

Dublin Airport flight path planning issue

Background

Since August 24th, 2022, when the new North Runway opened the flight paths that aircraft have been taking when using the new north runway have surprised local communities.

At present the planning permission for the North Runway is the permission that was granted in 2007. Based on that permission, operations off the new runway should be taking a path straight out from the runway for five nautical miles before turning towards its destination (with quicker turns allowed for slower aircraft).

Despite this, the Standard Instrument Departure procedures (SIDs) prepared for the new runway too a dramatically different approach.

They instructed aircraft to turn on reaching 650ft on two new bearings, not contained in any documentation. Those new flight paths are 30° north and 75° north.

This has caused considerable disturbance to communities who were not aware that they were ever likely to be impacted by aircraft noise.

The new flight paths, rather than avoid populated areas, have directed aircraft over rural villages. These villages are Coolquay, Rolestown, and Ballyboughal.

Since February 23rd, new SIDs have been put in place following a 'review' by the DAA of the flight paths.

The new routes have taken some communities out of the area impacted but made it much worse for others. The village of Coolquay is now experiencing such a severe impact it may be included in Noise Zone A. In this zone no residential development, or other noise sensitive developments, are permitted. Based on this new flight path a nursing home, a creche, a national school (with 3 autism units) and land with an application to ABP for 170+ homes have been drawn into Noise Zone A.

New planning permission

The DAA has also [applied for revised planning conditions](#) which would allow for night flights off the North Runway. This application [has been appealed to An Bord Pleanala](#) by residents and Environmental groups.

As part of that application there are new flight paths listed showing divergence north.

If the DAA gets permission from ABP for the changes then these new flight paths will become the established routes.

What is happening now does not align with those routes. Those new routes were permitted and prepared just a matter of months ago, yet they do not match up with the current routes.

The existing permission, which this application seeks to amend, has an upper limit of 65 flights per night, which DAA also seem to be very clearly in breach of at this time.

The most notable difference is that as part of those plans flights off the North Runway follow the runway track for 1 nautical mile before diverting north. This brings aircraft into a less populated area and avoid rural villages.

Noise contours

Noise contours were prepared before the launch of the North Runway, and they were consulted extensively on. They outlined the expected impact of noise on the community on initial operation and for the years to come.

They outlined three noise zones to be used for planning purposes. Noise zone A represents the most impacted areas with noise sensitive developments not allowed. Noise zone B represents less impacted areas but some development allowed with insulation and sound proofing. Noise zone C, noise sensitive developments allowed with expert sound proofing advice and insulation.

Unsurprisingly, they no longer make sense.

The contours were developed outlining a variety of flight paths to the west and north. Despite this reasonably broad approach to detailing the impact they did not factor in the impact of a 75° deviation and as such very many people who expected to be without impact or in Noise zone C are experiencing impacts aligned with Zone A or B.

This means that the insulation schemes that have been operating to date have insulated homes that are not facing significant impact and that many other properties are now in need of insulation.

Also, the significant planning impacts of Noise zone A, namely the sterilisation of land, is currently applying to the wrong areas.

Public outcry, planning enforcement, and changes to the flight paths

Following the first flights from the new North Runway, local people filed planning complaints to Fingal County Council in relation to the flight paths. In the region of 60 complaints were received by FCC.

Later in the year FCC announced that they were starting the planning enforcement process by writing to the DAA seeking more information on what was happening. Within four weeks the DAA responded and a further round of information seeking. The process is ongoing, and FCC are awaiting further information from DAA with a deadline of the 6th of February.

Once serious concerns started to be expressed the DAA said that they were going to carry out a review of what was happening.

This review has led to new flight paths being filed by the IAA. From February 23rd the new flight paths will come into effect.

The changes involve all the traffic travelling on the 30° north line for roughly 4km and then splitting with eastern traffic travelling due north before turning and western and southern traffic continuing on 30° until they reach sufficient height.

Implications of new flight paths

The new flight paths also present significant issues.

Firstly, they also do not meet what was proposed under planning, either the 2007 planning permission or the one currently being decided upon.

The change is closer to what has been proposed but clearly doesn't align. It is not clear how this could not be considered a breach of planning permission (if granted).

The other serious implication is the planning impact this would have on the rural village of Coolquay. Some early analysis suggests that Noise zone A could now reach as far as the village. There is

currently planning permission with An Bord Pleanála for 170 homes to be built there. If it is entering Noise zone A then it puts this project at risk. The decision to push the noise zone into land zoned for residential will have a serious impact on the local communities.

Why are the IAA and DAA changing from their plans?

The DAA or the IAA have not given a detailed explanation of the reasons for the divergent routes. The IAA have given explanations to Air Traffic Controllers for the divergence and DAA representatives have given verbal explanations to locals but never in detail or in writing.

The need to maintain a 30 degree divergence to the north comes from a regulation relating to how you can use parallel runway in segregated mode.

Segregated mode means that one of the parallel runways takes flights landing while the other is used for take offs.

Dublin Airport is seeking to make segregated mode its primary way of operating.

This means flights taking off from the North Runway and landing on the South from 6am to 12midnight with night flights all operated off the southern runway.

The issue here is that 'go-arounds' or missed approaches to the southern runway have to deviate by 30 degrees from the flight paths on the other runway. That is required under regulation.

The DAA and the IAA are saying that it is not possible to create a missed approach procedure for a 30 degree deviation to the south.

They cite the proximity of Baldonnell airspace as the reason for this.

Baldonnell airspace is roughly 10 nautical miles along the 30 degree deviation south of the south runway. Aircraft must be above 3,000 ft at that point to avoid this airspace.

It is common for aircraft to reach much higher altitudes within this distance although it would be above the standard Missed Approach Procedure gradient.

There is also an issue around the position of Weston Airport within the airspace and possible issues with approaches to these airfields.

It is very unclear whether these obstacles to the south can be avoided through a Missed Approach Procedure design or through adjusting the airspace in consultation with Weston and the Defence Forces. Derogations from standard procedures can be given to safely avoid obstacles.

Questions that should be answered

Is it possible for the airport to meet its planning permission through the design of a new Missed Approach Procedure for 28L (South Runway) with the current airspace?

[Independent expert]

Is it possible for the airport to meet its planning permission by changing the airspace in consultation with relevant stakeholders?

[Independent expert]

Are existing planning permissions considered when formulating and approving new SIDs? Do the two relevant regulatory bodies (FCC and IAA) communicate with each other in relation to their respective competencies?

Relevant graphics

Original 2007 planning permission flight paths



With actual flights mapped



2019 planning application flight maps



With actual flights mapped



First 70 flights from Feb 23rd SIDS

