AIRPROX REPORT No 2012141

Date/Time: 1 Sep 2012 1417Z (Saturday)

Position: 5159N 00103W (Finmere Microlight Site cct RW28LHC - elev 395ft)

Airspace: London FIR (*Class: G*)

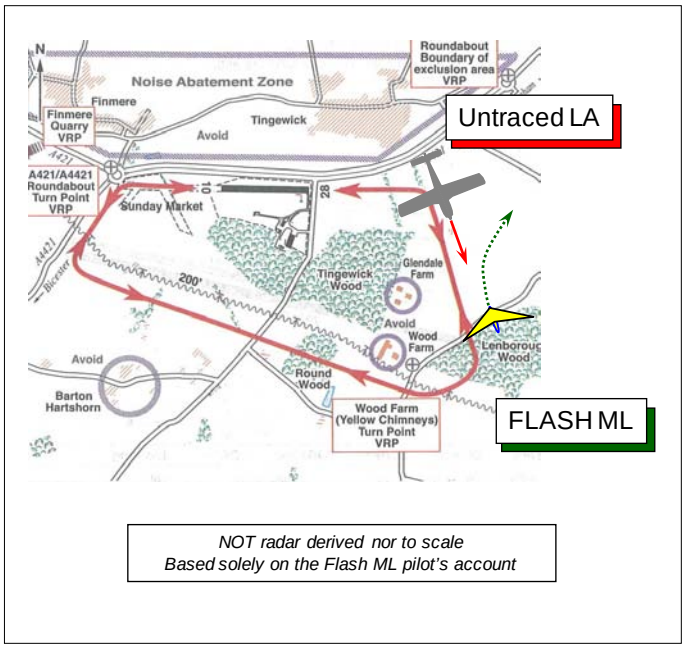
	Reporting Ac	*Reported Ac*
Type:	Flash 2A ML	Untraced LA
Operator:	Civ Trg	NK
Alt/FL:	700ft aal (QFE)	NK (NK)
Weather:	VMC CLBC	NK
Visibility:	10km	

Reported Separation:

Nil V/150m H NK

Recorded Separation:

Not recorded



PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE MAINAIR FLASH 2A FLEXWING MICROLIGHT PILOT (FLASH ML) reports that he was conducting a training flight with a student in the LHC to RW28 at Finmere. As they turned onto the promulgated L base leg heading 350-360° at 42kt, flying the cct pattern at 700ft aal [as he had depicted on the attached extract from a popular flight guide], both he and his student became aware of a high-wing light ac (LA) approaching head-on at exactly the same height, some 500m away when first seen. As the LA was relatively slow moving, it gave them 2-3 seconds to determine whether its pilot would take avoiding action, but the LA pilot did not do so, even though he had encroached into a live cct at a low height. The pilot of the other ac – a high-wing grey and blue coloured ac, which he thought was a distinctive type of vintage ac [registration provided] - did not deviate from his course even slightly, which suggested that the LA pilot was not maintaining a forward lookout. They took 'immediate avoiding action' by banking sharply to the R and the oncoming LA passed within 150m at exactly the same height of 700ft aal; he assessed the Risk of collision as 'high – certain'.

They were both able to identify the registration letters on the port side of the LA's fuselage as it flew on a steady SSE'ly course at 700ft until it had cleared the cct area. The LA had also flown directly over the centre of Tingewick Village at 700ft agl and through the nose abatement zone established for this ML site that is published in several commercial flight guides.

He made a visual identification of the ac that he thought was the same as an Auster ac shown on a photograph within 'g-info' [the web based ac register].

Finmere Microlight Site is marked as an active A/D on CAA and military charts. It has operated as a microlight training school since 2002 and its noise abatement procedures and cct pattern are published in all the current flight guides:

'Pilots are to avoid the Noise Abatement Zone north of A421 at all times.

Ccts: 700ft QFE, RW 10 RH, RW28 LH.

All approaches from E/SE or W/SW. No deadside. Join overhead Tingewick Wood at 1500ft QFE. Once cct direction established, maintain 1500ft QFE until clear of cct pattern to E or W. Descend to 700ft QFE and join cct on downwind leg to south of power cables.

Avoiding overflying Sunday Market to west of RW (Sundays only) and Barton Hartshorn village to SW.'

UKAB Note (1): The UK AIP at ENR 5-5-4-2, lists Finmere as a Microlight Site located at 51°59'07"N 001°03'23"W, with a site elevation of 395ft amsl.

UKAB Note (2): Upon receipt of the reporting pilot's report, the owner of the ac identified by the Flash ML pilot was contacted. However, he reports he has never flown around Finmere and is adamant that his ac was not the ac reported to be involved in this Airprox. Consequently, the RAC was tasked to review the available radar data and to trace the reported LA.

LATCC (MIL) RADAR ANALYSIS CELL reports that all the recorded radar sources available to the Unit have been reviewed closely, but neither the Flash ML nor the reported LA are evident in the vicinity of the Finmere cct. An intermittent primary radar contact does track ½nm W of the site heading SW-SSW. Because of the intermittent nature of this contact, however, the RAC have been unable to track the ac either to its destination or by back-tracking the contact to the A/D of departure. Consequently, the identity of the reported ac remains unknown.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available to the Board was limited to the report from the Flash 2A M/L pilot.

The Board acknowledged the difficulty of making a balanced assessment in the absence of a report from the untraced light aircraft pilot. Moreover the Board noted that Finmere is located where the airspace surrounding airspace constraints (Turweston ATZ, Bicester glider site, Croughton HIRTA) create a funnelling effect. Nevertheless, Members agreed that flying so close to a promulgated microlight site that is clearly marked on VFR charts was indicative of poor sortie planning and/or poor airmanship. The Board discussed whether, given the performance of some modern microlight aircraft, the symbology for microlight sites on VFR charts was appropriate to cover the range of microlight activities. A Member questioned whether microlight pilots perceived that an entry in the AIP and a symbol on VFR charts offered more 'protection' than is actually the case in practice. The CAA Flt Ops advisor confirmed to Members that microlight sites are considered to fall within the definition of an aerodrome. Therefore Rule 12 of the Rules of the Air applies and therefore pilots transiting the local area are required to conform to the traffic pattern formed by other ac or keep clear of the airspace in which the pattern is formed. This being the case, Members decided that contravention of Rule 12 was the Cause of the Airprox.

In discussing the Risk associated with the Airprox, the Board noted that having spotted the light aircraft some 500m away, the Flash pilot had waited 2-3 seconds before initiating avoiding action. There was some difference of opinion, but by a majority the Members assessed that the Flash pilot's sighting had been early enough to enable him to perform a manoeuvre that effectively removed the risk of a collision.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: The pilot of the untraced Light Aircraft did not comply with Rule 12 and flew into conflict with the Flash 2A on the base leg for RW28 at Finmere ML site.

Degree of Risk: C.