

24 Whangarei Airport

24.1 Significant Issues

- a) Conflicts between Airport activities and surrounding residential activities.
- b) Importance of the Airport in meeting the aviation transportation needs of the region.
- c) Airport noise.

24.2 Overview

Whangarei Airport is a significant physical resource, and contributes to the social and economic well-being of the people and community of Whangarei and the adjacent districts, as well as to the New Zealand community as part of a national network of Airports.

The Airport location at Onerahi has been confirmed beyond the life of this Plan.

It is projected that Whangarei Airport will experience steady growth in the number of aircraft movements over the foreseeable future. Following a study into possible alternative sites for locating the Whangarei Airport and the completion of an “Airport Master Plan”, the location of the Airport at Onerahi was confirmed beyond the life of this Plan. In order to ensure the long-term viability and sustainable management of the Airport as a strategic physical resource in its current location, it is necessary to achieve a balance between the long-term viability of the Airport and the needs of the residential land uses that surround it. The overall growth of the Airport will therefore ultimately be limited by the noise restrictions proposed in this plan.

The Airport's present location, close to the urban area and in close proximity to residential land uses that have grown up with, and around the Airport, has both positive and adverse effects. An important positive effect is the short travelling time from the Airport to the main urban Central Business District area. A further positive effect is the provision of passenger and freight transport to serve local business, industry and tourism. The main potential adverse effect of Airport activities is noise and its potential effects on nearby residential land uses, although air emissions, safety and traffic effects may also arise. If the effects of noise become excessive, or if noise-sensitive activities are inappropriately established in the vicinity of the Airport, the long-term viability of the Airport at its present location will be called into question.

The sustainable management of the Airport therefore requires planning for mitigation of future noise effects, as well as the avoidance of noise-sensitive activities establishing within the Air Noise boundaries for the Airport. Conflicts between the Airport and the Living 1 Environment and Open Space Environment will be managed through a range of regulatory and non-regulatory mechanisms that involve the Airport, operators, users and the community.

Although the Airport location at Onerahi has been confirmed beyond the life of this Plan, the long-term sustainable management of the Airport resource also requires management of all scenarios including that which would occur if the Airport was to relocate. Accordingly, if Whangarei Airport was to relocate, then many of the Airport provisions of this Plan will be redundant. In this event Council will initiate a review of all Airport provisions with a view to establishing a suitable land management regime easily integrated with the surrounding residential land use.

24.3 Objectives

24.3.1

The long-term continuation of Whangarei Airport at its present location, with provision for controlled growth in aircraft movements, whilst managing the effects of noise and other potential adverse effects on the community.

Explanation and Reasons: The Whangarei Airport is a significant physical resource, and contributes to the well-being of the people and community of Whangarei and the adjacent districts. This objective seeks to ensure its continued existence and moderate expansion.

24.4 Policies

24.4.1 Airport Resource

The operational area of the Whangarei Airport should be recognised and considered as an important community resource.

Explanation and Reasons: The Airport is governed by a designation for Aerodrome purposes and an airspace designation for the safe and efficient operations of aircraft on approach, landing and taking off. The Whangarei Airport is a large land area on which activities take place that are ancillary to, or directly associated with, the primary (and very important) transport use. The Airport is located partly in the coastal environment, and can provide a form of protection for some of the values of the coastal area. It does have the potential to conflict with activities in the surrounding Living 1 Environment and open Space Environment. The policy recognises the importance of Airport Operations.

24.4.2 Aircraft Noise

Noise effects of aircraft should be reasonable, in the context of the neighbourhoods surrounding Whangarei Airport, and should not exceed levels at, or outside, the Air Noise and Outer Control Boundary projected for the year 2027.

Explanation and Reasons: There is no one technique for managing the effects of Airport noise. Whangarei Airport is located in close proximity to established residential areas and areas of open space, which are expected to experience increased noise levels from aircraft movements. The average noise produced by the Airport is to be regulated, and other means of mitigation used, to address effects on and off site.

The Airport operator has produced projected noise contours for the year 2027. These allow for expected growth levels to that date. These noise contours have governed the placement of Air Noise Boundaries in this Plan. The Air Noise Boundary defines an area within which high levels of aircraft noise (65Ldn and above) are generated. The outer control boundary is further away from the Airport and defines an area of moderate levels of aircraft noise (55Ldn to 65Ldn). The Air Noise Margin controls will form the basis for managing the effects of aircraft noise, and land uses in areas identified as being subject to moderate-high noise levels of 55Ldn dBA and above. Limits will be established on aircraft noise of 65Ldn at Air Noise boundary and 55Ldn at the outer control boundary. The environments inside the Air Noise Boundary are considered adverse for noise-sensitive activities.

Both the Air noise Boundary and the Outer Control Boundary have been established in accordance with NZS6805: 1992 Airport Noise Management and Land Use Planning. It is recognised that the Whangarei Airport is a mixed use Airport that has both fixed wing aircraft and rotary winged (helicopter) aircraft. However, future growth predictions and modelling indicate that fixed wing aircraft will remain the dominant source of noise. The provisions of an Airport Noise Management Plan relating to helicopter hovering places significant restrictions on the overall growth of helicopter hovering at the Airport. Given this scenario, the Outer Control Boundary has been modelled, utilising predicted helicopter movements (take off and landing) and hovering, in a manner that is consistent with section 5.3.8 of NZS6807:1994 Noise Management And Land Use Planning For Helicopter Landing Areas.

24.4.3 Noise Management, Monitoring and Review

To establish methods for control, management and procedures for monitoring and audit of aircraft noise within areas defined by the Air Noise and outer control boundary.

The Council will exercise its commitment to environmental management, self monitoring and enforcement of environmental effects of Airport operations through the preparation, adoption, implementation and review of a Whangarei Airport Noise Management Plan and the establishment of an Airport Noise Management Committee.

Explanation and Reasons: Management and mitigation of adverse environmental effects generated by Airport activities requires implementation of best practices for aircraft noise abatement, operations requirements, airfield and airspace management. Formalised commitments to noise abatement can be established through a Noise Management Plan, which will be responsive to changing aviation practice/ technology and environmental outcomes. It will be a non-regulatory document in the context of this Plan but binding on the Whangarei District Council and the Whangarei Airport Authority and subject to affirmation by the Director of Civil Aviation. An Airport Noise Management Committee with representatives from both the community and Airport users will ensure that noise management is accountable to the Council and wider community.

24.4.4 Receiving Environment

The potential exposure of communities to Airport noise should be managed to ensure that a reasonable balance is achieved between the operational needs of the Whangarei Airport, over time, and the amenities and well-being of the community.

24.4.5 Noise-Sensitive Activities

The potential incompatibility between the Airport and the Living 1 environment and Open Space Environment should be managed through land use controls to avoid new noise-sensitive activities within the Air Noise boundary and provide restrictions on new noise-sensitive activities within the outer control boundary for the Airport, as well as implementation of best practice for mitigating noise from aircraft operations.

Explanation and Reasons: The Council has responsibility to address the effects of noise. A balanced approach is to control the activities producing the noise, under the previous policy, in addition to restricting the potential for people to be exposed to the noise, by limiting the numbers of houses in the worst affected areas.

It is appropriate to control development in order to avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse effects of aircraft noise on health and amenity. This can be done through rules which regulate activities in noise-affected areas. Residential activity and other noise-sensitive activities are subject to control because these activities are likely to suffer adverse effects from aircraft noise.

24.4.6 Fuel Burn

To monitor the effects of use of aviation fuel.

Explanation and Reasons: Odour, fuel droplets and carbon particles from aircraft operations have been identified as an issue for amenity of the Living 1 Environment and Open Space Environment. These effects from the use of hazardous substances in the operation of light aircraft and turbo prop aircraft are expected to be less than those associated with jet aircraft, which are unlikely to frequent Whangarei Airport. In view of the close proximity of the Living and Open Space environments, and the existence of helicopter activity at the Airport, a monitoring programme will be established in order to maintain existing standards of amenity and provide baseline information relating to this issue. The Whangarei District Council Monitoring Strategy sets out how monitoring will be undertaken. Refer to Chapter 1.7 – Plan Monitoring

24.5 Methods

24.5.1 Regulatory Methods

- Use of designation powers by the requiring authority as a network utility operator (Policy 24.4.1) and acceptance of controls on aircraft noise to be conditions on the Aerodrome designation.
- Rules regulating the generation of noise from the Airport, to limits set at the Air Noise and Outer Control Noise boundaries on the Planning Maps (Policy 24.4.2).
- Rules regulating the building or alteration of residential units within the Air Noise Boundary and in the Air Noise Margin as defined on planning map 46 (Policy 24.4.3).
- Develop and promote a set of “Acceptable Design Solutions”, with respect to achieving an appropriate internal dB(A)dn design level within the Outer Control Boundary of the Whangarei Airport.
- Measurement of Airport noise, and the processes for determining affected areas set out in New Zealand Standard 6805 ‘Airport Noise Management and Land Use Planning’ 1992 (Policy 24.4.3).
- Restriction on subdivision and density of development of noise-sensitive activities within the Air Noise boundaries.

24.5.2 Non-Regulatory Methods

- Establishment of a Council subcommittee, the Airport Noise Management Committee, with responsibility to initiate the preparation of a Noise Management Plan for the Airport and to make recommendations to the Airport Management in relation to noise, noise complaint and monitoring. This Sub-committee is to have representation from Council, Airport operators (or users) and the local community.

- Encouragement of adoption of Guidelines for Ambient Air Quality to manage effects of fuel burn.
- Encouragement of consultative processes and other techniques which can result in integrated management of any adverse effects arising from the Airport location and operation.
- Zoning of land, including rules, which give priority to Airport-related activities within the operational Airport area (Policy 24.4.3).
- Encourage the identification of alternative options for hovering activities that are not required to be undertaken within an Airport environment.
- Encourage, where practicable, the improvement of the visual amenity of the Airport through appropriate landscaping and planting, particularly where this has the potential to absorb noise emissions.

24.6 Anticipated Environmental Results

The following results are expected to be achieved by the foregoing Objectives, Policies and Methods. The means of monitoring whether the Plan achieves the expected outcomes are set out in the Whangarei District Council Monitoring Strategy. Specific monitoring of Airport noise will be established through the Noise Management Plan and implemented by the Council in conjunction with the Airport Management.

- Public health and amenity is addressed by minimising potential increase in noise-sensitive activities within the Airport's airnoise boundaries.
- Public health and amenity is addressed by implementing a suite of measures that include the management of Airport noise emissions to reasonable levels, and minimising potential increases in noise-sensitive activities within the Airport's Air Noise boundaries.
- The Airport is accountable for its management of operations to mitigate adverse environmental effects. A vehicle, the Airport Noise Management Committee, is available for the community and Airport users to make recommendations to the Airport Management on noise abatement.
- The continued efficient and safe operation of the Whangarei Airport, with provisions for controlled growth in the future.
- Adverse effects of the Airport on natural, cultural and historic heritage are avoided, remedied or mitigated.
- Effects of the Airport (including noise) on surrounding amenity values are controlled to a level deemed acceptable in the District Plan.
- The continued operation of the Airport is not hindered by future land use and development surrounding the Airport site.
- The Airport is accountable for its management of operations to mitigate adverse environmental effects. A vehicle, the Airport Noise Management Committee, is available for the community and Airport users to make recommendations to the Airport Management on noise abatement.