



NEW APPROACH: Auckland Airport is trialling new approaches to its runway to cut fuel use and noise levels.

New flight paths being trialled by Auckland Airport are riling those who say they are causing loud disruptions in their neighbourhoods.

Some incoming flights are approaching the airport in a different way in an effort to cut emissions and provide some respite for the communities living around the airport.

The trial began last November and uses what are known as "SMART approaches" which the airport says could result in fewer miles being flown by planes, reduction in fuel consumption and carbon emissions and better noise management for communities that live close to the airport.

But while those living nearer to the airport may find the changes an improvement, others are less pleased.

Epsom woman Toni Walker says she and neighbours on Coronation Rd have noticed a significant increase in noise from planes passing overhead, especially in the last six weeks.

She is preparing a petition to take to the airport asking for the original flight paths to be restored.

"Something significant has changed in the past six weeks," she says.

"We've got to the point where we're sitting inside at 10am on a Saturday morning with no windows open and it sounds like there is a lawnmower running next door.

"It's really destroying the atmosphere in the area."

Auckland Airport airfield systems and standards controller Matthew Palliser says Epsom is not under the new flight paths which are designed to make better use of the unpopulated Manukau Harbour and light industrial areas. The airport is looking into Mrs Walker's complaints.

Mr Palliser says until a full investigation is complete he can't be sure about what might be causing the increased noise levels.

One possibility is an increase in easterly winds recently which are not the prevailing breeze in Auckland.

"At this stage we just want to verify what Toni and the residents are saying is happening," Mr Palliser says.

"She will provide us with a list of times she thinks a flight has gone overhead and we will verify it against the radar data.

"Once she gives us the times and details of the aircraft they have observed we'll also compare it with last year's data."

That will determine where planes have flown and whether the flight paths have changed. The airport also plans to use acoustic consultants Marshall Day to assess the noise levels at some properties.

"A noise monitor is a good way to get an objective reading.

"The whole reason we do it on a trial is because we want feedback from the community." The trial is an initiative of Auckland Airport, Air New Zealand and Airways New Zealand. It is being trialled around the world with the aim of reducing fuel consumption and emissions.

An online information page says the new aircraft approaches take advantage of highly accurate satellite-based navigation to create curved flight paths that bring the final approach to the runway closer to the airport.

These approaches create a more continuous descent, with the engines' power settings at or close to idle which reduces the noise level.

"Pilots can close the throttle and follow a nice smooth arc with engines at idle power," Mr Palliser says.

Mrs Walker says she is worried the trial may be deemed a success and the new flight paths could have a permanent impact.