

SNOW (Stop Noise Over Whitchurch)

Progress Report 1 – 15th July 2020

1 Introduction

The objective of the SNOW project is to identify what steps can be taken to reduce or eradicate the noise nuisance to local residents caused by light planes doing aerobatics over the village.

2 The planes and pilots involved

The planes involved are privately owned and operate out of White Waltham airfield. It's assumed most if not all the pilots belong to the West London Aero Club which is based at White Waltham:

Contact details are:

White Waltham Airfield
White Waltham
Maidenhead
SL6 3NJ

Tel: 01628 823272
Email: ops@wlac.co.uk
Website: <https://www.wlac.co.uk/>

It's important to note that low altitude recreational flying, including aerobatics, is a legitimate activity subject only to the **The Rules of the Air Regulations 2015** (para 4.1)

3 Why are they so noisy?

External noise – ie the noise we hear on the ground from the planes doing aerobatics– comes from 2 main sources:

- Engine and mechanical noise
- Aerodynamic noise caused by the flow of air around the propeller blades – this is inherently noisy and accounts for most of the noise we hear.

4 What's the legal position?

4.1 Aircraft noise is generally exempted from the general noise nuisance controls. Generally, so long as **The Rules of the Air Regulations 2015** are being observed, aircraft are protected from action in respect of trespass or nuisance. However, section 4 states:

*“4. Aerobatic flight is not permitted—
(a) over the congested area of any city, town or settlement; or
(b) [not relevant to SNOW]”*

4.2 Another useful instrument for us is **The Aerodromes (Designation) (Facilities for Consultation) (Amendment) Order 2002** . This amends the Civil Aviation Act 1982 to require White Waltham [and other airports] to:

“... provide facilities for consultation on matters concerning the management or administration of the aerodrome for users of the aerodrome, for any appropriate local authority and for any other organisation representing local interests.”

4.3 Finally, the Civil Aviation Authority is the UK's aviation regulator. It has a role in aviation noise but does not involve itself in any initial response to individual complaints. Its website states (but without giving the legal reference)

"In general, if you have a complaint about aircraft noise, you should direct to it the airport where you think the aircraft was operating from. They have a duty to investigate your complaint and respond to you."

5 So what can we do?

At this stage I am pursuing one line of action. I have already written to The Chief Executive at White Waltham airfield asking him/her for details of their consultation procedures (para 4.2 above). I intend to meet with them for a courteous and constructive discussion and seek:

- 1 Details of their consultation procedures (para 4.2 above)
- 2 Their confirmation that they accept Whitchurch-on-Thames is a "settlement" (para 4.1 above)
- 3 Their assurance that they will deal properly with complaints in future (para 4.3 above).
The experience of myself and others is that they haven't always done so in the past.

6 And then what?

When we get White Waltham's assurance on the above we should publicise the complaints procedure in the Bulletin and village website and encourage residents to complain when they are disturbed by light aircraft doing aerobatics.

We may need to publicise Flightradar24 - <https://www.flightradar24.com> – as a tool to help identify a plane's registration number.

7 Is there anything else we can do?

There is no reason to think we cannot engage constructively with White Waltham.

However, if we feel that they are not dealing with our concerns and complaints in a fair and reasonable manner we can complain to the Civil Aviation Authority as the aviation regulator.

Geoff Weir
15th July 2020