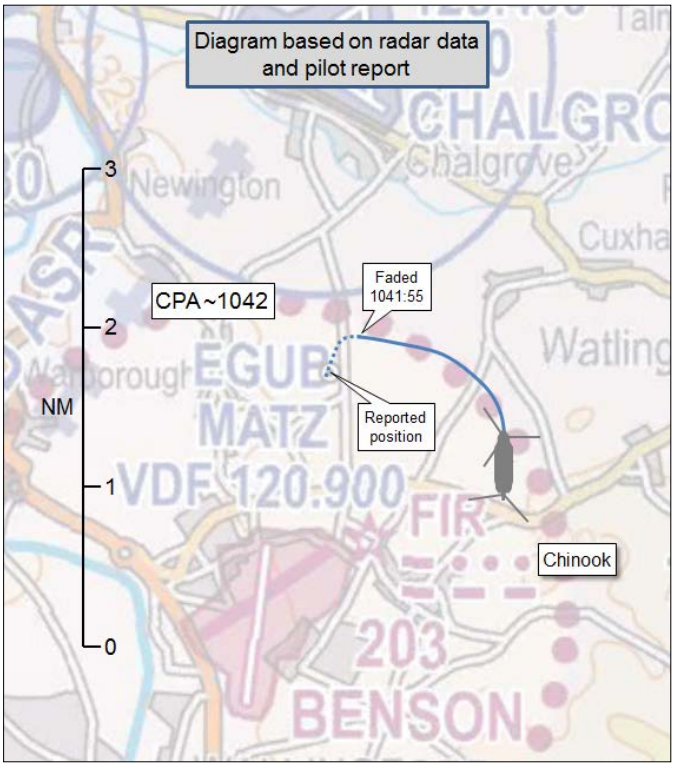
AIRPROX REPORT No 2016222

Date: 17 Oct 2016 Time: 1042Z Position: 5139N 00105W Location: 1.5nm NNE Benson

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	Chinook	Model
Operator	HQ JHC	Unknown
Airspace	Benson ATZ	Benson ATZ
Class	G	G
Rules	VFR	
Service	Aerodrome	
Provider	Benson Tower	
Altitude/FL	NK	
Transponder	A, C, S	
Reported		Not reported
Colours	Dark green	
Lighting	HISL, nav, landing	
Conditions	VMC	
Visibility	30km	
Altitude/FL	400ft	
Altimeter	QFE (NK hPa)	
Heading	210°	
Speed	80kt	
ACAS/TAS	Not fitted	
	Separation	
Reported	80ft V/5ft H	
Recorded	NK	



THE CHINOOK PILOT reports being 2 hours into a conversion-to-type sortie being conducted in the circuit at RAF Benson. The aircraft was setup on approach to RW19 for a running landing when, in a descending left-hand turn on final approach, one of the crewman saw a light blue, low-wing, single-engine model aircraft flying below the Chinook. He also saw what he believed to be the people operating the model on a road in the vicinity. The Instructor in the left-hand seat immediately informed ATC and the approach was continued as the model was no longer assessed to be a confliction.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'Medium'.

THE MODEL AIRCRAFT OPERATOR. The model aircraft operator could not be traced.

THE BENSON TOWER CONTROLLER reports the Chinook was downwind in the visual circuit. As the aircraft was turning final the pilot called 'practice pan, final for running landing'. Whilst on final, the pilot reported that a model aircraft had passed underneath. The controller noted the aircraft position as 1.5nm final, slightly offset to the east of the extended centreline. Once safely on the ground the pilot informed him that he would be filing a DASOR for the incident and the controller passed all information to the supervisor.

Factual Background

The weather at Benson was recorded as follows:

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METAR EGUB 171050Z 21012KT 9999 FEW022 BKN250 15/10 Q1017 BLU NOSIG=
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Analysis and Investigation

UKAB Secretariat

There are no specific ANO regulations limiting the maximum height for the operation of models that weigh 7kg or less other than if flown using FPV (with a maximum weight of 3.5kg) when 1000ft is the maximum height. Models weighing between 7kg and 20kg are limited to 400ft unless in accordance with airspace requirements. Notwithstanding, there remains a requirement to maintain direct, unaided visual contact with the aircraft sufficient to monitor its flight path in relation to other aircraft, persons, vehicles, vessels and structures for the purpose of avoiding collisions. CAP 722 gives guidance that, within the UK, visual line of sight (VLOS) operations are normally accepted to mean a maximum distance of 500m [1640ft] horizontally and 400ft [122m] vertically from the Remote Pilot.

Nor are there any specific ANO regulations limiting the operation of models in controlled airspace if they weigh 7kg or less other than if flown using FPV (with a maximum weight of 3.5kg) when they must not be flown in Class A, C, D or E, or in an ATZ during notified hours, without ATC permission. Models weighing between 7kg and 20kg must not be flown in Class A, C, D or E, or in an ATZ during notified hours, without ATC permission. CAP722 gives guidance that operators of models of any weight must avoid and give way to manned aircraft at all times in controlled Airspace or ATZ. CAP722 gives further guidance that, in practical terms, models of any mass could present a particular hazard when operating near an aerodrome or other landing site due to the presence of manned aircraft taking off and landing. Therefore, it strongly recommends that contact with the relevant ATS unit is made prior to conducting such a flight.

Notwithstanding the above, all model operators are also required to observe ANO 2016 Article 94(2) which requires that the person in charge of a small unmanned aircraft may only fly the aircraft if reasonably satisfied that the flight can safely be made, and the ANO 2016 Article 241 requirement not to recklessly or negligently cause or permit an aircraft to endanger any person or property. Allowing that the term 'endanger' might be open to interpretation, models of any size that are operated in close proximity to airfield approach, pattern of traffic or departure lanes, or above 1000ft agl (i.e. beyond VLOS (visual line of sight) and FPV (first-person-view) heights), can be considered to have endangered any aircraft that come into proximity. In such circumstances, or if other specific regulations have not been complied with as appropriate above, the model operator will be judged to have caused the Airprox by having flown their model into conflict with the aircraft.

Comments

JHC

This is another clear example of a JHC aircraft coming into close proximity with a Small Unmanned Air System in a vital phase of flight. The threat posed by SUAS is on the increase and so therefore is the reporting rate. JHC are monitoring these events closely and encouraging our crews to be extra vigilant and cognisant of the requirement for good lookout. It is disconcerting that there has been a significant increase in incidents in the vicinity of our airfields and that certain SUAS operators do not seem to be taking into consideration the safety of other air users when conducting their flights.

Summary

An Airprox was reported when a Chinook and a model aircraft flew into proximity at about 1042 on Monday 17th October 2016. The Chinook pilot was operating under VFR in VMC in receipt of an Aerodrome Service from Benson Tower. The model aircraft operator could not be traced.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available consisted of a report from the Chinook pilot, radar photographs/video recordings, a report from the air traffic controllers involved and a report from the appropriate operating authorities.

Members agreed that the model aircraft operator was ill-advised to be operating at a position near to the final approach to Benson RW19 due to the clear risk to aircraft at that location, and that, having been operating for 2 hours in the Benson circuit, the Chinook's likely proximity should have been obvious. For this reason it was agreed that the cause of the Airprox was that the model aircraft was flown into conflict with the Chinook. Members noted that although in this case there was a disregard for the safety of the Chinook by the model operator, this was by far the exception from the majority of model aircraft operators who were invariably responsible in their activities. The Chinook pilot's estimate of the separation was such that the Board assessed the risk of collision to be Category B; safety had been much reduced below the norm.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: The model aircraft was flown into conflict with the Chinook

Degree of Risk: B.