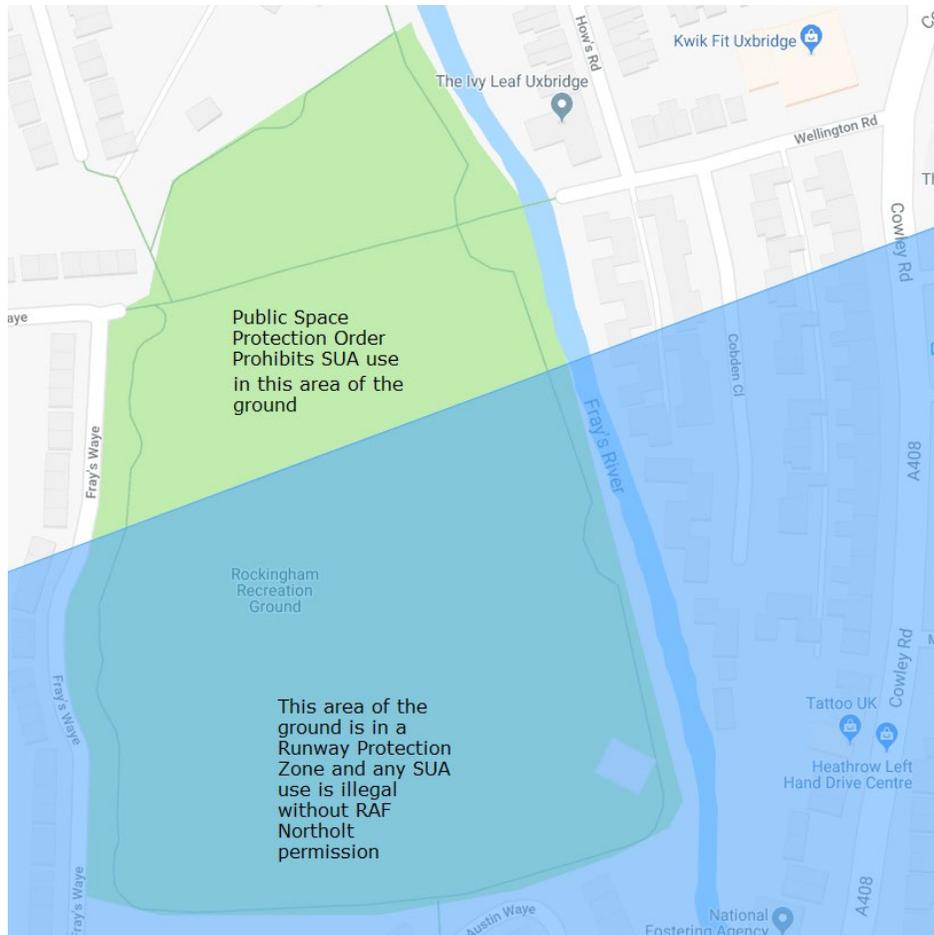
This is a list of designated Council owned parks and open spaces within the London Borough of Hillingdon that are in whole or in part **outside** Flight Restriction Zones or Runway Protection Zones under the UK Air Navigation [Amendment Order] 2019 where any such flying is illegal without permission.

In these designated parks and open spaces, the flying of drones or SUAs is prohibited without the express consent of the Council and Fixed Penalty Notices (fines) may be issued. Suitable signs and information will be in place across such parks to remind users.

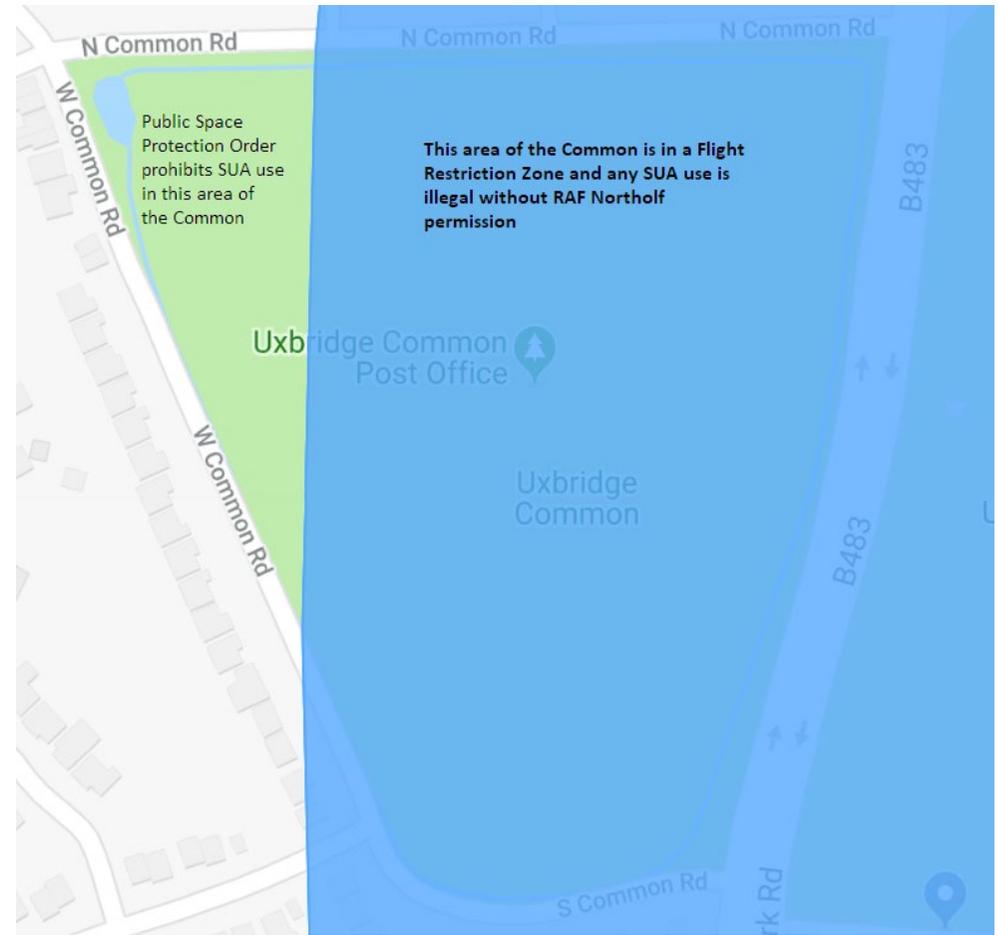
This prohibition is provided for through the Council's (Parks and Public Spaces) Public Spaces Protection Order, where the use of '**drones and small unmanned aircraft of any mass is prohibited without the express consent of the Council**'.

North of the Borough	Central parts of the Borough	South of the Borough
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Gravel Pits ● Ruislip Woods ● Ruislip Lido ● Hogs Back ● Northwood Recreation Ground ● Northwood Cemetery ● Haste Hill Golf Course ● Harlyn Drive Open Space ● Cuckoo Hill ● Raisins Hill ● Eastcote House Gardens ● Long Meadow ● Cheney Street Open Space ● Hayden Hall, Eastcote Cricket Club ● Coniston Gardens Open Space ● Bury Street Open Space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Top Left Corner of Uxbridge Common (see map) ● Fassnidge Park ● Top 1/3 of Rockingham Recreation Ground (see map) ● Hillingdon and Uxbridge Cemetery ● Robinwood Grove ● Cowley Recreation Ground ● Nine Elms Avenue ● Maygoods Green ● Bosanquet & Huxley Open Space ● Little Britain ● Philpots Farm ● Moorfield / St Clements Playground ● St Peters Road Playground ● Violet Avenue Children's Playground ● Colham Green Recreation Ground 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dawley Avenue Children's Playground ● Barra Hall Open Space ● Bell House Field ● Hitherbroom Open Space ● Minet Country Park ● Brookside Open Space ● Warrender Recreation Ground

Rockingham Recreation Ground, Uxbridge



Top Left Corner of Uxbridge Common, Uxbridge



Map images courtesy of Google Maps 2019