

Notes of the verbal presentation by Silvia Fowler,
on behalf of Silvia Fowler and Peter Mark Fowler
As presented at Hearing 17—Te Kowhai Airpark

Intro:

My name is Silvia Fowler and, together with my husband, own a property at 257 Collie Road, located under the western end of the approachway of the proposed extended OLS.

Being located under the approachway to the airfield means that we are subjected to air traffic flying directly over our house at relatively low altitude.

Proposed OLS:

We are opposing the proposed OLS based on the negative implications this will have on affected properties and also due to the overall lack of consultation and limited information that was issued to affected property owners.

Several properties would have a financial burden placed on them in terms of meeting compliance by having to bear the cost of either removing or controlling the heights of any trees which extend into the proposed OLS height limits. This would be an ongoing issue for the current and future property owners as trees continue to grow.

Some properties located on elevated areas and/or close to the airfield would have more stringent height restrictions placed on any proposed building works than what they are currently subjected to under the building regulations. This would most certainly impact the saleability and development potential of those properties.

The proposed OLS would be noted in the LIM report of affected properties. The OLS associated restrictions and potential ongoing financial burden to meet compliance could discourage prospective property buyers.

NZTE have stated that the Te Kowhai Airfield would continue to operate as a recreational airfield and that the purpose of extending the OLS is to improve safety to pilots when approaching and taking off from the airfield, particularly during inclement weather or during the night time.

Is there really a need for recreational pilots to be flying in inclement weather conditions or during the night?

Surely someone's chosen recreational activity should not be at the expense of other property owners and residents?!

The airfield would be able to continue operating as a recreational airfield, just like it has done for many years, without changing the current OLS.

There is also some conflicting and confusing information in regards to the different areas within the proposed OLS and the implications to affected properties.

In the Variation 1 document it is stated that:

“ A building, structures, trees and vegetation height control rule applies to land under the obstacle limitation surface to ensure aircraft safety by keeping flight paths clear of obstructions. ”

Then, in the Summary of Evidence and Supplementary Evidence of David Park on behalf of NZTE, it says that while certain areas of the OLS have to be kept clear of obstacles, other areas of the OLS could have obstacles present.?!

Mr Park stated that:

“I support the provision of OLS at the Aerodrome as notified, with the proviso that there is some flexibility in determining, on a case-by-case basis, whether existing or new OLS protrusions need to be removed, depending on where they are located. ”

These statements only enforce the uncertainty to property owners as to whether or not, or to what degree their properties will or will not be affected by the proposed OLS. There is no pre-determined guarantee that a particular structure, tree, or cluster of trees which are currently protruding into the proposed OLS will be able to remain, or how it will affect any already established trees which in the future will grow to a height that will encroach into the proposed OLS.

So, what exactly is the criteria for this “flexible determination on a case-by-case basis”?

Who sets these criteria and who makes these determinations?

Te Kowhai airfield is currently used by pilots who are based at the airfield, as well as itinerant pilots.

The new OLS would allow pilots to operate using IFR. This capability would also make Te Kowhai airfield a viable option for more itinerant pilots as well as flight schools to use the airfield to train in the use of IFR. Even if there are no plans to have any flight schools based at the airfield itself, there are no restrictions in place that would prohibit flight schools, that are based at other airfields, from using Te Kowhai airfield for training purposes.

NZTE has on several occasions stated that there is no intention to have a flight school based at the Te Kowhai airfield. Yet in the Summary of Evidence document by Dan Readman on behalf of NZTE Operations Ltd, dated 03 March 2021,

Point nr. 3 (e) reads:

*“The current activities, including the rescue helicopter operation, police operations, enroute refuelling facilities, **and support for small flying schools based at Te Kowhai.**”*

Well... not too far away from Te Kowhai is the Matamata aerodrome, and it is a good example of how a small rural airfield turned into a cause of much anxiety to local residents as a result of flight school training.

We do not want the same issues happening here.

Using Te Kowhai Airfield as a training airstrip by flight schools, either based at the airfield or based at other airfields, should not be a permitted activity, with the exception being the ongoing training required by private pilots who are based at Te Kowhai Airfield, in order to retain their accreditations.

Development and intensification of the Te Kowhai Airfield

We are opposed to the proposed development of an airpark at Te Kowhai Airfield based on the negative affect this would have on the surrounding community and future residential development in the area and also due to the complete lack of consultation with all affected parties.

We feel that the proposed intensification of operations at the airfield with the proposed development of an airpark, should have been notified to ALL affected parties. The proposal by NZTE is to increase the number of aeroplanes based at the airfield from the current approximately 65 to 200. ...a more than 3 fold increase!!!

Due to the location of our property, we are directly affected by any increase in the number of flights to and from the airfield.

The first bit of correspondence we ever received from NZTE was a letter dated 23rd February 2018.

It outlined the Proposed Change to the Waikato District Plan in regards to the proposed OLS for Te Kowhai Aerodrome.

One of the points in this letter was:

Does The Change In OLS Affect Aircraft Intensity Or The Existing Air Noise Boundary

...and then went on to say:

“Aircraft movement intensity is managed by the existing Air Noise Boundary (ANB) which is already provided for in the Operative District Plan. The ANB levels have been set for a number of years and any future aerodrome development will be designed to ensure compliance with those limits. The ability to operate under IFR conditions has no bearing on the ANB, which is unaffected by the Plan review.”

Without any other information at hand at that time, this statement in itself intimated that there were no significant changes planned to the current operations at the airfield. There was no mention of the planned airpark development nor the proposed 3 fold increase of aeroplanes to be based at the airfield.

The first we heard about the airpark proposal was at a community meeting held on the 8th July 2019. I believe this meeting was instigated by the Te Kowhai Community Group, and not by NZTE.

By this date, the proposed changes to the OLS as well as the proposed zone changes to facilitate the airpark were already written into the Proposed District Plan.

This complete lack of consultation with the community and especially with those who will be directly affected by these changes are simply un-acceptable!!!

Furthermore, NZTE have on numerous occasions stated that there are currently NO limits in place in terms of allowed flight movements and noise limits. This is a complete contradiction to what they stated in the aforementioned February 2018 letter.

So one of those statements is either very misleading, or simply not true.

Aircraft arrivals and departures are not subject to District Plan Rules, and are therefore noted as being outside the scope of the Acoustic Assessment in the Marshall Day Report, which focuses on the noise from taxiing aircraft and other on-site activities. Although a certain degree of overhead air traffic is an acceptable part of living close to a small rural airfield, developing the Te Kowhai Airfield into an airpark, with a projected threefold increase in the number of aeroplanes, would be far beyond what is currently an acceptable level of air traffic experienced in the area.

In terms of noise from airmovements, no consideration has been given to those residents living under the approachway beyond the Air Noise Control Boundaries. The noise emitted by an aeroplane flying at relatively low altitude soon after take-off or on approach to the airfield is still quite disruptive, especially on overcast days when sound gets bounced off the clouds back towards the ground.

It is also noted in the Marshall Day report that engine testing is excluded from the proposed noise limit. The noise from engine testing would be just as disruptive to nearby residents, or even more so because of their sustained nature.

Engine testing, as required after an engine service, or having had mechanical work done, should therefore be limited to weekdays, Mon-Fri between 8am & 5pm.

It has been proposed to impose strict regulations on new developments which fall within the airpark noise control boundaries in terms of acoustic insulation requirements at the expense to the home owner. Trying to retrofit any existing homes within that area with acoustic insulation as would be recommended, would be difficult and even more costly. And although acoustic insulation would protect home occupants from noise while inside the house (as long as all doors and windows are shut), it does not protect from noise while trying to enjoy the outdoor living areas.

The effects of air traffic noise are felt well beyond the noted noise control boundaries of the Marshall Day Report. Given its close proximity to Te Kowhai Village and Te Kowhai School and also taking into account the predicted growth in residential property developments in the areas surrounding the airfield, any development at the airfield which would result in a substantial increase in air movements compared to current levels should not be allowed.

Summary:

The OLS should be retained as noted in the 2013 Operative District Plan.

We request that an annual limit on flight movements be implemented, which more closely relates to current and historical figures.

Flights should be restricted to daylight hours, with no night flying except for emergency services.

Flight school training, or any other activities that require repetitive circuit flying (such as skydiving) should not be a permitted activity at Te Kowhai Airfield.

Comprehensive consultation needs to take place with the wider community and all affected parties on ALL aspects of the proposed changes and proposed developments at the airfield.