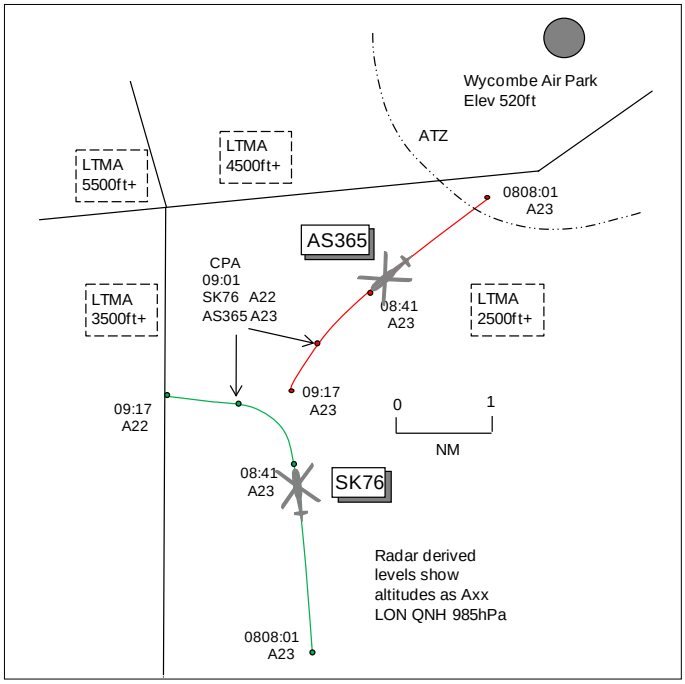
AIRPROX REPORT No 2012150

Date/Time:	24 Sep 2012 0809Z	
Position:	5133N 00053W (4·5nm SW Wycombe Air Park)	
Airspace:	LFIR	(*Class: G*)
	Reporting Ac	*Reported Ac*
Type:	SK76	AS365
Operator:	Civ Pte	Civ Pte
Alt/FL:	2400ft (QNH)	2400ft (QNH)
Weather:	IMC KLWD	IMC KLWD
Visibility:		
Reported Separation:		
	Nil V/1nm H	NR
Recorded Separation:		
	100ft V/1·1nm H	



PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE SK76 PILOT reports en-route from Blackbushe to Newcastle, IFR and in receipt of a RIS, he thought [actually a TS], from Farnborough LARS W on 125·25MHz, squawking an assigned code with Modes S and C; TCAS 1 was fitted. The Wx was IMC whilst flying in cloud at 2400ft QNH heading 360° at 145kt. He noticed traffic on TCAS in his 12 o'clock range 6nm but this was not called by Farnborough. He next received a TCAS TA when it was 12 o'clock range 2nm at the same level so he initiated a turn to the L (W'ly) and a descent whilst calling Farnborough for avoiding action. LARS W advised to turn further L onto 270° and the traffic passed <1nm to the E [on TCAS]. He assessed the risk as high.

THE AS365 PILOT reports en-route from Elstree to a private site near Boscombe Down, IFR and in receipt of a TS from Farnborough on 125·25MHz, squawking an assigned code with Modes S and C, TCAS 1 was fitted. In the cruise in cloud in IMC at 2400ft QNH heading 240° at 140kt a TCAS TA was received on traffic 2·5nm ahead so he turned to the S before ATC told him to turn L heading 180°. He assessed the risk as medium.

THE FARNBOROUGH APPROACH/LARS W CONTROLLER reports working bandboxed when the SK76 flight called and asked for a TS. After dealing with some other Approach traffic he identified the flight and issued a reduced TS owing to radar clutter giving intermittent contacts on radar. At some point during the next few minutes LARS N controller gave him an fps on the AS365 flight stating it was under a TS and it would be calling him after speaking to Wycombe Air Park. He then dealt with several other Approach items and phone calls and upon looking up saw the 2 subject ac about 2nm apart. He was about to call the traffic when the SK76 pilot advised that there was traffic and he requested an avoiding action turn. He gave a turn and upgraded to a DS before calling the SK76 to the AS365 flight. The SK76 pilot subsequently advised that he would be filing an MOR.

ATSI reports that the Airprox was reported by the pilot of a SK76 when it came into proximity with an AS365 in Class G uncontrolled airspace 4·5nm to the SW of Wycombe Air Park.

The SK76 flight was operating IFR on a flight from Blackbushe to Newcastle and was in receipt of a TS from Farnborough LARS W on frequency 125·250MHz. The AS365 flight was operating IFR on a

flight from Elstree to a private site near Boscombe Down and was in receipt of a TS from Farnborough LARS W on frequency 125·250MHz.

At the time of the Airprox the Farnborough LARS W and Farnborough Approach frequencies were bandboxed and the controller was providing both services combined. The Farnborough Manual of Air Traffic Services Part 2 states that:

> 'Farnborough LARS West is available daily between 0800 - 2000 local; services are provided utilising the same selection of radar feeds as the Approach task. Subject to traffic loading the LARS West and Approach tasks may be band-boxed to a single operational position at certain times of the day.'

CAA ATSI had access to written reports from the pilots of the SK76 and the AS365, the Farnborough LARS W/Approach controller, RT and desk-side recordings of Farnborough LARS W/Approach, RT recordings from Farnborough LARS N and area radar recordings.

The Farnborough METARs were:

EGLF 240750Z 10006KT 6200 SCT004 BKN005 15/14 Q0985= and EGLF 240820Z 12007KT 080V160 6000 DZ SCT004 BKN006 15/15 Q0985=

At 0803:50 the SK76 flight contacted Farnborough LARS W climbing to 2400ft IFR and requesting a TS. The flight was told to standby and after a short delay was issued the QNH and was assigned a squawk. Approximately 1min later the controller replied, *"(SK76 c/s) identified Traffic Service possible reduced warning of traffic er due radar er clutter...*"

At 0807:00 the AS365 flight contacted Farnborough LARS W on transfer from Farnborough LARS N at 2400ft. LARS W advised, *"(AS365 c/s) squawk zero four three one traffic service possible reduced warning of traffic due er weather breakthrough on the radar...*"

Between 0808:00 and 0808:40 the LARS W/Approach controller was involved with an ac that was too high on final approach and needed to be re-positioned. Following this RT conversation the controller answered one operational phone call and then called the Tower controller to advise that the traffic on final approach was breaking off and re-positioning.

At 0808:40, as the Farnborough LARS W controller ended the phone conversation with the Tower controller, the SK76 pilot transmitted that he had, "*a TCAS contact twelve o'clock four miles requesting any avoiding action"*. At 0808:41 the SK76 is tracking N (SSR code 0430) with the AS365 (SSR code 0431) positioned NNE of the SK76, tracking SW at a range of 2nm (Figure 1). Both ac are at 2300ft.

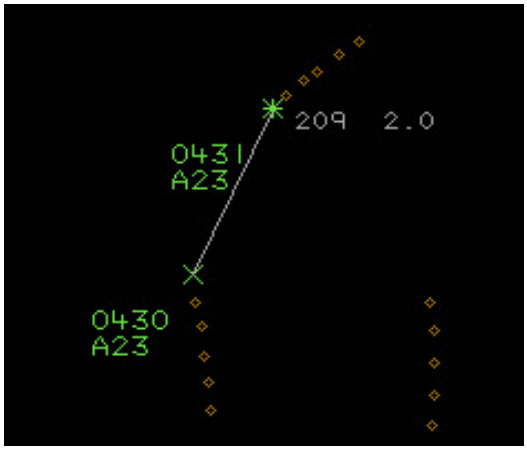


Figure 1

The controller replied, *"…roger turn left heading er two seven zero degrees er avoiding action it's now deconfliction service that traffic north northeast two miles same level is a Dauphin"*. This was read back before the controller transmitted, *"(clipped AS365 c/s) you've got traffic southwest at a mile suggest track to the south to turn you behind it's an S K seventy-six same level".* At 0809:01 the SK76 is tracking W at 2200ft with the track of the AS365 now pointing behind the SK76 at 2300ft. The distance between the 2 ac is 1·1nm (CPA).

The pilot of the AS365 did not respond to the controller's avoidance advice and the controller asked if the pilot had copied the previous transmission. The pilot of the AS365 replied, "*oh sorry sorry say again*". The controller replied, *"That traffic has now turned clear to the west of you at a mile same level suggest you track southerly it's an S K seventy six".* The AS365 pilot replied, *"Affirm that's what we are doing and he's er he's clear of us now"*. At 0809:17 the AS365 is behind the SK76, tracking SSW'ly and the distance between the 2 ac has increased to 1·3nm.

The Airprox took place in Class G uncontrolled airspace where regardless of the service being provided pilots are ultimately responsible for their own collision avoidance.

Both flights were being provided with a TS. CAP774, Chapter 3, Page 1, Paragraph 5 states that:

> 'The controller shall pass traffic information on relevant traffic, and shall update the traffic information if it continues to constitute a definite hazard, or if requested by the pilot. However, high controller workload and RTF loading may reduce the ability of the controller to pass traffic information, and the timeliness of such information.
>
> > *Traffic is normally considered to be relevant when, in the judgement of the controller, the conflicting aircraft's observed flight profile indicates that it will pass within 3 NM and, where level information is available, 3,000 ft of the aircraft in receipt of the Traffic Service. However, controllers may also use their judgement to decide on occasions when such traffic is not relevant, e.g. passing behind or within the parameters but diverging. Controllers shall aim to pass information on relevant traffic before the conflicting aircraft is within 5 NM, in order to give the pilot sufficient time to meet his collision avoidance responsibilities and to allow for an update in traffic information if considered necessary.'*

Prior to the Airprox the controller was involved in breaking-off and re-positioning an ac that had been vectored for the ILS. It is likely that the controller's focus on this task prevented him from noticing the potential confliction between the SK76 and the AS365 earlier.

When the SK76 pilot requested avoidance advice the controller upgraded the service, gave instructions and TI to assist in resolving the confliction with the AS365. The pilot of the SK76 requested avoidance advice from the controller which was given. The controller also passed TI and suggested action to resolve the situation to the pilot of the AS365. In both cases the instructions and advice given was consistent with the actions already being taken by both pilots.

The Airprox occurred in Class G airspace when the SK76 and AS365 flights were both in receipt of a TS from Farnborough LARS W and in the absence of timely TI flew into proximity with each other.

When the Farnborough LARS W/Approach controller became aware of the situation he gave instructions, advice and information to assist the pilots of both ac in resolving the situation.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available included reports from the pilots of both ac, transcripts of the relevant RT frequencies, radar video recordings, reports from the air traffic controllers involved and reports from the appropriate ATC authorities.

Members were surprised that the SK76 and AS365 pilots, whilst flying IFR in IMC within Class G airspace, only opted for a TS. Both crews were responsible for collision avoidance through see and avoid and their ability to meet this responsibility would have been significantly enhanced with assistance from ATC under a DS. A helicopter pilot Member opined that in his experience pilots normally only asked Farnborough LARS for a BS or TS as a DS was usually hard to obtain by transiting traffic. It was also noted that, although the Farnborough controller had limited the TS to both flights because of radar clutter, both the subject ac were displaying SSR labels so the confliction should have been apparent, irrespective of primary radar clutter. The ATSI Advisor confirmed that the workload was light, the 2 helicopters being the only traffic on the LARS frequency and the inbound ac the sole traffic on the Approach frequency, a level of traffic acceptable for bandboxing. However, after the AS365 pilot had called on handover from LARS N, the controller was apparently distracted, when the inbound traffic needed repositioning onto final approach, a telephone call was made and then coordination was effected with the Tower. From the RT transcript timings, there were short periods of time when he had an opportunity to see the potential for conflict: when LARS N passed the fps on the AS365 or after the AS365 pilot called on handover and before the controller concentrated on the inbound flight. However, the opportunities were missed and the confliction was only noticed when separation had reduced to about 2nm. A controller Member commented that if the controller was distracted, it was questionable whether having either or both flights under a DS would have made any difference. That said, another controller Member opined that had earlier TI been given, it may have spurred the crews into requesting a change of service. In the end Members agreed that in the absence of timely TI, this Airprox had been a conflict in Class G airspace between IFR traffic in IMC.

Turning to the risk element, the SK76 pilot had seen the deteriorating situation on TCAS and when a TA was generated he told Farnborough that there was conflicting traffic and that he wanted avoiding action whilst simultaneously commencing a L turn away. LARS W responded correctly by issuing an avoiding action L turn onto W with TI on the AS365 and upgrading the service to a DS. After this was read back, TI was given to the AS365 pilot on the SK76 with a suggestion that the pilot turn onto a S'ly heading. The AS365 pilot had already seen the conflicting SK76 on his TCAS equipment and was also commencing a L turn away ahead of the controller's suggested turn. Although the LARS W controller had given avoiding action to the SK76 flight and avoidance advice to the AS365 pilot, these were issued late, after the helicopter crews had initiated turns at their own volition. The Board noted that both crews had initiated avoiding action based on TCAS azimuth indications, which is undesirable. However, the manoeuvring options available to both crews were largely limited to the horizontal plane; the helicopters were flying at 2400ft with CAS immediately above at 2500ft and the area MSA of 2200ft. These restricted manoeuvre options reinforce the imperative for requesting a DS when operating IMC. Nevertheless, the actions taken were judged by the Board to have resolved the conflict with any risk of collision effectively removed.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: In the absence of timely TI, a conflict in Class G airspace between IFR traffic in IMC resolved by both crews.

Degree of Risk: C.