

NOISE ASSESSMENT

RETENTION OF DOG WALKING FIELD ON LAND TO WEST OF HIGH STREET, GRAVELEY

GROW WALKIES

JULY 2025

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Revision	Prepared By	Date
1.0	L Jephson BEng (Hons) MIOA	22/7/25

This report has been prepared using all reasonable skill and care within the resources and brief agreed with the client. LF Acoustics Ltd accept no responsibility for matters outside the terms of the brief or for use of this report, wholly or in part, by third parties.

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1. Introduction

LF Acoustics Ltd have been appointed to prepare a noise assessment in relation to the Grow Walkies dog walking field, located on land to the west of High Street, Graveley.

A temporary planning permission for change of use of the field to a dog walking field was granted by North Hertfordshire District Council on 8 January 2024 (Application Ref. 23/02221/FP), with further planning permission granted for a weather shelter and dog playframe granted on 4 December 2024 (Application Ref. 24/02118/FP).

The temporary nature of the planning permission was to address concerns from neighbours in relation to dogs barking etc, with the current planning permission due to expire in January 2026.

Grow Walkies are now applying for a permanent planning permission for the dog walking field.

This report presents the results and assessment of a noise monitoring exercise carried out at the field to determine the audibility and level of noise associated with the dogs using the field. The results of the assessment have been used to demonstrate that the use is not resulting in a potential for adverse noise impacts upon occupants of neighbouring properties.

This assessment and report has been prepared by L Jephson Beng (Hons), MIOA, Director of LF Acoustics Ltd.

2. Standards and Guidance

2.1. National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) revised in December 2024 [1], sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework upon which locally prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced.

The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

With regards to noise, local planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of noise pollution.
- mitigate and reduce to a minimum, potential adverse impacts resulting from noise from new development – and avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life;
- identify and protect tranquil areas which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason.

Reference is made within the NPPF to the Noise Policy Statement for England (NPSE) [2], which sets out the long-term vision of the Government noise policy. Further information has been provided on the assessment of noise within recent Planning Practice Guidance, updated in July 2019 and available on the Government planning web site (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/noise-2>). Whilst this guidance does not provide any objective criteria upon which to base noise assessments, the guidance provides a description of the relevant Effects Levels identified within the NPPF and NPSE and this is reproduced in Table 2.1.

Perception	Examples of Outcomes	Increasing Effect Level	Action
Not noticeable	No Effect	No Observed Effect (NOEL)	No specific measures required
Noticeable and not intrusive	Noise can be heard but does not cause any change in behaviour or attitude. Can slightly affect the acoustic character of the area but not such that there is a perceived change in the quality of life.	No Observed Adverse Effect	No specific measures required
		Lowest Observed Adverse Effect Level (LOAEL)	
Noticeable and intrusive	Noise can be heard and causes small changes in behaviour and/or attitude, e.g. turning up volume of television; speaking more loudly; where there is no alternative ventilation, having to close windows for some of the time because of the noise. Potential for some reported sleep disturbance. Affects the acoustic character of the area such that there is a perceived change in the quality of life.	Observed Adverse Effect	Mitigate and reduce to a minimum
		Significant Observed Adverse Effect Level (SOAEL)	
Noticeable and disruptive	The noise causes a material change in behaviour and/or attitude, e.g. avoiding certain activities during periods of intrusion; where there is no alternative ventilation, having to keep windows closed most of the time because of the noise. Potential for sleep disturbance resulting in difficulty in getting to sleep, premature awakening and difficulty in getting back to sleep. Quality of life diminished due to change in acoustic character of the area.	Significant Observed Adverse Effect	Avoid
Noticeable and very disruptive	Extensive and regular changes in behaviour and/or an inability to mitigate effect of noise leading to psychological stress or physiological effects, e.g. regular sleep deprivation/awakening; loss of appetite, significant, medically definable harm, e.g. auditory and non-auditory	Unacceptable Adverse Effect	Prevent

Table 2.1 Significance Criteria

The NPPF advises that development should seek to ensure that noise from proposed developments does not give rise to significant impacts, i.e. a level identified as a Significant Observed Adverse Effect (SOAEL), which is at a level where the noise would cause a material change in behaviour.

2.2. British Standard BS 4142

Reference is generally made to the use of BS 4142 [3] when considering noise from commercial nature. However, it is clear within Section 1.3 that the Standard is not intended to be applied to the rating and assessment of sound from e) domestic animals and thus is not appropriate guidance to consider when assessing noise from the dogs using the walking field.

2.3. Guidelines for Environmental Noise Impact Assessment

Appropriate guidance for assessing the likely impact of noise from a new development is set out within the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment Guidelines for Environmental Noise Impact Assessment [4].

Whilst the guide mainly focusses on the assessment of noise from large infrastructure projects, the assessment methodology is also applicable to other developments and sources of noise.

The guidance is based upon an assessment of the change in noise levels between those without the development operational and with the development operational to evaluate any potential increases in noise levels. The guidance sets out categories on noise impact based upon the likely change in noise levels. The criteria are set out below.

Very Substantial	Greater than 10 dB L_{Aeq} change in sound level perceived at a receptor of great sensitivity to noise
Substantial	Greater than 5 dB L_{Aeq} change in sound level at a noise-sensitive receptor, or a 5 to 9.9 dB L_{Aeq} change in sound level at a receptor of great sensitivity to noise
Moderate	A 3 to 4.9 dB L_{Aeq} change in sound level at a sensitive or highly sensitive noise receptor, or a greater than 5 dB L_{Aeq} change in sound level at a receptor of some sensitivity
Slight	A 3 to 4.9 dB L_{Aeq} change in sound level at a receptor of some sensitivity
None / Not Significant	Less than 2.9 dB L_{Aeq} change in sound level and/or all receptors are of negligible sensitivity to noise or marginal to the zone of influence of the proposals

The NPSE / NPPF advise that noise should not give rise to a potential for a significant adverse effect upon noise sensitive receptors. On this basis, noise levels increasing within the slight impact category above would be unlikely to result in a potential for significant adverse impacts and would thus remain acceptable. The guidelines do not specify the time periods and for the purposes of the present assessment, it is considered appropriate to assess the noise levels over an hourly period, based upon the BS 4142 methodology for daytime activities.

3. Site Description and Current Measures Adopted to Reduce Noise

3.1. Site Location and Identification of Noise Sensitive Receptors

The dog walking field is located on land to the west of High Street Graveley, as indicated on Figure 1.

There are existing residential properties located to the north-west (The Waldens), approximately 25 metres from the north-western corner of the field, and to the east along the High Street, approximately 45 metres from the northern part of the field. These properties are considered most likely to be affected by noise from the use of the dog field. As indicated on the Figure, the main walking area is considerably further from the properties.

3.2. Measures Taken to Reduce Noise

Grow Walkies seek to ensure that the operation of the dog walking field does not result in a potential to generate adverse noise impacts upon occupants of neighbouring properties.

The temporary planning permission provided reassurance to the neighbours that the use would cease should the use generate complaints. The field has been operational for over 18 months, and it is understood that there have been no complaints during this time, which is a positive indication that the use generates acceptable levels of noise.

Grow Walkies are proactive in ensuring noise levels are controlled.

The use of the field is restricted by means of an online booking system, which requires the users to enter a gate code to enable them to access the field. Utilising this method of access ensures that the following operating hours, controlled under Condition 3 of the planning permission, are strictly adhered to:

- 07:00 – 21:00 hours Mondays to Fridays;
- 08:00 – 18:00 hours Saturdays, Sundays, Bank or Public Holidays.

Should a complaint be received, the person using the field can be identified from the booking system. Initially, if the complaint was valid, the user would be given a warning to ensure they control their dog to minimise barking etc, and if further breeches are identified, the user would be restricted from accessing this site.

Users are advised of the need to minimise noise on site both during the booking process and again as they get to site, with the following signage clearly displayed.



In relation to the present planning application, no changes to the operating hours are being sought, nor would there be any amendments to the booking system or the requirement for the users to control noise from their dogs whilst using the field.

4. Noise Monitoring

In order to ascertain the noise levels attributable to the users of the dog walking field, an unattended noise survey was carried out between Thursday 10 to Monday 14 July 2025.

Weather conditions for the survey remained dry throughout, with either calm conditions or light winds, thus suitable for undertaking an environmental noise survey.

A Rion NL-52 Class 1 Sound Level Meter was used for the survey, calibrated with a Rion NC-74 Class 1 Acoustic Calibrator before and after the exercise, with the instrument reading 94.0 dB on each occasion. Both instruments had been calibrated according to National Standards within the previous 12 / 24 months. Details of the instrumentation used and calibration dates are provided below.

Instrument	Serial No.	Calibration Date	Laboratory / Certificate No.
Rion NL-52 Class 1 SLM	00464685	25/9/23	AcSoft – 1506621-2
Rion NC-74 Class 1 Acoustic Calibrator	35125830	5/9/24	AcSoft – 1509697-1

Table 4.2 Instrumentation Details for Unattended Noise Survey

The instrument was positioned at the north-western corner of the field, as indicated on Figure 1, with the microphone set in free-field conditions and at a height of 1.5 metres above the ground. The survey position was closer to the users of the field, than the neighbouring property and thus noise levels monitored attributable to the dogs within the field would be higher and thereby providing worst-case conditions.

The instrument was configured to record noise levels over both 1-second and 15-minute monitoring periods during the survey, with the instrument also fitted with audio recording capabilities, used to obtain periodic audio snapshots and when high noise levels were detected. The short duration measurements and audio recordings enabled particular events to be identified.

The results of the noise monitoring exercise are presented graphically in Appendix B. The results also indicate the periods when the field was in use, based upon the log obtained from the booking system for confirmed bookings. It was noted that the field was mowed during Thursday afternoon, over a period of around 1 hour, which is indicated by the blue shading on the monitoring figures.

Observations made whilst on site and from the audio recordings indicated that the main source of noise throughout the survey period was attributable to traffic travelling along the A1, which runs approximately 350 metres to the west of the field. Traffic travelling along the A1 was noted to be the main influence on the ambient (L_{Aeq}) and background (L_{A90}) noise levels throughout the survey. Traffic travelling along the High Street to the east was also noted to be clearly audible during the day.

Birdsong was also a main influence on the maximum noise levels during the survey period, with the majority of the maximum noise levels recorded during the survey period attributable to the birds.

The operation of The Waggon and Horses Public House, which is to the north of the site and the access road, was also audible at times. During the day noise from tables being moved within the pub garden and the handling of barrels was audible at the monitoring position. There is another public house, The George and Dragon, to the north-east and closer to the field. However, this was closed at the time of the survey, with the car park fenced off. When operational, it is likely that the operation of this pub would also influence noise levels at the neighbouring properties.

Children playing in the playground of the primary school to the west of the field and neighbouring properties were also clearly audible at break times.

Analysis of the audio recordings made whilst the field was in use, and from observations at the start and end of the survey period, indicated that the dogs using the field were generally quiet, with the users tending to walk down the field and away from the neighbouring properties.

When dogs were heard barking during the survey period, which was noted to be during two brief periods on Sunday 13 and Monday 14 July, as indicated on the monitoring results, the noise levels attributable to the barking were observed to be lower than from other noise sources.

Analysing the results obtained during the period on Sunday, noise levels monitored on the site boundary indicated levels of 48.7 $L_{Aeq, 1 \text{ hr}}$ during the two hours between 08:00 – 10:00 when the field was in use, compared to a level of 48.8 dB $L_{Aeq, 1 \text{ hr}}$, between 07:00 – 08:00 and 47.7 dB $L_{Aeq, 1 \text{ hr}}$, between 10:00 – 11:00, when the field was not in use.

For the period monitored on Monday morning, the results indicated a level of 53.7 $L_{Aeq, 1 \text{ hr}}$ during the hour between 07:00 – 08:00 when the field was in use and the dogs were audible occasionally, compared to a level of 52.7 dB $L_{Aeq, 1 \text{ hr}}$, between 06:00 – 07:00 and 55.0 dB $L_{Aeq, 1 \text{ hr}}$ between 09:00 – 10:00, when the field was not in use. It was noted during all three periods, that the traffic on the A1 was the main source of noise.

5. Assessment

The dog walking field has been in use since January 2024. It is understood during this time, that there have been no complaints in relation to noise from the use of the field. This is a positive indication that the use of the field is not resulting in a potential for adverse noise impacts at the neighbouring properties.

As indicated, good controls are maintained with regards to the use of the field, with users advised to ensure they maintain low levels of noise. There are clear notices both on the booking website and at the field to remind users. There is also a policy implemented that if users' dogs were to generate a complaint, they would be warned and their access to the site removed if there were further instances. These measures seek to ensure noise levels are minimised.

The noise survey carried out at the site boundary indicates that generally dogs using the field generated very low levels of noise, with the noise levels whilst the field was in use remaining equivalent to when the field was not being used. Noise levels were noted to be principally influenced by traffic using the A1 to the west.

Two periods were identified when dogs were heard barking, monitored during Sunday and Monday mornings. These periods were identified to represent the period when dogs using the field were most audible and thus provide worst-case conditions for the assessment.

Noise levels monitored on the field boundary during Sunday morning were 48.7 $L_{Aeq, 1 \text{ hr}}$ during the two hours between 08:00 – 10:00 when the field was in use, compared to a level of 48.8 dB $L_{Aeq, 1 \text{ hr}}$ between 07:00 – 08:00 and 47.7 dB $L_{Aeq, 1 \text{ hr}}$ between 10:00 – 11:00, when the field was not in use. On Monday a level of 53.7 $L_{Aeq, 1 \text{ hr}}$ was measured on the field boundary during the hour between 07:00 – 08:00 when the field was in use and the dogs were audible occasionally, compared to a level of 52.7 dB $L_{Aeq, 1 \text{ hr}}$ between 06:00 – 07:00 and 55.0 dB $L_{Aeq, 1 \text{ hr}}$ between 09:00 – 10:00, when the field was not in use.

Noise levels at the field boundary therefore increased by up to 1 dB(A) during the periods when the field was being used. Given that the neighbouring property is ~25 metres further from the field boundary, the change in noise levels associated with the use would have been lower.

Assessing the noise levels against the IEMA criteria would indicate a **“None or Not Significant”** change in noise levels. The increase would also result in an imperceptible increase in noise levels at the field boundary and at the neighbouring properties.

The main potential for disturbance would be attributable to times when the dogs are barking. Clearly, the measures which are being taken on site to control noise are effective, with minimal numbers of dogs barking identified in the audio recordings during the noise survey. This indicates that, if dogs were barking, the level of noise was generally low and below noise levels associated with the other surrounding noise sources. During the period identified above, maximum noise levels of 70 -78 dB $L_{Amax, F}$ were recorded on the field boundary, which were noted to be attributable to the dogs barking close to the monitoring position. Taking account of the distance to the neighbouring property, the maximum noise levels would have been below 60 dB $L_{Amax, F}$, thus considerably lower than those attributable to other sources as indicated within the results.

On the basis that the noise associated with the use of the dog walking field had a negligible increase in noise levels at the field boundary, and the fact that the use to date has not resulted in complaints, the assessment has concluded that continued operation would not have a potential to result in adverse noise impacts and therefore remains acceptable.

6. Summary

LF Acoustics Ltd were appointed to prepare a noise assessment in relation to the Grow Walkies dog walking field, located on land to the west of High Street, Graveley.

A temporary planning permission for change of use of the field to a dog walking field was granted by North Hertfordshire District Council on 8 January 2024 (Application Ref. 23/02221/FP), with further planning permission granted for a weather shelter and dog playframe granted on 4 December 2024 (Application Ref. 24/02118/FP).

The temporary nature of the planning permission was to address concerns from neighbours in relation to dogs barking etc, with the current planning permission due to expire in January 2026.

Grow Walkies are now applying for a permanent planning permission for the dog walking field.

A noise monitoring exercise was carried out to determine the levels of noise attributable to the dogs using the field. The results indicate that generally the use results in a negligible change in the noise levels, which are mainly influenced by road traffic. Where the use was identified during the survey, the increase in noise was noted to be very low, less than 1 dB(A) at the site boundary.

An assessment against the IEMA guidelines indicates that the noise associated with the result would result in a “**None or Not Significant**” impact, with the overall change in noise levels unlikely to be perceptible beyond the field boundary.

In conclusion, the present use of the dog walking field is not resulting in complaints, with the assessment demonstrating that the use is generating acceptable levels of noise. With the present operational hours and controls to minimise noise maintained, there is no reason from a noise perspective that the use cannot continue.

References

1. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. National Planning Policy Framework. December 2024.
2. DEFRA. Noise Policy Statement for England (NPSE). March 2010.
3. British Standards Institute. Methods for Rating and Assessing Industrial and Commercial Sound. BS 4142:2014 +A1:2019.
4. Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment. Guidelines for Environmental Noise Impact Assessment. Version 1.2. November 2014.

Figures

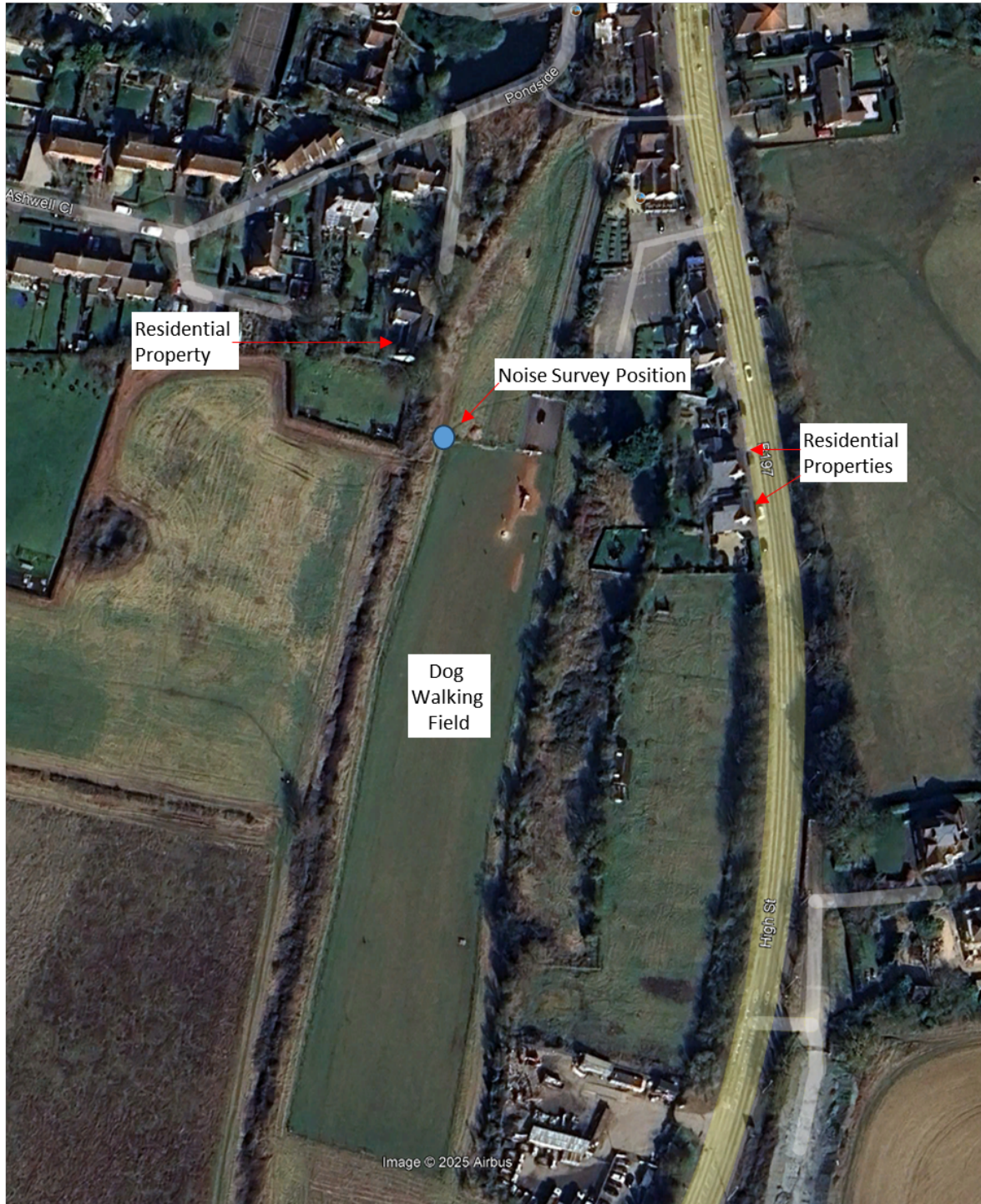


Figure 1:
Site Location and Noise
Monitoring Position

Appendix A

Noise Units

Decibels (dB)

Noise can be considered as 'unwanted sound'. Sound in air can be considered as the propagation of energy through the air in the form of oscillatory changes in pressure. The size of the pressure changes in acoustic waves is quantified on a logarithmic decibel (dB) scale firstly because the range of audible sound pressures is very great, and secondly because the loudness function of the human auditory system is approximately logarithmic.

The dynamic range of the auditory system is generally taken to be 0 dB to 140 dB. Generally, the addition of noise from two sources producing the same sound pressure level will lead to an increase in sound pressure level of 3 dB. A 3 dB noise change is generally considered to be just noticeable; a 5 dB change is generally considered to be clearly discernible and a 10 dB change is generally accepted as leading to the subjective impression of a doubling or halving of loudness.

A-Weighting

The bandwidth of the frequency response of the ear is usually taken to be from about 18 Hz to 18,000 Hz. The auditory system is not equally sensitive throughout this frequency range. This is taken into account when making acoustic measurements by the use of A-weighting, a filter circuit that has a frequency response similar to the human auditory system. All the measurement results referred to in this report are A-weighted.

Units Used to Describe Time-Varying Noise Sources (L_{Aeq} , L_{Amax} , L_{A10} , and L_{A90})

Instantaneous A-weighted sound pressure level is not generally considered as an adequate indicator of subjective response to noise because levels of noise usually vary with time.

For many types of noise the Equivalent Continuous A-Weighted Sound Pressure Level ($L_{Aeq,T}$) is used as the basis of determining community response. The $L_{Aeq,T}$ is defined as the A-weighted sound pressure level of the steady sound which contains the same acoustic energy as the noise being assessed over a specific time period, T.

The L_{Amax} is the maximum value that the A-weighted sound pressure level reaches during a measurement period. $L_{Amax F}$, or Fast, is averaged over 0.125 of a second and $L_{Amax S}$, or Slow, is averaged over 1 second. All L_{Amax} values referred to in this report are Fast.

The L_{A90} is the noise level exceeded for 90% of the measurement period. It is generally used to quantify the background noise level, the underlying level of noise that is present even during the quieter parts of measurement period

Appendix B
Results of Unattended Noise Survey

