

# AIRCRAFT NOISE AND BAD TRACK-KEEPING HOW TO COMPLAIN. WHAT TO COMPLAIN ABOUT. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU DO. And 'THE RULES'

## 1 How to Complain

Complaints are dealt with by Stansted Airport's Flight Evaluation Unit (FEU). An easy way to complain is to use the [SSE form](#) which provides all the information the FEU requires. It is important to complete each box, especially the date, time and postcode, which allows the incident to be identified by FEU. Every complaint made using our form is automatically forwarded to the FEU. A copy also goes to SSE, which helps us monitor the pattern and causes of complaints. Alternatively, contact the FEU direct - details below. If you email the FEU, please send a copy to: [info@stopstanstedexpansion.com](mailto:info@stopstanstedexpansion.com)

If you want a written reply from the FEU, it is important to request this.

## 2 What to Complain About

You are entitled to complain about any nuisance from the airport, particularly if you believe that a particular aircraft was either excessively **noisy, too low, or off-track**. Rules governing noise and track-keeping are complex - we have summarised some of the main regulations below (see 4 The Rules). It is helpful to have some knowledge of these and also to be familiar with flight paths and likely heights relating to where you live or work. In general, though, our advice is to use common-sense in deciding whether you have been upset, annoyed or disturbed by a noisy or off-track aircraft.

Legitimate complaints are important because they inform Stansted Airport (STAL) about the impact the airport is having on the community and whether its mitigation measures are effective. Lack of complaints can be seen as a sign of acceptance of noisy aircraft. You may also feel satisfied that you have at least registered a complaint. If you also inform SSE it helps us to judge whether the situation is getting better or worse.

How often you complain will depend on where you live and what your particular criteria are for 'nuisance', e.g. sleep disturbance, the number of occurrences, interruption of music or conversation. Some may complain when they feel the overall noise climate has changed for the worse or the pattern of operations has changed. You should be aware that those who complain most regularly or frequently may eventually receive less informative replies from the FEU or have the validity of their complaints implicitly undermined. Those who complain at least 30 times every month are put in the 'multiple complainers' category (see 3 What happens when you complain)

SSE encourages residents to complain responsibly and according to their own consistent criteria, and if necessary, to keep complaining even though they may feel their complaints are not yet achieving the desired effect.

## 3 What Happens When You Complain

If you requested a written reply, you should receive a letter or email, usually with a map, within about a week. The reply is based on information taken from noise monitors close to the airport and National Air Traffic Services radar tracking system. If the incident qualifies as an 'infringement' you may also receive a later, additional reply as the FEU will pursue the matter with the airline and may impose a fine, which is distributed to the local community through STAL's Community Trust Fund.

Details of your complaint will be added to the Airport's statistics, which are reported quarterly to the Stansted Airport Consultative Committee (STACC), comprising representatives of local councils and other stakeholder organisations (with meetings attended by Stansted Airport's management). The data are also considered in more detail by the Airport's Noise and Track Keeping Working Group and the quarterly statistics are also reported to the Department for Transport. Complaints from 'multiple complainers' (see 2 What to complain about) are totalled separately from the main statistics.

Track keeping performance, noise infringements and complaints statistics are published on the [airport's website](#).

## 4 'The Rules'

This is a summary of the main regulations, as set down by the Department for Transport, covering noise and track keeping. SSE does not agree with many aspects of the official noise control regime and continues to press for improvements, including the establishment of an independent complaints handling body.

**Complaints fall into one of two categories: infringements and non-infringements.**

## INFRINGEMENTS

These include the following:

- An aircraft exceeding the noise limit when flying over noise monitors positioned 6.5 km from the start of the runway in both directions. Noise limits are set by the Department for Transport.
- A departing aircraft that passes over the noise monitors at less than 1,000 feet above the airport.
- A departing aircraft leaving the 3 km wide swathe of one of the six departure routes (Noise Preferential Routes or NPRs) before attaining 4,000 feet altitude (or 3,000 feet between 0600 and 2330 in the case of two of the routes).
- Aircraft must avoid flying over the centre of Bishop's Stortford; or at less than 2,500 ft. over Sawbridgeworth and Stansted Mountfitchet; and less than 4,000 feet above St Elizabeth's Centre in Much Hadham.
- Other incidents such as very low flying aircraft over built up areas and use of excessive (in the Airport's judgement) reverse thrust when landing at night.

### NOTES:

**Altitude:** All references to altitude are those above sea level, so in practice the distance between you and the aircraft will be less than the height quoted in the FEU's reply (the airport itself is about 350 feet above sea level).

**Exceptions:** In some instances the regulations can be relaxed, eg aircraft acting under special instructions from Air Traffic Control for safety reasons.

**Helicopters:** Helicopters do not fly the Noise Preferential Routes but have 'Visual Flight Routes' and are under the constant guidance of air traffic control.

**Non-Stansted traffic:** The FEU cannot deal with complaints about aircraft not taking off or landing at Stansted. These will normally be at higher altitude than Stansted traffic.

**For more information:** Contact the FEU for a copy of the Airport's leaflet 'An overview of noise at Stansted Airport', which can be [downloaded here](#) or requested from the FEU (details below).

## NON-INFRINGEMENTS

Arrivals, which account for half the operations at the airport, do not keep to specific noise preferential routes (i.e. equivalent to the departure NPRs) since there are no fixed flight paths until aircraft are established on the Instrument Landing System on the final approach. There are no fixed noise limits or fixed heights, however air traffic controllers will take into account environmental considerations. The point at which aircraft intercept the Instrument Landing system is known as the Joining Point. This has minimum height and distance requirements depending on the time of day. Arrivals may not descend below an altitude of 2,000 feet (3,000 feet between 2330 and 0600 hours) until they are established on the final approach.

## CONTACT DETAILS

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