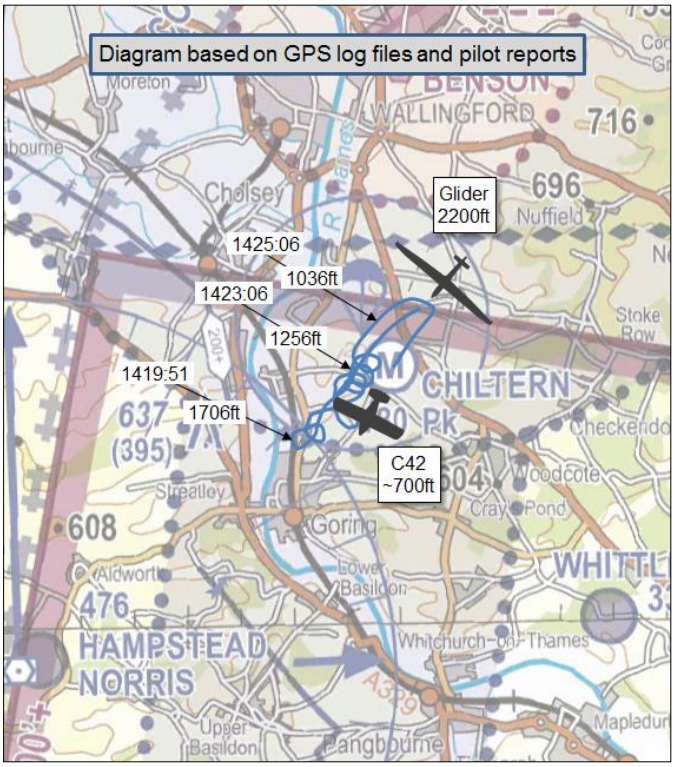
AIRPROX REPORT No 2017200

Date: 20 Aug 2017 Time: 1425Z Position: 5132N 00106W Location: Chiltern Park

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	ASW27	C42
Operator	Civ Pte	Civ Trg
Airspace	London FIR	London FIR
Class	G	G
Rules	VFR	VFR
Service	Listening Out	Listening Out
Provider	Chiltern Park	Chiltern Park
Altitude/FL	12-1700ft	NK
Transponder	Not Fitted	
Reported		
Colours	White	
Lighting		
Conditions	VMC	VMC
Visibility	15km	
Altitude/FL	1600ft	~700ft
Altimeter	QNH (1023hPa)	QNH
Heading	N/A	040°
Speed	60kt	65kt
ACAS/TAS	PowerFLARM	Unknown
Alert	None	N/A
Separation		
Reported	0ft V/40m H	NK V/200ft H
Recorded	NK	



THE ASW27 PILOT reports that he was flying in a gliding cross-country competition, departing from and returning to Lasham. At the morning task briefing the competitors were advised that the Chiltern Park para DZ would not be active, and the Chiltern Park frequency was given on their task sheets. At 1420 he passed NE to SW through Chiltern Park DZ, approx 1.5nm SW and started circling right in an attempt to climb in a thermal. During the next 5 mins he descended slowly from 2100ft to 1600ft (on the Lasham QFE) until circling west abeam Chiltern Park. He speaks little English, but was monitoring 134.025 throughout the time he was in the vicinity. Whilst circling, he noticed a white ultralight 300ft below circling right and climbing up towards him. When it reached the same altitude it positioned on his right such that he was forced to roll wings level to avoid a collision. The ultralight then positioned in front and rocked its wings. The ASW27 pilot perceived this to be an interception and instruction to land, so he immediately joined right downwind and landed at Chiltern Park.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'High'.

THE C42 PILOT reports that he was instructing a low-hours student in the circuit and they were doing frequent landings and take-offs. They were on the ground when they first saw the glider go overhead; it looked low, as if the pilot was looking for lift, so he instructed the student to stay on the ground until it cleared. However, once airborne and established downwind (at around 700ft, plus or minus 100ft due to the student's low-hours), they saw the glider again, now conducting an orbit. They were still some distance away so they continued but, when it conducted an orbit circuit at the end of the downwind leg, he decided to leave the circuit. The two aircraft were no closer than 2-300ft and he remained visual throughout, but it was obvious that the glider was going to need to land. He kept the atmosphere relaxed and calm so as not to unduly worry his student and they re-joined behind the glider on finals.

A PILOT WITNESS reports he had just landed at the airfield having dropped off some para-droppers when he saw a glider at the end of the downwind leg. It appeared low (he estimated 500-600ft), and obviously looking for somewhere to land he thought. They tried calling on the frequency but didn't get any joy; the C42 pilot was in the circuit and also tried calling him but couldn't raise him. The C42 pilot then said he would try to get the glider pilot's attention to get him onto the frequency. There was no wing-waggling, and in his opinion the two aircraft did not get close.

Factual Background

The weather at Benson was recorded as follows:

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METAR EGUB 201350Z AUTO 22009KT 9999 FEW047 BKN100 19/09 Q1023=
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Analysis and Investigation

UKAB Secretariat

The ASW27 and C42 pilots shared an equal responsibility for collision avoidance and not to operate in such proximity to other aircraft as to create a collision hazard[1]. Notwithstanding, if the incident geometry is considered converging then the C42 pilot was required to give way to the glider[2].

Summary

An Airprox was reported when an ASW27 and a C42 flew into proximity at 1425 on Sunday 20th August 2017. Both pilots were operating under VFR in VMC, neither were in receipt of an ATS.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available consisted of reports from the pilots of both aircraft and GPS track files.

The Board first examined the actions of the glider pilot. They were unsure as to whether he thought that Chilton Park was not active; noting that the competition brief stated that Chilton Park was not para-dropping, and that there was no penalty for overflying it, they wondered whether he had interpreted that to mean that the airfield was shut. Members noted that he reported that he had flown through the overhead, and that his GPS logger indicated that he had done this between 2200ft and 1760ft amsl (between 2000ft to 1500ft above the airfield). The GPS logger then showed that he spent nearly 10mins orbiting over the downwind leg at between 1700-1200ft amsl (1500-1000ft above the airfield) just above the microlight circuit height of 700ft. The Board also noted that the glider pilot had reported that he was listening out on the Chiltern Park frequency, (which had been printed on his task sheet). Noting also that the Chilton Park pilots had reported that they were trying to contact him on that frequency, members surmised that he did not assimilate that he was being called because he was either too busy trying to find some lift, or did not realise/understand that they were calling him. Whatever the reason, the Board felt that flying directly through the overhead of an active airfield without calling on the frequency was not an ideal plan, even if he did believe the airfield was closed. It was clear to the Board that the glider pilot perceived that the C42 had intercepted him and that he had not expected to see the C42 come so close, reporting that he had to roll wings level to avoid it. The glider member commented that glider pilots are used to being in close proximity and manoeuvring with other gliders, especially during competitions, and that the C42's proximity must have been of significant concern to the glider pilot for him to roll out of his manoeuvre. He went on to say that the glider in question was a high performance completion model and that, even at 1000ft agl, although the glider pilot would obviously be looking for more lift, it did not necessarily mean that he would have needed to land at Chilton Park had he not believed he was being told to do so.

[1] SERA.3205 Proximity.
[2] SERA.3210 Right-of-way (c)(2) Converging.

For his part, members noted that the C42 pilot had asserted that he had not flown in close proximity to the glider and had cleared the circuit when he saw the glider orbiting downwind. They also noted that the other pilot witness had commented that the C42 pilot had talked about trying to get the glider pilot's attention. Members wondered whether there had been a misunderstanding or differing perceptions between these 2 pilots as to what the C42 pilot was going to do in trying to get the glider pilot onto the frequency. If the C42 pilot had flown near to the glider in trying to get it's pilot's attention then the Board cautioned about pilots taking matters into their own hands and flying close to other aircraft to either warn other pilots, or take registration numbers, because without knowing the other pilot's intentions, these actions could well cause a situation more dangerous than that which they were trying to prevent.

The Board then discussed the organisation and briefing at the gliding competition. They were told that the competition was due to route 5km to the west of Chilton Park, but that the weather conditions meant that the glider had had to route closer in. Bearing in mind that this was an international competition, members wondered what the visiting pilots had been briefed about flying in proximity to local airfields, and whether international competitors had a full understanding of UK airspace. Although the Board could not know for certain whether the glider pilot had thought that Chilton Park was closed or not, members wondered whether its status had been made absolutely clear during the pre-flight briefings. However, members agreed there was not enough information available to come to any conclusions on this aspect.

UKAB Secretariat Note: After the UKAB sat, the competition organisers have confirmed that the briefings were indeed comprehensive. All competitors attended a mandatory brief on UK Airspace before the competition days, and attendees were required to sign in to ensure the attendance of all. During this brief the status of ATZ were discussed, but also that many busy airfields, of which Chilton Park was included, do not have an ATZ. CAA 1:500000 charts were available for every competing pilot to purchase, as well as a bespoke competition chart detailing turning points and airspace. Furthermore, a 'forbidden airspace file' outlining penalty airspace was available for pilots to upload into their electronic equipment, with help on hand to assist in doing so. Any pilot entering forbidden airspace would be penalised on the competition scoring system. Chilton Park DZ was included as a 1.5nm and FL150 radius circle, and the equipment should have alerted on entering regardless of the status of the DZ on that day. Finally, a daily task briefing on the morning of the competition included a specific airspace section in which the Chilton Park DZ was briefed as not active, but that it would still be busy with microlight activity.

Members then deliberated on the cause and risk of the Airprox. The Board could not reconcile the glider pilot's account of being intercepted and being instructed to land with that of the C42 pilot's account of clearing the circuit on seeing the glider orbit downwind. Taking into account the need for the C42 pilot to ultimately give way to the glider in a converging situation, and the fact that the glider pilot had expressed his concern at the proximity of the C42 (however close it had been in reality), the Board agreed in the end that the C42 pilot had flown close enough to the ASW27 to cause its pilot concern. Notwithstanding, members agreed that there was a contributory factor in that the ASW27 pilot had flown into proximity to the Chilton Park visual circuit without communicating his intentions. Determination of the risk was again grounds for much discussion. Some members thought that the glider pilot's description of needing to roll wings level to avoid the C42 indicated that safety had been much reduced (Category B). However, others opined that the C42 pilot had indicated that he was visual with the glider at all times and so would presumably have taken measures not to collide with it. The debate ebbed and flowed (particularly on the issue of how the C42 pilot intended to attract the glider pilot's attention), but, in the end, the discussion settled on the latter view and the risk was assessed as Category C, safety had been degraded but there had been no risk of collision.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: The C42 pilot flew close enough to the ASW27 to cause its pilot concern.

Contributory Factor: The ASW27 pilot flew into proximity to the Chilton Park visual circuit without communicating his intentions.

Degree of Risk: C.

Safety Barrier Assessment[3]

In assessing the effectiveness of the safety barriers associated with this incident, the Board concluded that the key factors had been that:

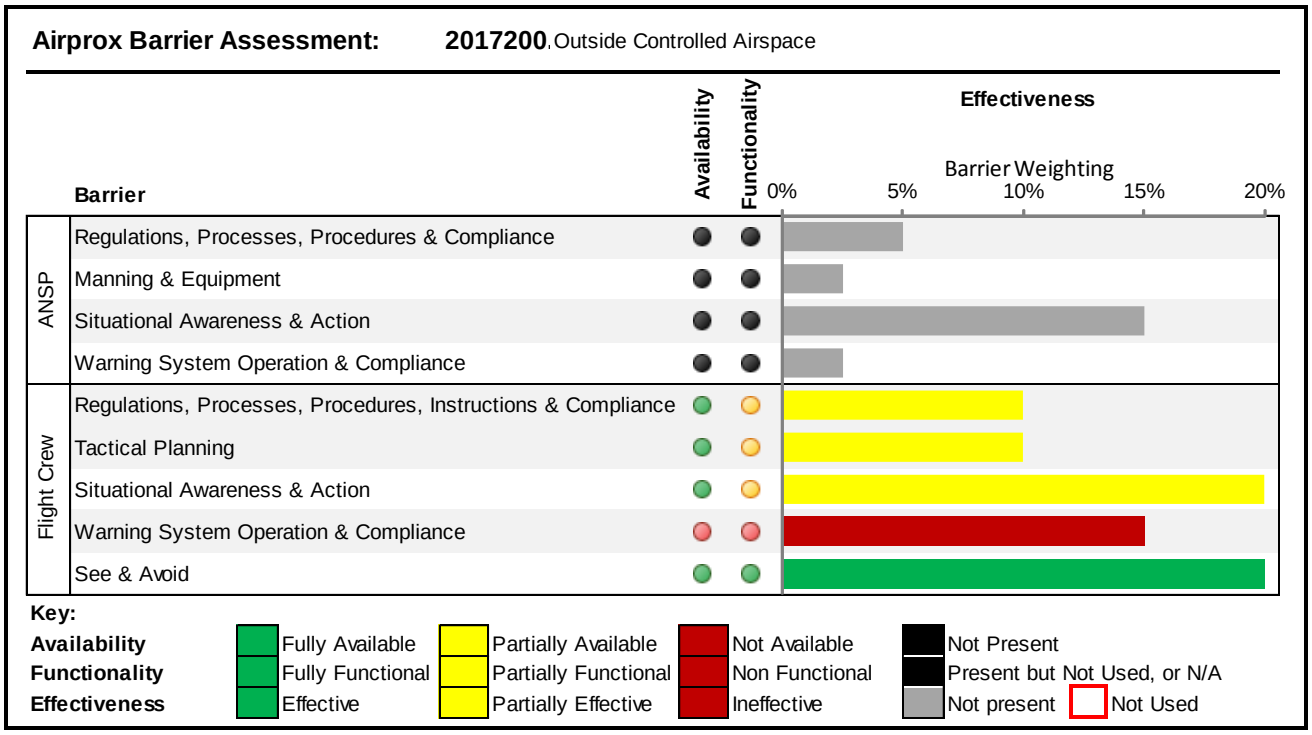
Flight Crew:

Regulations, Processes, Procedures, Instructions and Compliance were assessed as **partially effective** because the glider pilot didn't fully account for the presence of Chiltern Park.

Tactical Planning was assessed as **partially effective** because although the glider pilot was aware of Chilton Park and the fact that there would be no para-dropping there, he did not appear to be aware that it might be active with other flying.

Situational Awareness and Action were assessed as **partially effective** because although the C42 pilot could see the glider, he flew close enough to unsettle its pilot.

Warning System Operation and Compliance were assessed as **ineffective** because the glider's PFLARM could not detect the C42.



[3] The UK Airprox Board scheme for assessing the Availability, Functionality and Effectiveness of safety barriers can be found on the UKAB Website.