

**New Zealand Defence Force  
Te Ope Kaatua O Aotearoa**

Whenuapai Air Force Base

A Discussion Document for Public Consultation

DATE: October 2003



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# 1 Introduction

The purpose of this public consultation paper is to seek the views of the local community, local and central government agencies, industry and iwi/maori groups regarding the future use of Whenuapai.

Military activities on Whenuapai are being transferred to Ohakea over the next five years. The site will become surplus to military use and will be available for a range of alternative uses.

The Government, through the New Zealand Defence Force, is consulting with all interested parties now on the potential uses of the site, so that all possibilities can be considered.

Four broad options for the future of Whenuapai have been identified:

- a commercial, civilian airport;
- another public work, and/or urban development;
- an industrial/development site; and
- rural residential sites.

These options are possible either separately, or in combination.

The Government is particularly seeking feedback on what the future use or uses of the site should be. To assist interested groups and individuals in making submissions, this paper provides information on the site and regional activity and plans. It also describes the four broad options for the site, the processes for disposing of the site, and the criteria against which proposed future options might be addressed.

Details of the possible options have been left brief deliberately – we hope that public submissions will focus on the issues of interest and concern as well as the opportunities that the Whenuapai airbase could support in the future.

Specific proposals for use of the land will require detailed consultation in the form of structure plans and/or resource consent applications, at an appropriate but later time.

Development or detailed planning for proposed uses may not commence until after 2008. Some activities may take years after that to implement. As an example, The Albany Centre was conceived in the late 1980's and took some years to plan. The mid 1990's saw the road and services infrastructure complete. Nearly 15 years on, The Albany Centre is still being developed and has some years to go to completion.



## 2 Public Consultation Process

### 2.1 Purpose

In September 2003, the Government directed the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF), in consultation with a number of other government departments, to undertake public consultation as the basis for future Cabinet consideration of the most logical future use of Whenuapai. The Minister is required to recommend to Cabinet the most logical future use of Whenuapai and the process for disposal of the airbase by the end of March 2004.

### 2.2 The Consultation Framework

The timeframe for consultation is as follows:

Stage	Timeframe
Public Consultation (first round) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Public Meetings – November 2003</li><li>• Meetings with government agencies and other interested parties – November 2003</li><li>• Submissions due – end December 2003</li><li>• Collation and summary of submissions – mid January 2004</li></ul>	To January 2004
Review of submissions and preparation for further public consultation	By early February 2004
Public Consultation (second round)	February and early March 2004
Recommendation to Cabinet	End March 2004

The public meetings will be held from the week beginning 10 November 2003. Details of locations and timing will be publicly advertised.

The public are invited to make written submissions addressed to:

The Chief of Defence Force  
New Zealand Defence Force  
RNZAF Base Whenuapai  
AUCKLAND

and marked to the attention of Director, Property Rationalisation

Submissions should be received by 31 December.



Information can be obtained including a template for submissions from the following website which will be operative from 3 November 2003:

<http://www.nzdf.mil.nz/public-documents/consultation/index.html>.

Copies of the discussion document and the submission template will also be made available at the public meetings.

A record of all the meetings will be kept and will form part of the information gathering exercise, which together with a summary of the submissions made, will be released as part of a feedback process in February 2004.



### 3 Whenuapai Airbase - Overview

#### 3.1 History

Construction of Whenuapai began in the late 1930's following the purchase of 600 acres (circa 240 hectares) of swamp and kauri forests in September 1938. In order to cope with heavy aircraft serving the Pacific, the concrete runways were constructed in 1942, along with housing and further base facilities.

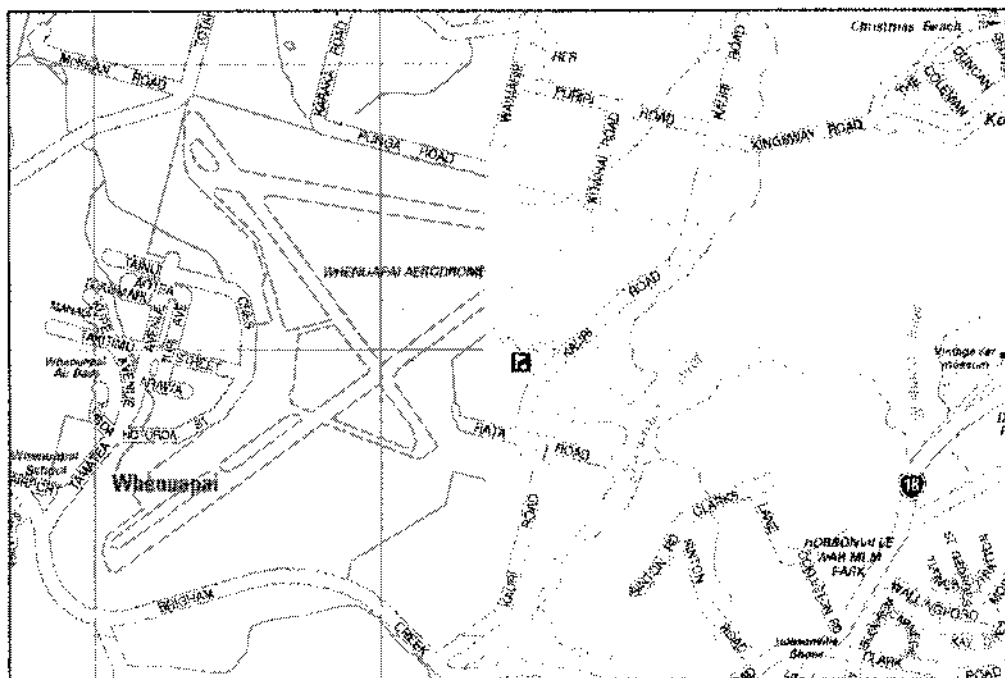
Whenuapai remained operational after World War Two and opened for civilian aircraft in 1945. In 1947 National Airways Corporation took over the passenger and freight carrying service and commenced regular services between Whenuapai, Paraparaumu and Harewood. International services commenced in the late 1940's, and continued until 1965, when the international airport opened at Mangere.

The 1960's saw a return to military activities only. The level of activity remained relatively constant for the following forty years.

#### 3.2 Description

Located near the upper reaches of Waitemata harbour, around twenty minutes drive from central Auckland; Whenuapai airfield is in a mostly rural area. The Growth Concept 2050 map attached as Appendix 1 shows the position of Whenuapai in Auckland.

Whenuapai is close to Hobsonville Road (SH 18). This provides easy connection with Waitakere City and North Shore City.





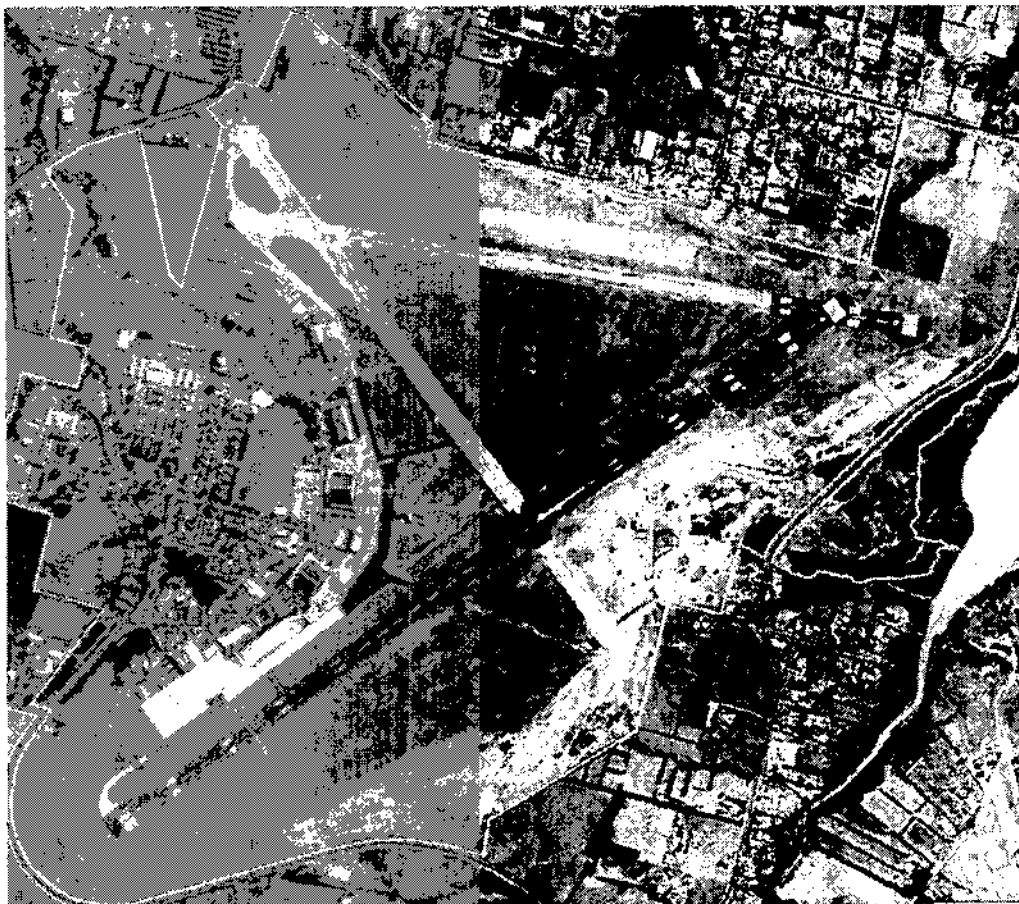
The site occupies an area of 311 hectares, it comprises:

1. Runways, taxiways with additional land.
2. Hangars, terminal buildings and other airfield facilities.
3. Barracks, housing, administration and office accommodation on site.
4. Housing and additional land adjacent to the main site.

An aerial photograph of the site is attached as **Appendix 2**.

The site is described in more detail below:

### Runways, Taxiways and Additional Land



Three runways are on the site. The main runway is 2,031 metres in length. This is relatively short for an international airfield and cannot accommodate long-haul departures. It is likely to be long enough to accommodate trans-Tasman and national services. As a comparison, Wellington International Airport's runway is 2,000 metres long.



The second runway is 1,581m long and the third runway is 1,446m long.

The land around the runways includes a golf course on the eastern boundary, which covers approximately 25 hectares.

The western side of the runway area has the apron parking areas and base facilities.

### Hangars and Air Field Facilities

This includes:

- Four large hangars, two constructed in the 1940's. One modern hangar has just been upgraded to include sophisticated fire fighting and safety equipment.
- A terminal building, which is modern and low rise.
- The air traffic control building.
- Aircraft maintenance facilities.
- Emergency services accommodation.
- Bulk fuel storage.
- Training areas and additional workshops.

Many of the buildings were constructed in the 1940's, though all of them have been generally well maintained.





### Accommodation on Site

This includes:

- Housing (approximately 60 houses)
- Barrack accommodation (353 rooms)
- Three service mess blocks
- Sports fields and a gymnasium
- A small retail centre

These are all set in an open, landscaped environment.



### Housing and Other Land

At the southern end of the site, off the base, is a subdivision of about 100 houses. Immediately to the south of this is an area of grazing land, part of which could be used for an extension to the runway in the future.

East of the site, on Kauri Road, is an area of vacant land bordering the mud flats. This contains a disused landfill.





## 4 Regional Policy

The Auckland Regional Council and Waitakere City Council have jurisdiction over the area. A comprehensive set of policies, statements and studies has been completed that relate to the area. Those that apply to Whenuapai are:

- The Auckland Regional Policy Statement
  - This includes the definition of the Metropolitan Urban Limit (MUL) and the requirement to contain development within it. Whenuapai is beyond the MUL. Completion of road developments in the next five years will include a move of the MUL to bring it closer to, but still outside, the site.
  
- The Auckland Regional Growth Strategy
  - This identifies regions and areas favoured for development or infill in order to house projected population increases. These are shown on the Growth Concept 2050 map attached as Appendix 1.
  - The Hobsonville Corridor was identified as a key area for future growth. This does not include Whenuapai but it will result in an increase in the population within a reasonably close proximity of the Whenuapai airbase.
  
- The Northern and Western Sectors Agreement
  - This provides further detail on the way in which the growth projected by the Regional Growth Strategy will be accommodated.
  - The 2021 population for Waitakere City is projected at 230,000. This compares to a 1996 figure of 156,000 and a 2001 figure of 169,000.
  - Development in the west will include smaller town centres in existing residential areas, greenfield development north of Westgate/Redhills and opportunities to be identified in rural areas such as Helensville and Kumeu.
  - The Northern Strategic Growth Area is identified, which includes Whenuapai. This area is outside the MUL but there is agreement in principle that the MUL will be extended to include selected areas.
  
- The Upper Waitemata Harbour Study
  - This environmentally focused study will research the area to identify ways to accommodate growth with minimal cost to the environment. It is expected to be complete later this year.



- Waitakere City District Plan
  - The Plan (adopted March 2003) identifies the Whenuapai Airbase with a defence purposes airfield designation with housing designations on the off-base roads.
  - The underlying zone for the site and the surrounding area is Countryside Environment. Part of the provisions associated with this zone is that the minimum site area for any proposed subdivision is 4 hectares.
  
- The Waiarohia Structure Plan
  - This plan relates to an area immediately east of Whenuapai. The plan is on hold, pending the outcome of the Upper Waitemata Harbour Study. If approved by Waitakere City Council, this would allow subdivision (outside the Airbase noise contour lines) down to 1 hectare from the current 4-hectare limit.



## 5 Options For Future Use

The four broad options for the future use of the site are a civilian airport, public work/urban development, industrial/development and rural residential sites. A combination of these uses is possible. This section outlines each of the options, and the processes required to achieve them.

### 5.1 Civilian Airport

The existing runways, hangars and other buildings could be used for a civilian airport operating aircraft of 737 size or smaller.

The main runway will need to be extended for larger aircraft. This could require the purchase of additional land. In any event, the main runway will need to be significantly upgraded.

New terminal buildings and improvement work to the hard standings and other runways will be required over time.

A civilian airport would not change the external appearance of the airport substantially. The principal concern for residents in the area would be the noise generated from commercial operations.

#### Steps required

The Airport Authorities Act 1966 allows for transfer or licensing of the land to an Airport company. The steps are set out below:

1. A licence is granted to an airport company to allow it to use the land and buildings to operate a commercial airport.
2. The land and buildings can be sold to the airport company or to another party – such as the territorial authority.
3. Land not used for the commercial airport would be disposed of through the Public Works Act process. This could involve the whole site if the airport proved not to be feasible.

Alternatively, Waitakere City Council could seek to acquire the land under the Public Works Act in order to establish an airport.

### 5.2 Public Work/Urban Development

The definition of a “public work” is broad and can include many possible uses. Possibilities include:

- Infrastructure – roading, water supply, sewage processing and transfer, electrical or gas transmission.
- Central government – a prison, another type of detention centre, military use or training.