

Submission on the airport company's Application to use the Southern part of Miramar Golf Course for aviation

In my view, the application should be declined for the reasons outlined in this submission.

I wish to speak on this matter.

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My Interest

My interest in aviation and climate safe travel includes:

- My father worked with National Airways Corporation and Air New Zealand and my family travelled extensively
- I learned about global heating in physics at Victoria University in 1979
- I was a member of Wellington Aero Club and held a private pilot licence
- I calculated the total global heating effect of a Vancouver conference, which I attended; it was almost entirely air travel
- The threat of global heating became apparent to me in 2009 when reading a New Scientist article on the topic, that predicted that mid latitudes would be uninhabitable
- I edited "Beyond Flying" in 2014, published by Green Books, Cambridge, UK. The book chronicles flightless journeys around the world
- My involvement in the climate safe travel movement includes running and attending seminars and conferences on the topic, representing Flightfree World in NZ, extensive reading on the topic and travelling long low carbon journeys, including Oslo to Shanghai by train
- From my Hataitai property, I observe the tanker ships bringing kerosene to the airport tank farm and observe flights
- The earth is already +1.14C over its pre-industrial temperature and Dr James Hansen said that +1C the maximum safe temperature, when he spoke in Wellington in 2011. Beyond +1C a range of serious effects threaten life on earth, including positive feedback. International reaction to extreme weather, drought, fire, floods etc means that prospects for our children and grandchildren are already bleak, so I am pointing out reasons that the applicant's proposal should be declined.

Incomplete Assessment of Environmental Effects

The applicant's assessment of the environmental effects is incomplete:

1. Wellington International Airport is the principal portal of the COVID19 virus into Wellington. The virus is a hazard to Wellingtonians' health and lives, as well as the economy of the city and function of government. The applicant's assessment of environmental effects has neither acknowledged, quantified the COVID19 virus infections that have come through Wellington International Airport, nor assessed the increased risk of more passengers bringing future viruses to the Wellington population.
2. The applicant's characterisation of travel as a "demand" is not fact-based. While there medical emergencies and a tiny proportion of other journeys could be said to be high priority, most air travel is discretionary. This was demonstrated during the 2020 pandemic, when many people started meeting by teleconferences and other internet services.
3. The applicant's statement that "...aviation emissions are 2% of global emissions" (Page 10 WIAL East Side NOR) is misleading. Aviation is responsible for 3.5% of global heating according to Professor Lee and his team (<https://www.mmu.ac.uk/news-and-events/news/story/12787/>). We understand that Wellington City Council finds that aviation is responsible for 11% of Wellingtonians' emissions.

Airport Objective for Sustainable Operation

WIAL objectives include: “To operate, maintain, upgrade and extend the facilities at Wellington International Airport to continue to provide for the aircraft types currently in use, and likely to be in use in the foreseeable future by New Zealand’s major domestic and international airlines in a sustainable manner.”

In 1987, the United Nations Brundtland Commission defined sustainability as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” (academicimpact.un.org/content/sustainability)

There was 570 GtCO₂ to have a 67% chance of staying below 1.5C (World Resources Institute 7 October 2018) and around 40 GtCO₂ emitted per year (statistica.com). At this rate, global emissions need to be zero by 2032.

While aeronautical engineering may continue to make tiny reductions in GHG emissions from like-for-like aircraft, the applicant offered no evidence that Wellington air traffic emissions would operate “... without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

Conclusion

The applicant provides no proof that airport operation is sustainable and therefore incompatible with the airport’s objective. Accommodating even more fossil fuelled aircraft at the airport would make the airport even less sustainable - the opposite to its objective - so the applicant’s proposed changes to the golf course should be declined.

Miramar Golf Course is the Buffer Zone

RMA Section 171 (1) requires proposals to be considered for compliance with the existing district plan, which states that it remains a Golf Course because:

The existing Golf Course provides a buffer between the Residential Areas and the Airport operations. The intention is to retain as much open space as is practical for golf course and recreational use.

The applicant's proposal is to remove this buffer and put airport operations next to people's houses. This is a significant adverse effect that would not be suitably mitigated, therefore the application should be declined.

Climate Change = Economic Decline = Less Air Travel = No Requirement

The designation must comply with the Part 2 (s171(1)) including Section 7(i) the effects of climate change:

At the applicant's 28 January 2021 public presentation of their ambitions to modify the golf course, their representative advised that passenger forecasts are based on:

- Historical passenger numbers
- Economic forecasts
- GDP forecasts
- Forward fuel contract prices
- Airline plans

The applicant's representative said that passenger forecasts do NOT take account of the economic effects of climate change. These include the effects of fire, flood, storms, drought, disease, mass extinction and other effects of the climate emergency.

The decline in the economy as a result of climate change was most famously demonstrated by the Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change 2006 (reference HM Treasury, UK). The direct relationship between economy and air travel was demonstrated when the 2008 "global financial crisis" suppressed passenger numbers. Thus, climate change will suppress passenger numbers.

The climate emergency has been recognised by Wellington, New Zealand and 38 other countries. A passenger forecast that ignores the economic effects of climate change fails to demonstrate that proposed work is required therefore eth application should be declined.

Alternatives

Section 171(1)(b) RMA requires the Council to have particular regard to whether adequate consideration has been given to alternative sites, routes, or methods of undertaking the work. This consideration must be undertaken if “it is likely that the work will have a significant adverse effect on the environment.”

Despite the proposal having significant adverse effects, the applicant has failed to show alternatives, therefore it should be declined.

Less Tourism for a Stronger Wellington Economy

Since the 2020 “lockdown” (to minimise virus infections) the Wellington economy has been booming despite – or because – international tourism has effectively stopped. There are several possible explanations for this.

Tourism Yields Poor Productivity

The late Sir Paul Callaghan - New Zealander of the Year - pointed out that tourism has a low productivity, and that increasing our wealth depends on moving out of the tourism sector and into more productive sectors. For example, having fewer low wage jobs (like taxi drivers and hotel cleaners) and more higher wage jobs (for example, film making and specialised manufacturing). Reference: “Rethinking Creativity with the late Sir Paul Callaghan” - youtube.com

Wellington’s Booming Staycation Economy

Before the virus, Wellington tourism was dominated by outbound Wellingtonians leaving Wellington to travel overseas. During 2020 wealthier Wellingtonians were more likely to employ Wellington tradespeople to renovate their house instead of renting a villa in Tuscany in July and August. The economic effect of Wellington’s wealthier residents spending discretionary income in Wellington is to strengthen the Wellington economy.

The Vision of New Zealand’s Boutique Tourism

Air New Zealand’s Chief Executive Officer, Christopher Luxon, said ‘We need to turn the place into Switzerland, not Cancun’ (Q+A: Christopher Luxon interviewed by Corin Dann Monday, 26 November 2018 Press Release: TVNZ). Mr Luxon’s vision of “boutique tourism” offers Wellington three major benefits:

1. Avoid the much-maligned “overtourism” that is popularly associated with overcrowded attractions, Asians driving on the wrong side of the road and “freedom campers” using our countryside as their toilet.
2. Rapidly reduce the amount of kerosene pumped through Wellington airport to be burnt in the upper troposphere, where it heats the climate fastest twice as fast.
3. Improve our economy with better paying jobs than offered in tourism.

Move Wellington Tourism Up Market

In conclusion, Wellington could have environmental, economic and cultural benefits with a much smaller boutique tourism market. Boutique tourism would require far fewer flights so the proposed changes to the golf course are unnecessary.

Climate Safe Travel

Section 171(1)(b) RMA requires particular regard to be taken to whether adequate consideration has been given to alternative sites, routes, or methods of undertaking the work. This consideration must be undertaken if “it is likely that the work will have a significant adverse effect on the environment.”

The applicant has not considered methods of connecting across the internet and methods of inter-city mobility that emit low/zero carbon. People are increasingly choosing low/zero carbon travel including:

- Greta Thunberg
- Contributors to my book “Beyond Flying” 2014 (Green Books, Cambridge, UK)
- Those self-listed in flightfree.world and flightfree organisations in 7 countries
- Engineers in the Transition Engineering teleconferences 2010-2020
- ICMPC Musicologists, who met online in a multi hub conference in 2018
- Physicist, Professor Shaun Hendy, “#NoFly Walking the Talk on Climate Change” BWB, 2019
- The musician, engineer and psychologist speaking at the FlightFreeOz seminar on 24 February 2021
- Lawyer, Tom Bennion who quit flying in 2009
- StayGrounded.org conference delegates since about 2015
- A Flight Free NZ group on Facebook
- Academics self-listed on academicflyingblog.wordpress.com
- Climate scientists self-listed on noflyclimatesci.org
- Travel writers; Michael Kerr, Evelina Utterdahl, Gavin Haines

“Travelling” in Cyberspace

People are connecting with computer games, virtual reality, teleconferencing, holographs and social media. Whereas aviation uses a mature technology, information technology is developing at pace.

Increasingly Rapid Shift to Flight Free Travel

As the fires, floods, disease, drought, storms and pandemics of climate change kill more people and destroy the natural environment, fewer people will use fossil fuelled aircraft, so the applicant’s proposed changes to the golf course are NOT required.

My Backyard

Threat of Worse Airport Traffic Noise, Pollution, Traffic, Hazards and Congestion

Vehicular traffic, congestion, pollution and road accidents other nuisance factors caused by the applicant's proposed increased air travel would worsen our quality of life, particularly in Hataitai, Kilbirnie, Oriental Bay, Mt Victoria and Te Aro.

The applicant provided no evidence that local authorities are capable of solving Wellington's transport problems. They demolished its entire light rail network circa 1960 – including a light rail route right past the airport - and failed in attempts to rebuild a single light rail line in 1990, 2010 and 2020.

Even if Wellington City Council could build first world public transport in the foreseeable future, it would take many decades to replace low density suburban sprawl in inner city suburbs, with medium density buildings close to the CBD. The "Lets Get Wellington Moving" has been reported to be another failure. The applicant offers no evidence that the councils have recently obtained the ability to urbanise and build effective transport after half a century of failing to do so.

Aircraft and Airport Road Traffic Nuisance

I live on Evans Bay, 3km north of the runway. Whilst I do not mind occasional aircraft passing, frequent fossil fuel aircraft (at busy times) are a nuisance.

Evans Bay was beautiful place during the COVID "lockdown" in 2020 because there were fewer flights and less airport road traffic on Evans Bay Parade.

Road traffic on Evans Bay Parade diminishes my quality of life and makes it more dangerous to use the bike track and access the footpath. Accommodating any additional airline passengers would worsen the airport nuisance in surrounding suburbs and there is no evidence that local authorities can solve the problem, so the golf course should not be used for parking more aircraft.

Aviation is a Dirty Business

The applicant raised the prospect of clean green aircraft. Unfortunately (with the possible exception of short flights in small electric aircraft) there is no evidence passenger aircraft flying on sustainable energy in the foreseeable future. Even if zero carbon aircraft engines were developed tomorrow, certification of new commercial aircraft is necessarily conservative, and time consuming.

Electricity

I am hoping to cross Cook Strait in a small commercial electric passenger aircraft before 2030. However, there are no foreseeable electric passenger aircraft with a range much further than Blenheim. This is because the energy density of batteries is nowhere near that of kerosene.

Biofuel

Air New Zealand flew a B747 using 50% jatropha seed biofuel on one of its four engines for a thirty-minute flight in 2009. The applicant offers no evidence that Air New Zealand is flying biofuel aircraft, or will do so in the foreseeable future. The main obstacle is that biofuel aviation would require vast land areas for crops or other feedstock.

Hydrogen

Hydrogen is an extremely inefficient way of storing energy and there are challenges to storing vast quantities of gas or super cooled liquid in aircraft fuselages.

Synthetic Kerosene

Synthetic kerosene is possible, but Air New Zealand and its government owner chose not to build a synthetic kerosene plant at Tiwai point (where they could have used abundant electricity at the port of Bluff for distributing it). The cost of synthetic kerosene would be substantially higher than fossil fuel, therefore there would be vastly fewer flights. Even if synthetic kerosene were manufactured from renewable energy, its use in jet aircraft would presumably leave contrails (H₂O) in the upper troposphere, where they heat the earth as similar amount to CO₂ burning fossil fuel in jet engines.

Airships

Large solar-powered airships have been proposed to ride high-altitude jet stream winds for clean air freight. However, I understand that they would be limited to unscheduled flights downwind in a westerly direction in latitudes where there are favourable winds.

“Offsetting” Scams

Airlines are promoting various offsetting scams, however they would have to be very expensive to be effective to prevent aviation heating the planet, and if they were effective, then they would reduce air travel.

Conclusion

The Miramar Golf Course should remain entirely as a golf course, because of these reasons:

Incomplete Assessment of Environmental Effects

Airport Objective for Sustainable Operation

Miramar Golf Course is the Buffer Zone

Climate Change = Economic Decline = Less Air Travel = No Requirement

Alternatives

Less Tourism for a Stronger Wellington Economy

Climate Safe Travel

My Backyard

Aviation is a Dirty Business

Therefore, I submit that the application should be declined.

I wish to speak on this matter.