

Memorandum

To: ANCCG members

From: AKL and Airways

Date: 4 September 2026

Subject: Follow-up response to enquiries from Ōrākei Local Board representative (Troy Churton)

This memo provides a response to an email to the ANCCG from Ōrākei Local Board representative Mr Troy Churton on 7 July 2026 (see **Appendix 1**). It follows a previous email from Mr Churton dated 2 June 2026 and a response from AKL that was circulated by the ANCCG Secretariat on 6 July 2026 (**Appendix 2**).

Before addressing Mr Churton's most recent email, it is important the ANCCG understands the previous email and response.

Previous email and response

Mr Churton's questions of 2 June 2026 related to how the different types of approach are used and why aircraft may at times appear to operate differently from the Civil Aviation Rules designed to help manage noise from visual approaches.

In short, the noise abatement procedures and noise abatement areas referred to by Mr Churton apply to visual approaches, not instrument approaches.

Instrument approaches are used by almost all commercial aircraft and provide standardised and predictable procedures (including route, altitude, and speed) for safely managing aircraft in controlled airspace. These procedures are designed and certified by the Civil Aviation Authority to ensure aircraft remain safely separated, including in situations where conditions may change or where pilots are required to carry out unexpected manoeuvres. They allow aircraft to join final approach closer to and at lower altitude than visual approaches.

Aircraft on instrument approaches are typically already configured and so the use of speed brakes on approach is less common.

There is no regulatory limit on how often aircraft may operate using instrument approaches.

While instrument approaches can be used consistently across a wide range of operating conditions, visual approaches rely on visual separation and real-time adjustments by pilots and therefore can only be used in particular conditions.

Given the discretion visual approaches give to pilots, additional procedures can and do apply to manage noise. The same is not required for instrument approaches as the noise is considered and managed by standardised, predictable flight paths, altitudes and descent profiles that support stable aircraft operation and minimise the need for short-notice manoeuvring or additional thrust and drag changes close to the runway.

At Auckland Airport, noise abatement procedures are in place via the Civil Aviation Rules for visual approaches from the north or factored into the design of the certified and published instrument approaches.

Visual approaches are predominantly used by Turbo prop aircraft and since 2015 jets arriving to Auckland Airport from the north have not been permitted to utilise visual approaches. This was introduced based on the availability of published approaches and to limit the variability associated with visual approaches.

Mr Churton's reply of 7 July 2026 and AKL's response

Mr Churton's reply is premised on his understanding that aircraft are required to join final approach above 2,000 feet for noise abatement reasons and therefore anything lower is unacceptably noisy. Based on this assumption, Mr Churton has sought clarification on the noise impact of the X-ray approach¹ where aircraft are permitted to join final approach at 1,000 feet. Mr Churton does not consider the difference is between visual and instrument approaches.

AKL does not agree with the assumption upon which Mr Churton's reply is based. Aircraft operating on published instrument approaches are compliant with the relevant aviation, airspace, and noise management requirements.

Mr Churton seems to be suggesting that rules relating to visual approaches in some way also set minimum requirements for precise instrument approaches. Mr Churton's view appears to overlook that altitude is only one factor influencing aircraft noise.

This is perhaps best explained with the example of the X-ray approach as raised by Mr Churton. Aircraft flying the X-ray approach typically descend continuously from approximately 6,000 feet using low engine thrust. They are subject to the same stabilised approach requirements and approved operating procedures as aircraft using other instrument approaches. These requirements establish the speed, descent profile, and aircraft configuration that must be achieved before landing. Accordingly, the fact that the approach results in an aircraft joining final approach at approximately 1,000 feet does not, by itself, indicate increased noise impacts on the community, an unstable approach, or non-compliance with operational requirements. An aircraft descending continuously at low thrust may in fact generate less noise than an aircraft maintaining a higher altitude that requires additional engine power. Consequently, altitude alone cannot be used as a proxy for noise impact.

¹ The X-ray approach refers to the RNP X RWY 23L instrument approach that is certified by CAA. It allows an aircraft to establish on final approach at 1,000 feet.

Appendix 1: Mr Troy Churton email of 7 July 2026

Hello ANCCG

The response to my enquiry appears to miss a salient point, which is:

- if it is accepted that for noise abatement reasons aircraft have always been restricted to joining final approach below 2000', then the rule concedes that anything lower, requiring aircraft to fly low on base leg, is unacceptably noisy.
- How then is it ok to have aircraft joining final at 1000' thus creating much noise in the process?

We are not debating the difference between visual and instrument approaches if I understand it correctly.

I understand the description of "stable managed approaches" by aircraft 'fully configured for landing' is not true for the Xray approach which joins final at 1000', thus turning and slowing late in the descent and flying much lower than normal over areas further out than normal...with obvious nuisance related consequences for our communities.

I ask the secretary to ensure:

- this matter is tidied up at the next meeting, and
- to extend an invitation to recent community representative Mark Easson to join the meeting for this conversation.

With thanks

Troy Churton

Orakei Local Board

Appendix 2: Response to enquiries from Ōrākei Local Board representative (Troy Churton)

This memo provides Auckland Airport's written response to questions raised by Ōrākei Local Board representative Mr Troy Churton in relation to Runway 23 approach procedures. The original questions and supporting material were circulated to committee members by Mr Churton on 2 June 2026 and are attached as an appendix.

The questions raised by Mr Churton relate primarily to how different types of approaches are used and why aircraft may at times appear to operate differently from the visual approach rules designed to help manage noise.

Responsibilities

Flight paths and approach procedures are designed by Airways New Zealand and regulated by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). Auckland Airport works closely with both organisations on operational and community matters, including noise and flight path concerns.

Visual and instrument approaches

Almost all commercial aircraft use instrument flight approaches, which provide standardised and predictable procedures for safely managing aircraft in controlled airspace, including route, altitude and speed. These instrument flight procedures are designed and certified to ensure safe and consistent operations and are not subject to the same noise-based limits as visual approaches.

The precise, pre-designed flight paths for instrument approaches enable Air Traffic Control to manage spacing between aircraft rather than relying on visual separation and real-time adjustments by pilots and ATC. This allows aircraft to join final approach closer in and at lower altitude than visual approaches. Instrument approaches can also be used consistently across a wide range of operating conditions.

Visual approaches allow pilots to fly to the runway using visual reference rather than a published instrument approach and the pilot can either hand-fly the aircraft or engage the autopilot. They are used when weather, visibility and air traffic conditions allow safe visual separation.

Visual approaches are subject to specific requirements under Civil Aviation Rule 93.61, which are designed to help manage aircraft noise by setting expectations for how aircraft join the final approach.

At Auckland Airport, the use of visual approaches for jets arriving from the north has been significantly reduced over time. Since 2015, jets arriving from the north have not been permitted to undertake visual approaches. This change was made to reduce potential noise effects associated with lower altitude and less predictable flight paths.

Application of the rules

Although jets arriving from the north are currently not permitted to conduct visual approaches, the CAA has confirmed that, under the existing rules, Airways New Zealand may direct an aircraft on a visual approach to join final approach inside the 14 nautical mile minimum standard referred to in Civil Aviation Rule 93.61. No exemption is required for this.

Civil Aviation Rule 93.61 does not apply to instrument approaches. This reflects the fact that aircraft flying an instrument approach are not subject to the same centreline-joining procedures that apply to visual approaches. Rather, instrument approaches manage aircraft noise by design, as they use standardised, predictable flight paths, altitudes and descent profiles that support stable aircraft operation and minimise the need for short-notice manoeuvring or additional thrust and drag changes close to the runway. Aircraft on instrument approaches are typically already configured for landing, so the use of speed brakes is uncommon at this stage of flight. Where speed brakes are used, this is more likely to occur earlier in the descent in preparation for commencing an instrument approach, or during a visual approach where additional drag may be required over a shorter distance.

Operational context

The use of different approach types reflects how aircraft are managed safely within a constrained and busy airspace system. Instrument procedures are designed in advance to ensure aircraft remain safely separated, including in situations where conditions may change or where pilots are required to carry out unexpected manoeuvres.

This means flight paths are not easily changed, as even small adjustments can affect aircraft safety and how flights are managed across the wider airspace.

Frequency of instrument approaches

There is no regulatory limit on how often aircraft may operate using instrument approaches. Their use is determined by operational and safety requirements, including weather conditions, traffic levels and how aircraft are sequenced through the airspace.

Regards,

Auckland Airport

Appendix: copy of correspondence share with ANCCG, 2 June 2026

Dear Chair

Item tabled for 'other business' – Advice on 3 technical questions that have consequences for our communities

According to CAR part 93.61, aircraft on a visual approach to runway 23 must not turn onto final approach below 2000' (which is about 7 nautical miles from the runway threshold).

At night they must intercept final at 14nm or 4000'.

They also must not fly below 5000' over the residential noise abatement area.

Advice sought on three technical questions bulleted below:

- Why are they allowed to intercept final on the Green x/ray approach to RW 23 at 1000' and 3nm? And inevitably this means using speed brakes - is that right?
 - If the visual approach rules are to minimise noise, why is there an exception on an 'instrument approach'?
- It seems the flightpath starts below 5000' somewhere over Mt Albert and descends linearly over residential areas until turning in for landing.
- Is it correct Airport/Airways no limit to the number of times this happens?

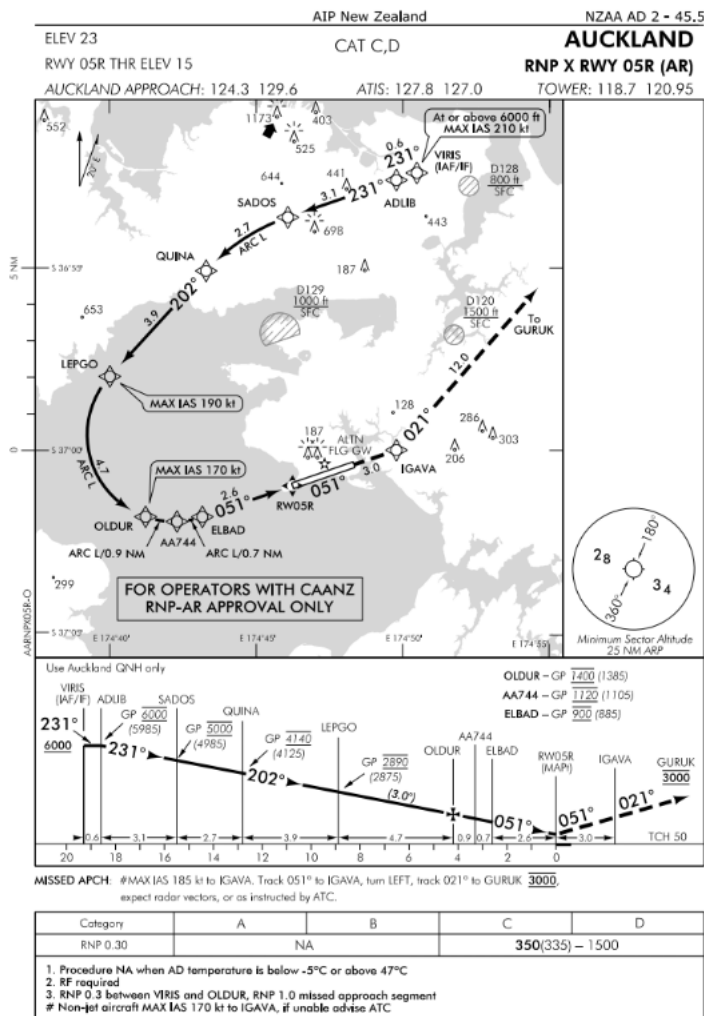
I attach

1. the instrument approach charts. (I note too that the approach to RW05 crosses Hillsborough at 3000'), and
2. an AI description of the approach

With thanks

Troy Churton

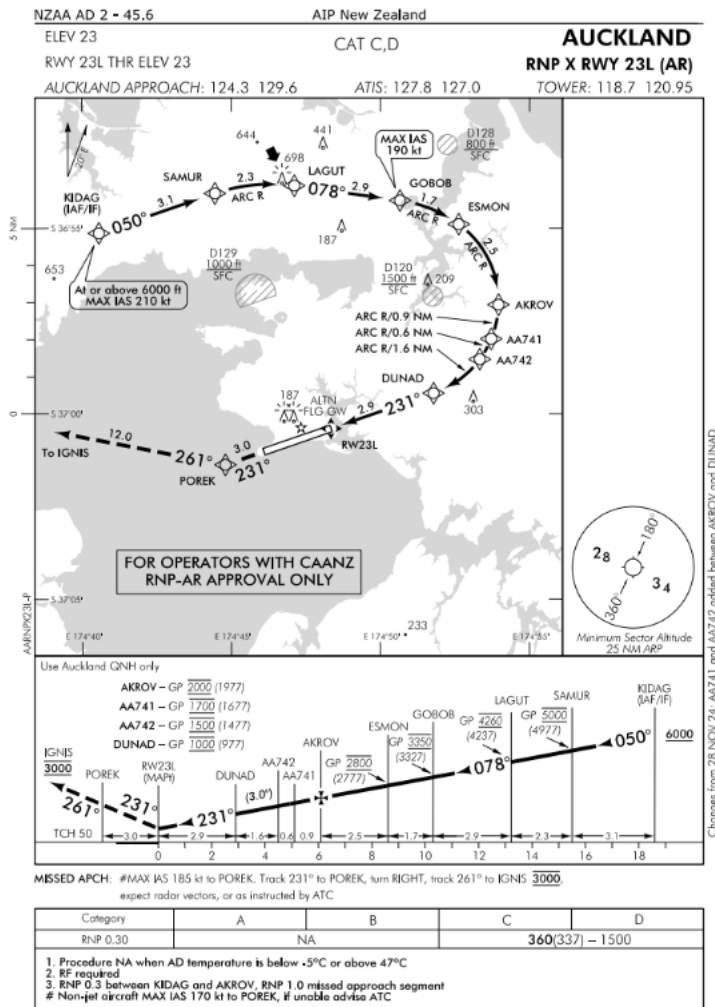
Orakei Local Board



Effective: 20 FEB 25

© Civil Aviation Authority

AUCKLAND
RNP X RWY 05R (AR)



Effective: 20 FEB 25

© Civil Aviation Authority

AUCKLAND
RNP X RWY 23L (AR)

Direction of traffic

KIDAG is northwest of Auckland Airport, not northeast.

The RNAV X / Green X-ray is therefore designed for arrivals from the North and West, not from the Gulf side.

Updated schematic description

KIDAG (NW of NZAA): Aircraft arriving from the north and west pass KIDAG, then track toward LOSGA.

LOSGA (east of the field, 4,950 ft): From KIDAG, they route across the top of the TMA toward LOSGA, then:

At LOSGA, they start the RF leg at 4,950 ft.

RF leg: From LOSGA, the curved path:

Sweeps southwest, inside Whitford

Passes north of Totara Park

Crosses the centre of Highbrook (~1,400 ft)

DUNAD / Wiri (1,000 ft):

End of the curve, start of short final.

Over Wiri, at 1,000 ft.

Short final:

Straight-in from DUNAD to RWY 23L.

So the clean story is:

Arrivals from the North and West route via KIDAG, cross the top of Auckland to LOSGA (4,950 ft), then follow a curved RF leg inside Whitford, over central Highbrook, straighten over Wiri at 1,000 ft, and land on 23L on a very short final.

If you want, next I can do the side-by-side schematic: RNAV X vs Whitford long-final, in the same simple style.