

Noisy light aircraft

SNOW – Stop Noise Over Whitchurch – was set up in 2020 to tackle the problem of noisy aerobatic light aircraft above the village. We think we've been successful.

By invitation, I visited White Waltham airfield in August 2020 and had constructive discussions about our concerns with the Deputy Airfield Manager. He agreed to designate a circular “no-go” area for aerobatics of 2 nautical miles (2.3 statute miles) radius centred on Whitchurch Bridge - the bridge is easy to see from the air, and 2 nautical miles is a distance light aircraft pilots are familiar with for other reasons.

Members of the West London Aero Club who fly out of White Waltham for aerobatics will be expected to follow this rule. However, it's important to note that White Waltham does not control the airspace above Whitchurch-on-Thames: Heathrow controls a corridor above 4,500 ft and RAF Benson between 3,200 ft and 4,500 ft. The airspace below 3,200 ft is uncontrolled, and any light aircraft pilot has the right to fly in this airspace subject only to Civil Aviation Authority rules, The Rules of the Air Regulations 2015, etc.

The agreed “no-go” area gives us better protection against aerobatic aircraft than does reliance on these rules. There have been a few incursions since the “no-go” area was agreed, but these were reported to White Waltham who dealt with them robustly.

What can I do if an aerobatic aircraft appears?

Any Whitchurch resident can complain to White Waltham if an aircraft does aerobatics over the village – phone 01628 823 272.

Please:

- Be courteous to the person answering the phone – they may just be admin staff.
- Bear in mind that although most aerobatic aircraft we see come from White Waltham, some don't and are thus beyond the control of White Waltham airfield.
 - Give your postcode, and an exact time when the incident took place.
 - If possible, give a description of the aircraft, eg colour or any markings.
- Give your contact details if asked – you may get a phone call from the pilot to apologise!

If an incident occurs, the more people that complain the more likely action will follow. If you're still not happy, please let me know. I have details of contacts through whom I can escalate complaints.

Please note that although the **Civil Aviation Authority** is supposed to enforce the Rules of the Air Regulations 2015, they have in the past shown no interest in following up complaints about aerobatic aircraft contravening Rule 4 which states that aerobatic flight is not permitted over the congested area of any city, town or settlement. Complainants are normally referred to the airfield from which the plane operates.

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