

noise notes volume 3 number 4

in this issue...

Disclosure, disclosure, disclosure	3
Noise and property values	4
Comparison of objective methods for assessment of annoyance of low frequency noise with the results of a laboratory listening test	12

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Tel: +44 (0)1277 224632 · Fax: +44 (0)1277 223453

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Disclosure, disclosure, disclosure

January 1st 2004 saw the implementation of new legislation in California – the Airport Noise Disclosure Bill (AB 2776), which protects unwary house purchasers from noise of local airports. Most people know what to expect from major airports, but there are also many small ones, largely used for private flying and freight, which are not so prominent. The legislation deals with “airport influence areas”. Where appropriate, vendors are required to state that their property is in an airport influence area and advise potential purchasers to consider the noise implications of this before completing the purchase. As there are nearly 300 military and public use airports in California, it is estimated that one in six of the population will be affected.

Of course, interested parties have reacted as anticipated. the real estate industry is in shock, predicting at least 5% devaluation, and up to 15% in a property downturn. Affected home owners are nervous and confused, but have the support of a “home defence” organisation,¹ set up to fight the legislation, whilst pilots and airport managers approve, hoping that this open approach will limit future

complaints of noise. There are even cynics who claim that the Bill is all about protecting the airports from hassle rather than the residents from noise.

A technical hang-up is in the definition of an airport influence area. These are designed by the local counties, based on noise level, say 60DNL, although this contour may not be known accurately. Conflicts have arisen where two counties are affected by the same airport, but disagree on the size of the influence area, which typically will extend about 2.7 miles around the runways, or up to 45 square miles, depending on the size of the airport. Boundaries will be adjusted to roads or natural features, rather than lines on a map, giving inequalities of cut-off, where one street is in, but the next one, exposed to the same noise, is out.

Disclosure of potential noise problems to the unwary is clearly a desirable development but, since the legislation was passed, there has been a change of Governor in California. Will Arnie terminate it?

¹ www.defendmyhome.com

noise notes

PERCEPTION, PERCEPTION, PERCEPTION

Despite an increasing number of complaints from local residents, the overall amount of noise made by aircraft taking off and landing at Brussels international airport has fallen steadily over the past four years, say the airport's managers. Biac, the company that runs Zaventem airport to the north east of Brussels, said that the annual number of night flights in and out of the airport has fallen by over 13,000 since 1999. “You have to accept the evidence that the level of noise from aircraft taking off from Zaventem at night has fallen by half in four years. Unfortunately it's a message that's difficult to get across because certain people don't want to hear it,” said Biac spokesman Paul De Backer. The question of aircraft noise is central to the current debate over international courier firm DHL's plans to expand its operations at Zaventem. If DHL gets its way, night flight numbers at Brussels airport will increase considerably.