



To whom it my concern,

On acquiring Farway Common Airfield, we recognised and understood the significant responsibilities to both the General Aviation and Local Community that came with it. We were successful in our purchase amongst significant competition due to the passion that we have for flying and grass, country airfields.

We are very disappointed with the obvious campaign that is running in objection to our recent application for a lawful use certificate. Many of the objections are a cut and paste from a circular letter whose writer has not properly read or understood our application. Despite making our contact details known and introducing ourselves to our near neighbours not a single one has opened any dialogue whatsoever as to what our plans are and our reasons for the application.

We did not want to make an application. We were forced to do it.

We write this letter in an attempt to prevent further concern, worry and fear that these circulating nefarious letters/social media posts are creating.

The Application

Earlier in the year, we allowed three short training slots for the Navy at Yoevilton to do some practice. Flying helicopters into grass fields is an important part of their training and ensuring preparedness of their pilots. We agreed to this on the proviso that they stayed to the North and East of the Airfield and did not overfly homes or livestock.

One neighbour, who we understand lives at the top of Roncombe Lane took great objection to the Navy doing their flights. We were not aware of this at the time.

Around this time, I also went around many of our neighbours and introduced myself. I also left my telephone number so that if there were any concerns I could deal with them. I visited the neighbour concerned during this time – no mention was made of their feelings towards us.

On a subsequent occasion, I did receive a telephone call from another neighbour and decided at that point to prevent military training sorties into our Airfield. I thought at the time that the matter was resolved.

The reason for the application is because Jacqui Webster, an Enforcement Officer from East Devon District Council failed to properly engage with us, failed to follow EDDC's own enforcement procedures and has still failed to respond to any of the points or matters we raised to letters sent to her over 12 weeks ago.

Due to unnecessary escalation from the Council (with an out of the blue Contravention Notice despite writing to EDDC), we have had no choice but to apply for a Certificate of Lawful Development. This is simply to protect what has been occurring at the Airfield for over 20+ years.

Had EDDC followed procedure, they would have been able to visit our site, inspect our logbooks which provide proof of use and agreed a plan to prevent further complaints. This option was never afforded to us. More importantly, it forced an application that has clearly been manipulated by several individuals that are now causing wild exaggeration of our intentions and a significant amount of concern and worry for local residents. This is a great shame as our intention all along has been to become a community asset and preserve the beautiful Airfield we have come to own.

All we seek to do is regularise the operation of the site as a small airfield. The application to do this has been blown out of all proportion.

The Application is for the following:

Use of the land as an airfield. This is what has occurred for over 28 days, every year, continuously for over 20+ years. Our Airfield Logbooks, those of the on-site flying school and those of aircraft owners prove this. The airfield has, and always has been available for use 365 days per year. However, there are natural limitations to its use – these include weather and runway surface conditions for example. In reality, our resident pilots fly around 70-100 hours per year (5-8 hours per month). We are also a small airfield with very limited space – we simply don't have the room for hundreds of aircraft.

A commercial flying school. The word "commercial" has been taken out of all context. By commercial, we mean "for reward and employment" – this does not mean an ab-initio school for would be commercial pilots who want to do circuits all day, every day. In fact, it would actually be illegal as such training must occur at a licenced facility. The flying school has operated for over 12 years. This is evidenced in the application.

Parking and Hangar. In the application, the area used for parking is clearly marked on a plan. It is not in sight of the Seaton Road or Hatway Hill. The hangar has stood and has been used for 30 years. This is evidenced in the application and clearly why no one has noticed it for 30 years.

The site has operated at a greater intensity than it does now for numerous years over the last two decades. No complaints during this time were received. There has been no impact on the ANOB, our fields are full of wild flowers, insects, pollinators, deer and birds. We seek to preserve and protect this environment. However, the natural asset that Farway Common Airfield has become is dependent on flying activities – without it, we would be forced to graze horses or other livestock which would result in a monoculture.

Had the airfield caused many of the issues that people are worried about, EDDC would have acted 5, 10, 15 or even 20 years ago. There have been no complaints to act on. While we completely understand the concerns, the perceived negative effects of the airfield on the area have not materialised.

Exeter Airport & Aircraft Noise

We too have noticed a significant increase in aircraft over the ANOB. These are nothing to do with Farway and we believe that due to the negative publicity received, we appear to be getting the blame.

There are several large airfields in the area. The coast is a natural draw – they often transit low to keep clear of the Instrument Landing System (ILS) that projects overhead Farway Village and the ANOB.

Exeter Airport is owned by a large group companies that includes Bournemouth. Exeter is the airfield of choice for a number of Commercial Flying Schools, often from there with upwards of 20+ training flights a day. These are small single and twin engine aircraft that are indistinguishable from those at Farway.

There are several local pilots who practice aerobatics in the area – these are not based at Farway.

The army and navy are actively training for conflict. There has been a huge increase in traffic as a result.

The aircraft noise that we at Farway create is minimal and transitory. The noise from motorbikes speeding up the Seaton Road or constant barking from the local kennels is much more frequent and continuous. We recommend approach to Farway (after clearance with Exeter Radar) that pilots fly at 800' inbound. This is higher than aircraft transiting the area. Furthermore, we do not fly over Sidbury or Farway Villages – all operations are to the North or East.

Exeter ACP Proposal

The residents of the area should be aware that EDAL (Exeter & Devon Airport Ltd) are attempting to have Controlled Airspace inserted above the ANOB. This is known as an ACP (Airspace Change Proposal). This will start at 1500' and could extend for a very wide area. This will force all of the light aircraft traffic not associated with Exeter to below 1500' (above sea level) – this equates to 500' above the hills of the ANOB.

Exeter Airport thinly veils its ACP requirement to be down to safety and environment. In reality, it allows them to open up to a significant increase in Airline traffic. I note that many objectors are concerned for the environment. If so, they really should take a careful look at the ACP – as our skies will be far busier with light aircraft dodging the airspace. The airliner traffic into Exeter will multiply by a magnitude.

Exeter Airport have had their application rejected 3 times now by the CAA due to a failure to engage with stakeholders properly. These stakeholders include the residents who live beneath it, ourselves at Farway etc. I was surprised that Cllr Louden was unaware, as are all of the residents.

More information on the ACP can be found here:

<https://airspacechange.caa.co.uk/PublicProposalArea?pID=62>

We are not aware of a single AIRPROX relating to aircraft using Farway Common and Exeter Airport over the last 20+ years. Any claim of safety issues are hyperbole and utter exaggeration. The management at Exeter Airport don't seem to realise that their head of Air Traffic Control completed Farway's radio training, has advised on our procedures. He also manned our radio during one of our Fly In events. As an airfield operator, safety is our primary concern and have indeed done things to improve it.

On A Positive Note

We've had some great messages of support. Farway is clearly loved by many and an important local and national asset to the flying community. Therefore, it is important that we also mention some of the positives that we seek to offer:

Farway was recently studied by a Conservationist who collected numerous seeds and samples. He was overwhelmed by the rich species of grasses and flowers in the field. He was impressed that we use no fertilisers, pesticides or herbicides. We've got a small herd of deer living in the nearby copse, skylarks and some amazing birds of prey – all thrive amongst our use as an airfield.

We advertise local businesses to pilots – the local B&B, pubs and attractions. We also provide a car for easy transport – the plan is to change it for an EV soon and add some bikes.

Instead of buying a new diesel ride on mower, we've invested in robot lawnmowers which are far less impactful in terms of noise and pollution.

Our other business is an electrical company, we'd also like to take Farway Common Airfield completely "off-grid" and make both the house and hangar carbon neutral – this is something that the entire aviation industry is working towards and has committed to. We also have welcomed in local paragliders to use the airfield – a sport which is becoming increasingly popular with young people.

We've invited the local schools to come to Farway to see the aircraft and study wildlife on site. Several local people have enquired about learning to fly. We also host a local model flying club.

While it may be annoying to neighbours occasionally, Farway is an important landing site for the Air Ambulance, Police Helicopter and Coastguard. Unlike other airfields, we don't charge for landings or diversions. Their familiarity with the airfield is important – especially when attending a local emergency.

We see all of the above as positive to the local environment, economy and community that we live in.

We hope that this letter provides some more detail behind our application. We also hope that it reassures our local community that we simply wish to continue as we always have – many were unaware, until now, of our operation. Indeed, Devon Live have called us "Devon's Secret Airfield". We remain committed to preserving the ANOB and are keen to allow other activities on our site that benefit more people.

As always, we remain available to those who would like to come and find out more about our fantastic airfield.

Yours faithfully

James Hortop