Aircraft Movements and Noise

April 2026

This document is to help local residents and anyone considering moving to the local area understand the aircraft movements at Bournemouth Airport.

Departing Aircraft

General Policy
Bournemouth Airport has a robust system of noise control in place. Our general policy is to route aircraft away from built-up areas wherever possible. This minimises the number of people affected and reduces overall environmental impact.

All aircraft are directed by Air Traffic Control (ATC), who provide information and instructions to pilots. ATC operates to the highest standards. The potential impact of aircraft noise is an important consideration, and every effort is made to support the quietest safe operation.

For reasons of operational safety, it is usual at all airports for aircraft to take off into the wind. As the prevailing wind comes from the west, around 65% of departures take off to the west and 35% take off towards the east. ATC primarily assess the wind direction and strength at the surface. However, wind on the ground can, on occasion, be very different to that higher up and ATC may decide to assess wind direction and strength at higher altitudes. As a result, it is not always possible to rely on ground level wind direction to determine the direction in which aircraft will depart.

Noise Preferential Routes (NPRS)
To reduce noise over local communities, larger aircraft (including all jet aircraft) are required to follow Noise Preferential Routes (NPRs) after take-off. These routes are designed to keep aircraft climbing straight ahead, so they gain height as quickly as possible before turning.

These routes are published in the UK AIP (Aeronautical Information Publication) and reinforced through local environmental planning agreements. The Bournemouth NPRs aim to:

- Route aircraft over less densely populated areas where possible.
- Ensure aircraft remain within defined corridors once airborne.
- Support aircraft reaching higher altitudes quickly, reducing perceived noise on the ground.

Because NPRs are based on conventional navigation, actual track dispersion over time is broader than a single narrow line. This provides noise dispersal to local communities as no two tracks are completely identical.

Departures to the west (Runway 26 - towards West Parley)
When aircraft take off towards the west, they are required to:

- Climb straight ahead after take-off to just under 0.7 miles (0.6 Nautical Miles), staying aligned with the runway
- Fly a track of 270° MAG (magnetic direction) to approx. 3.5 miles (3.1 nautical miles) before commencing any turn

This applies to both commercial flights and local training circuits for all aircraft heavier than 5700kg. By delaying turns, aircraft remain concentrated over areas with fewer homes and are higher before spreading out towards their destinations.

Departures to the east (Runway 08 – towards Matchams Lane**)**
When aircraft take off towards the east, the routing depends on the direction they are travelling next:

- **Aircraft heading north or north-east** climb straight ahead for just over mile (1.0 nautical mile), then fly track 075° MAG to approx. 6.5 miles (5.6 nautical miles) before commencing any turn.
- **Aircraft heading east or south-east** follow the same initial route but may turn after around 4¾ miles (4.1 nautical miles).
- **Aircraft heading west or north-west** climb straight ahead for longer (2 nautical miles) and must reach at least 1,500 feet before turning left or right.

These variations allow aircraft to remain over less populated areas for as long as possible, while still joining the wider airways network safely and efficiently.

All departing aircraft are monitored using radar and altitude data. Track-keeping is regularly reviewed to ensure aircraft follow the published routes and climb profiles wherever operationally possible.

While noise reduction is a key objective, safety is always the overriding priority. Air traffic control may instruct aircraft to deviate from these routes if required due to weather, traffic congestion, or aircraft performance.

Noise Action Plan

Bournemouth Airport's **Noise Action Plan** outlines ongoing commitments to:

- Monitor and review departure routing and noise outcomes.
- Report noise and track-keeping performance publicly, including through services such as WebTrak.
- Work with airlines and stakeholders to support continuous improvement.

Arriving Aircraft

Aircraft arriving at Bournemouth Airport may sometimes appear to approach from different directions or over different communities. This information explains why this happens and how air traffic controllers manage aircraft safely while also aiming to minimise disturbance to people on the ground.

Landing Into Wind
For safety reasons, aircraft normally take off and land into the wind. This allows aircraft to operate more efficiently and safely during landing.

At Bournemouth Airport the prevailing wind usually comes from the west. As a result, around 65% of aircraft approach the airport from the east, with the remaining 35% approaching from the west.

However, wind conditions can vary at different heights. ATC may therefore need to assess wind conditions both on the ground and in the air before deciding the safest direction for landing.

Arrival Routes
Unlike departing aircraft, arriving aircraft do not follow a single fixed path. This allows Air Traffic Controllers to safely organise aircraft as they approach the airport and maintain appropriate spacing between flights.

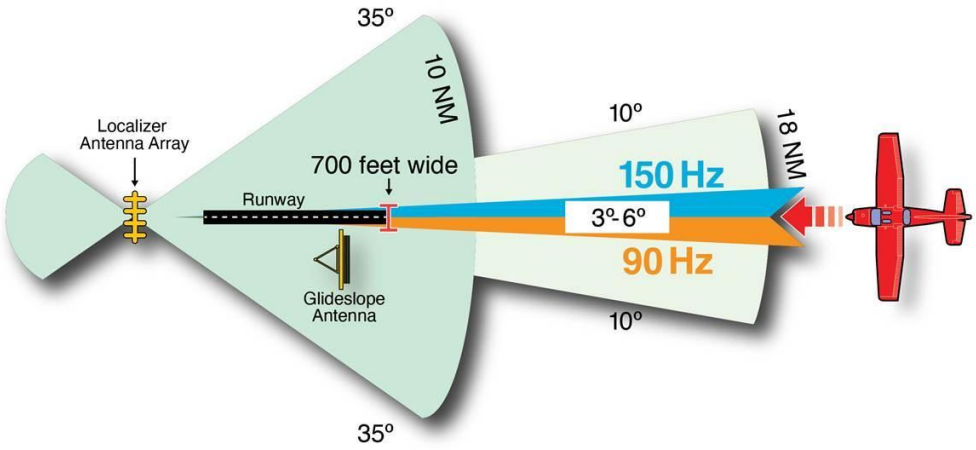
Controllers may guide aircraft along slightly different paths depending on:

- the direction the aircraft is arriving from
- other aircraft already approaching or departing
- weather conditions
- airspace shared with nearby airports such as Southampton

This flexible approach helps ensure safe operations while also allowing controllers to manage aircraft as efficiently as possible.

Instrument Landing System (ILS)
Most commercial aircraft use the airport's Instrument Landing System (ILS) when approaching Bournemouth. This system provides pilots with precise guidance to align the aircraft with the runway during the final stage of the approach.

Aircraft normally join the ILS several miles from the airport so that they are correctly lined up with the runway before landing. At Bournemouth Airport, the ILS uses a standard glide slope of 3 degrees, which equates to approximately 300 feet of descent per nautical mile travelled. Because aircraft following the ILS remain on this consistent glide path, all aircraft using the ILS will be at roughly the same height when passing the same point on the approach. This predictable and stable approach helps ensure safe, efficient and consistent operations as aircraft arrive at the airport.

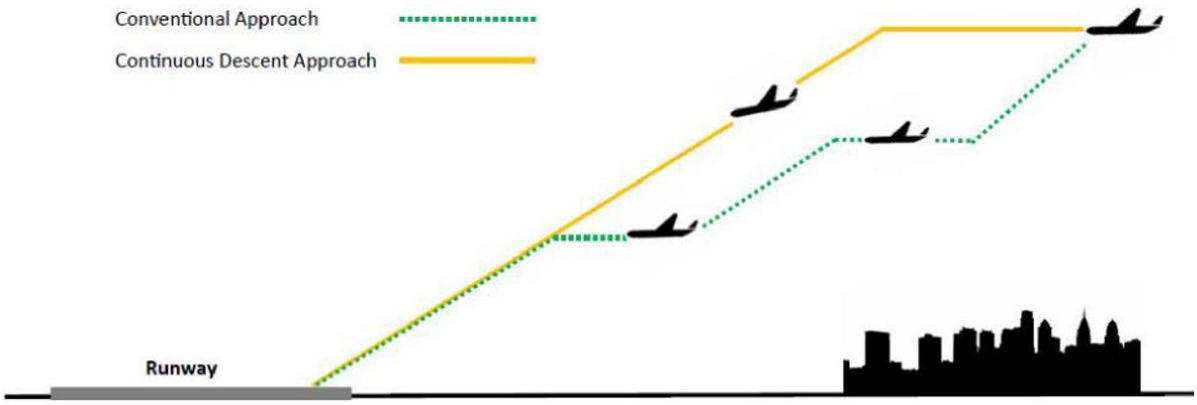


Minimising Noise Where Possible
While safety is always the primary consideration, Bournemouth Airport works with air traffic controllers, airlines and pilots to minimise the impact of aircraft noise wherever possible. This includes following national guidance and operational procedures designed to reduce noise while maintaining safe and efficient operations.

Continuous Descent Approach (CDA)

Bournemouth Airport encourages pilots of commercial aircraft to use a Continuous Descent Approach (CDA) whenever possible.

A CDA allows an aircraft to descend towards the airport in a smooth, continuous descent, rather than descending in several stages. This means the aircraft remains higher for longer before landing and follows a more gradual descent path.



Research undertaken for the UK Government has shown that CDA is considered best practice for arriving aircraft because it provides environmental benefits and helps reduce noise experienced by communities around airports.

Benefits of Continuous Descent
When a Continuous Descent Approach is used:

- Aircraft engines can operate more efficiently
- Fuel consumption is reduced, lowering emissions
- Noise on the ground can be reduced by up to around 5 decibels
- Aircraft remain higher for longer during the approach

For these reasons Bournemouth Airport works with airlines and air traffic control providers to encourage the use of CDA wherever operationally possible.

Why CDA is not always possible
Although CDA is encouraged, it cannot always be used.

Bournemouth Airport operates within a busy and complex airspace environment, with other nearby airports such as Southampton, as well as military aircraft and general aviation traffic. Air traffic controllers must ensure that all aircraft remain safely separated at all times.

Because of this, there are occasions when an arriving aircraft may be asked to:

- maintain level flight for a short period, or
- descend earlier than planned

This may be necessary to allow other aircraft to pass safely above or below. When this happens, the aircraft may not be able to complete a full Continuous Descent Approach.

Working to increase CDA use
Bournemouth Airport continues to work closely with National Air Traffic Services (NATS), neighbouring airports and other airspace users to maximise opportunities for aircraft to use Continuous Descent Approaches.

Improving the ability for aircraft to carry out CDA is an ongoing focus of operational collaboration, helping to balance safe aircraft operations with reducing environmental impacts wherever possible.

Night Noise and Night Flying

Bournemouth Airport understands that aircraft noise during the night can be particularly noticeable for nearby communities. For this reason, night-time aircraft activity is managed through a range of operational procedures and environmental controls.

Night-time period
Under the airport's planning agreement, the night-time period is defined as 23:30 to 06:00.
While most aircraft movements take place during daytime and evening hours, there are occasions when flights may operate during the night.

These can include:

- aircraft arriving later than scheduled due to weather or air traffic delays
- operational requirements of airlines
- positioning or maintenance flights
- emergency or humanitarian flights

Safety always remains the primary consideration for aircraft operations.

Night noise controls
Aircraft noise during the night period is managed through a quota count system, which limits the total noise generated by aircraft operating at night.

Each aircraft type is assigned a Quota Count value based on its certified noise performance. The airport operates within an overall quota limit that restricts the total amount of aircraft noise permitted during the night-time period.

This approach encourages airlines to operate quieter, more modern aircraft, helping to reduce the overall impact of night operations.

Reducing noise where possible
Bournemouth Airport works with airlines, air traffic control and regulators to minimise the impact of aircraft noise wherever possible.

Measures include:

- encouraging the use of modern, quieter aircraft
- promoting procedures such as Continuous Descent Approaches, which help aircraft remain higher for longer during arrival
- monitoring aircraft movements and noise levels
- working with operators to follow best practice for noise management

Monitoring aircraft activity
Residents can view aircraft movements and flight tracks using the airport's WebTrak radar replay system, which shows where aircraft have flown and the heights at which they were operating.

The airport also operates a noise enquiry service, and all enquiries or complaints are reviewed and responded to.

Noise on the Ground

Aircraft noise can sometimes be heard by people living close to Bournemouth Airport even when aircraft are not flying overhead. This is known as ground noise, and it can vary depending on weather conditions, wind direction and the location of aircraft on the airfield.

Bournemouth Airport recognises that ground noise can affect nearby communities and works with airlines, handling agents and maintenance providers to minimise noise wherever possible while maintaining safe aircraft operations.

Main sources of ground noise
Ground noise at airports generally arises from three main activities:

- aircraft using reverse thrust after landing
- aircraft operating power units while parked on stands
- aircraft engine testing during maintenance

Each of these activities is managed through operational procedures designed to reduce noise impact.

Reverse thrust
After landing, aircraft may use reverse thrust to help slow the aircraft safely on the runway.
At Bournemouth Airport the use of reverse thrust is discouraged where operationally possible, and pilots normally use it only when required for safety reasons — for example when the runway is wet or contaminated.

Aircraft power units
Aircraft require electrical power when parked at the stand in order to operate systems such as lighting, air conditioning and onboard equipment. Where available, aircraft are encouraged to use ground power units (GPUs) rather than running their own onboard auxiliary power units. Using ground power helps reduce both noise and emissions on the ground.

Engine testing
Aircraft engine testing may occasionally be required following maintenance or technical rectification. Bournemouth Airport has strict procedures governing engine testing, including:

- tests must be approved by the airport in advance
- engine testing is not normally permitted at night
- testing is conducted in locations chosen to minimise disturbance to nearby communities, taking into account weather conditions and wind direction.

Managing environmental impacts
Bournemouth Airport works with airlines, maintenance organisations and air traffic control providers to ensure that aircraft operations are conducted as efficiently and quietly as possible on the ground.

These measures form part of the airport's wider environmental approach, which aims to minimise the impact of airport operations on surrounding communities while maintaining safe and efficient aviation activity.

General Aviation

In addition to commercial flights, Bournemouth Airport is home to a number of general aviation operators and flying schools.

General aviation includes light aircraft, business aviation and pilot training activities. Flying schools based at the airport provide training for both recreational pilots and future commercial airline pilots.

As part of pilot training, aircraft may conduct training circuits. A circuit involves an aircraft taking off, flying a short rectangular pattern around the airport and then landing again.

Training circuits may involve several consecutive take-offs and landings as part of normal pilot training.

Circuit heights
Standard circuit heights are used to help ensure safe operations and reduce noise where possible:

- 1,200 feet above sea level for aircraft weighing less than 5,700 kg
- 1,500 feet above sea level for turbine-powered aircraft or aircraft weighing more than 5,700 kg

Air traffic control carefully manages circuit activity and normally limits the number of aircraft operating in the circuit at any one time.

Where possible, circuits are flown away from the main built-up areas, although the direction may vary depending on operational requirements and wind conditions.

After departure, aircraft normally climb straight ahead before turning in order to comply with noise-abatement procedures.

Military aircraft
From time to time, military aircraft may visit or divert to Bournemouth Airport.

UK civilian airports are required to make themselves available in certain circumstances to support military activity, including operational exercises or diversions.

When this occurs, Bournemouth's air traffic controllers work closely with military pilots to ensure they are familiar with local procedures and the surrounding area, so that operations are conducted safely and with minimal impact.

Supporting safe aviation
General aviation activity, including pilot training, is an important part of the UK aviation system. Bournemouth Airport works closely with flying schools, pilots and air traffic control to ensure these operations are conducted safely, efficiently and with consideration for local communities.

Aircraft Emissions and Air Quality

Bournemouth Airport recognises the importance of protecting local air quality and reducing emissions wherever possible. The airport works with airlines, ground handling companies and other partners to manage emissions associated with aviation activity while continuing to support safe and efficient operations.

Aircraft engines, like other forms of transport such as road and rail vehicles, produce emissions as part of normal combustion. The main pollutants of concern are nitrogen oxides (NOx), along with smaller amounts of particulate matter and carbon dioxide.

Studies undertaken around the airport have shown that road traffic is typically the largest contributor to emissions in the surrounding area, rather than aircraft operations themselves.

Bournemouth Airport continues to work with partners to reduce emissions from both aircraft operations and ground activities wherever possible.

Managing Emissions at the Airport
A number of operational measures are used to reduce emissions on the ground and improve overall environmental performance.

These include:

- encouraging the use of ground power units (GPUs) so aircraft can switch off their onboard auxiliary power units while parked
- reviewing aircraft taxiing and ground manoeuvring procedures to reduce unnecessary engine running
- monitoring vehicle emissions across the airport site
- supporting the introduction of alternative and lower-emission fuels for airport vehicles
- promoting public transport and sustainable travel options for passengers and staff travelling to the airport.

The airport also continues to modernise its operational vehicle fleet and infrastructure to improve efficiency and reduce emissions.

Monitoring Air Quality
Air quality around Bournemouth Airport is regularly monitored to ensure that operations remain within national environmental standards.

Monitoring programmes assess key pollutants and help the airport understand trends in local air quality. The results of this monitoring help inform environmental management and are made available through the airport's environmental reporting.

Air quality monitoring focuses on pollutants that can affect the local environment around the airport, rather than greenhouse gas emissions associated with global climate change.

Air Quality and Climate Change
When discussing aircraft emissions it is helpful to distinguish between local air quality and global climate change impacts.

Local air quality relates to pollutants such as nitrogen oxides (NOx) and particulate matter, which can affect air quality close to the ground around transport infrastructure such as roads and airports. Climate change impacts relate primarily to carbon dioxide (CO_2) and other greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere during fuel combustion. These emissions contribute to global climate change rather than local air pollution.

Measures used at Bournemouth Airport help address both issues. For example:

- Reducing engine running on the ground helps improve local air quality
- Improving operational efficiency and encouraging modern aircraft helps reduce carbon emissions

This distinction helps ensure that environmental management measures are targeted appropriately and remain consistent with national environmental policy.

Noise Action Plan and Environmental Management
Bournemouth Airport operates in accordance with a Noise Action Plan, which sets out the airport's approach to managing aircraft noise and environmental impacts. The plan includes measures designed to minimise noise generation, monitor aircraft operations and respond to community concerns.

Many of the procedures described elsewhere on this website, including noise preferential routes, continuous descent approaches and operational restrictions on certain activities, form part of this broader approach to environmental management.

The Noise Action Plan is reviewed periodically to ensure that the airport continues to apply best practice and to reflect changes in aircraft technology, operational procedures and regulatory guidance.

Carbon Reduction and Sustainability
Bournemouth Airport is committed to improving environmental performance and reducing carbon emissions from its own operations.

The airport has set a target to achieve net zero carbon emissions from airport-controlled operations by 2040, supported by measures to reduce energy use, improve operational efficiency and adopt lower-emission technologies.

These initiatives form part of the airport's wider sustainability strategy and support the aviation industry's broader efforts to reduce environmental impacts while maintaining connectivity and economic benefits for the region.

Aircraft Technology and Operational Improvements
Aircraft technology and operational procedures continue to evolve, helping to reduce both noise and emissions over time. Modern aircraft engines are significantly more efficient than earlier generations, producing lower emissions and reduced noise levels.

Operational measures used at Bournemouth Airport, such as Continuous Descent Approaches, noise preferential routes and efficient ground operations, also help improve environmental performance by reducing fuel burn and keeping aircraft higher for longer during arrival where possible.

Together, improvements in aircraft design, airline fleet renewal and operational procedures play an important role in reducing the environmental impact of aviation while maintaining safe and efficient airport operations.

Working with the Community
Bournemouth Airport works with regulators, airlines and local stakeholders to manage environmental impacts responsibly.

The airport's environmental policies, Noise Action Plan and monitoring programmes are designed to ensure that aircraft operations continue to be managed safely while seeking to minimise impacts on local communities wherever possible.

Moving Into the Area

If you are thinking about moving into the area, you may wish to understand how aircraft operate to and from Bournemouth Airport and how this may relate to where you choose to live.

Airports are an important part of regional infrastructure, supporting travel, employment and the wider local economy. Like other transport infrastructure, aircraft operations can sometimes be heard by communities in the surrounding area.

Bournemouth Airport works to manage these impacts through a range of operational procedures, environmental monitoring and community engagement measures.

Understanding aircraft activity
Aircraft approaching or departing Bournemouth Airport may pass over a number of areas surrounding the airport.

The exact path of any particular flight can vary depending on a number of factors, including:

- wind direction
- air traffic control instructions
- weather conditions
- other aircraft operating in the airspace

Aircraft normally take off and land into the wind, which means that the direction of operations may vary. At Bournemouth Airport the prevailing wind is from the west, meaning aircraft most commonly approach from the east and depart towards the west.

Air traffic controllers guide aircraft to ensure safe separation between flights, and operational procedures are used to minimise noise wherever possible.

Viewing aircraft movements
Residents and prospective home buyers can view aircraft movements using the airport's WebTrak radar replay system.

WebTrak allows users to see:

- where aircraft have flown
- the altitude at which they were operating
- the time of the flight
- the type of aircraft involved
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The system shows aircraft activity within approximately 30 miles of Bournemouth Airport, including some flights that may not be related to airport operations.

This tool can help provide a better understanding of typical aircraft activity in the area.

Managing aircraft noise

Aircraft noise is managed through a range of operational procedures and environmental controls.

These include:

- noise preferential departure routes designed to avoid built-up areas where possible
- the use of Continuous Descent Approaches, which keep aircraft higher for longer during arrival
- operational controls on training activity and circuit flying
- monitoring of aircraft movements and noise levels.

These measures form part of the airport's wider Noise Action Plan, which sets out how Bournemouth Airport manages aircraft noise and works to reduce its impact on surrounding communities.

The Noise Action Plan is reviewed periodically to ensure that the airport continues to apply best practice and respond to changes in aircraft technology and operational procedures.

Planning for the future

Information about the airport's longer-term development plans can be found in the Bournemouth Airport Master Plan, which outlines how the airport may develop over time to support regional connectivity and economic growth.

Future development and environmental management measures are considered alongside planning requirements, environmental regulations and community consultation.

Further information

Additional information about aircraft operations and environmental management at Bournemouth Airport is available on this website, including:

- How aircraft arrive and depart
- Continuous Descent Approaches
- Night flying and night noise
- General aviation activity
- Ground noise
- Aircraft emissions and air quality
- The Bournemouth Airport Noise Action Plan

These pages provide more detail about the procedures used to ensure that aircraft operations are conducted safely while seeking to minimise impacts on local communities wherever possible.