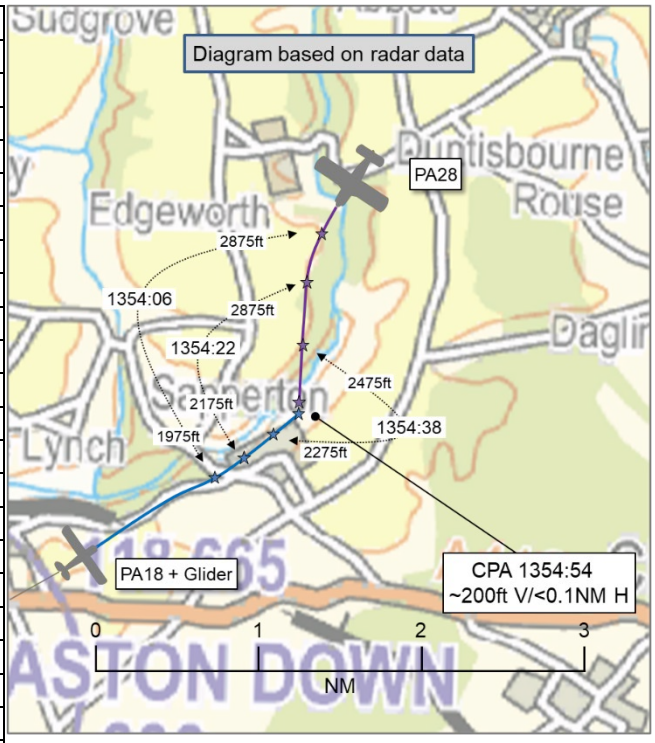
AIRPROX REPORT No 2025181

Date: 17 Aug 2025 Time: 1355Z Position: 5144N 00204W Location: Sapperton

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	PA18	PA28
Operator	Civ FW	Civ FW
Airspace	London FIR	London FIR
Class	G	G
Rules	VFR	VFR
Service	Listening Out	Basic
Provider	Aston Down/ Kemble	Kemble
Altitude/FL	2475ft	2275ft (descending rapidly)
Transponder	A, C, S	A, C, S
Reported		
Colours	Cream, maroon	White, silver
Lighting	Strobe	Strobes, nav
Conditions	VMC	VMC
Visibility	>10km	>10km
Altitude/FL	1700ft (2300ft)	3000ft
Altimeter	QFE (QNH)	QNH (1021hPa)
Heading	'East'	'South'
Speed	65kt	95kt
ACAS/TAS	PowerFLARM	Not fitted
Alert	None	N/A
Separation at CPA		
Reported	100ft V/500m H	100ft V/500m H
Recorded	~200ft V/<0.1NM H	



THE PA18 PILOT reports that, during an aerotow climb as part of the NOTAMed gliding competition from Aston Down, a low-wing monoplane was spotted in their approximate 10 o'clock position at the same level. The PA18 pilot reports that they could not turn to the right because of a group of circling gliders at the same height and could not turn to the left because a manoeuvre would have been too severe to the attached glider. A gentle right turn was initiated. At that point, the PA28 (which they had identified it being) rolled quickly to the left and descended away. After the other aircraft recovered from the manoeuvre, it headed towards Kemble. The PA18 pilot reports that they had Kemble on their standby frequency (due to its close proximity) and they had heard [the PA28 pilot] call up as being number 1 of 2 PA28 aircraft returning to Kemble (the other PA28 had been much lower and had already been spotted at that time). The glider released successfully at the assigned height of 2000ft QFE and the PA18 pilot returned to Aston Down to carry out further tows.

The pilot assessed the risk of collision as 'Medium'.

THE PA28 PILOT reports that they had been on a return flight from Scotland, having been on an hours building trip. They were aware of the NOTAM about the gliding competition and had discussed it with their passengers who were also pilots. Whilst they [note that they] had been aware of the high traffic density, the PA28 pilot had decided that the best way to mitigate the threat would be to route to the east of the area to avoid the majority of the gliders without having to divert far off their intended route. On passing through Gloucester's overhead, the PA28 pilot had changed to Kemble Information and obtained a [Basic Service] and had received joining information from them. The passengers and the pilot in the cockpit were scanning for gliders and calling them out to each other. The PA28 pilot had been maintaining a good distance from Aston Down using [branded navigation equipment] to help with the navigation. There were a lot of gliders about but the PA28 pilot stated that they were well clear of all of them. Whilst setting up to join crosswind at Kemble, the passenger sat in the P2 seat spotted a glider and tow aircraft combination and the PA28 pilot executed a left turn to avoid them. As stated

above, the closest point was about 500ft horizontally and about 100ft vertically but the risk of collision was low and the turn put them well away from the conflicting towed aircraft. After this turn, the PA28 pilot notes that they then joined the visual circuit at Kemble with no further issues.

The pilot assessed the risk of collision as 'Low'.

THE KEMBLE AFISO reports that they conducted an initial investigation into the reported Airprox incident. They had reviewed the ATC recording and there was no mention from the PA28 pilot of an incident. These is also no RT traffic related to the pilots operating from Aston Down on the Kemble frequency in relation to an Airprox. They have [discussed with] the AFISO on duty who stated that they were unaware of an incident.

Factual Background

The weather at Brize Norton was recorded as follows:

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171350Z 05012KT CAVOK 25/08 Q1023 NOSIG=
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Analysis and Investigation

UKAB Secretariat

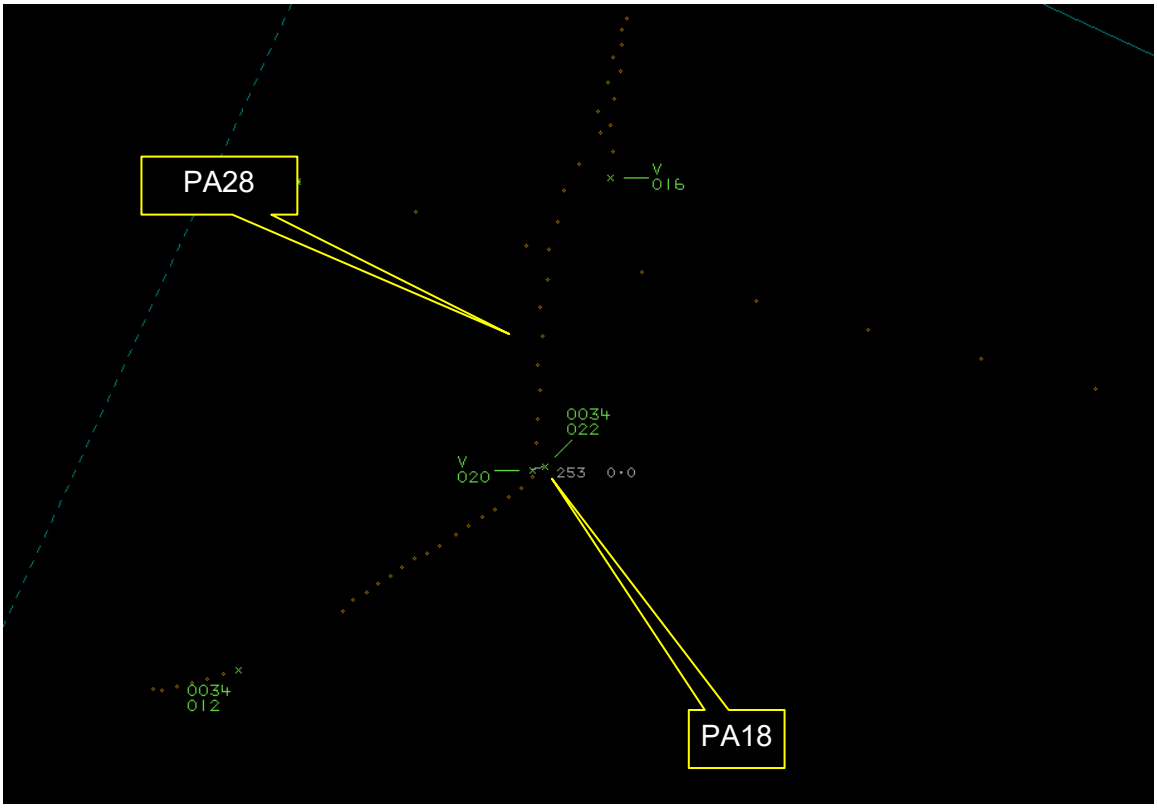


Figure 1: At CPA +1sec (1354:55) – <200ft V/<0.1NM H

Figure 2: At CPA – 1354:54. PA28 had initiated a left 'avoidance' turn and the PA18 had initiated a gentle right turn.

Figure 3: At CPA +30sec (1355:24). PA28 had resumed navigation to Kemble.

Both aircraft were tracked via radar and identified through Mode S data. Figure 1 above shows the radar image at CPA +1sec and appears to show the PA28 passing down the left-hand side of the PA18. However, figures 2 and 3 are taken from the CAA's Airspace Analyser Tool and show the

point that the PA28 pilot described having taken an avoidance turn to the left passing ahead of the PA18 and glider combination and then subsequently resuming their navigation toward Kemble.

The NOTAMs relating to the gliding competition are shown below:

H4625/25 NOTAMN
Q) EGTT/QWGLW/IV/M/AW/000/100/5142N00208W006
A) EGBP B) FROM: 25/08/16 08:00 TO: 25/08/24 17:00
E) MAJOR GLIDING COMPETITION. INTENSE ACT WI 5NM RADIUS
514228N 0020750W (ASTON DOWN). UP TO 100 GLIDERS PLUS TUG ACFT OPR.
SEE SEPARATE DAILY NOTAM AND WWW.GLIDINGTASKS.CO.UK FOR GLIDER ROUTES
OUTSIDE THIS AREA. FOR INFO CONTACT 01285 702102 OR 118.665MHZ.
AR-2025-4295/01.
LOWER: SFC
UPPER: FL100
SCHEDULE: 0800-1700

H6650/25 NOTAMN
Q) EGTT/QWGLW/IV/M /W /000/060/5148N00151W022
A) EGTT B) 2508171100 C) 2508171700
E) GLIDING COMPETITION ACFT ROUTEING:
514522N 0020440W (EDGEWORTH)
520217N 0012708W (SWALCLIFFE)
520210N 0015121W (BROADWAY)
513324N 0015857W (BRINKWORTH)
513538N 0021406W (WESTONBIRT)
514221N 0020754W (ASTON DOWN)
100 GLIDERS TRANSITING AT 0-5000FT AGL WI 5NM OF ROUTE. TIMINGS, HGT
AND ROUTE ARE APRX AND MAY CHANGE DUE TO WX OR OTHER REQUIREMENTS.
GLIDERS MAY MONITOR COMPETITION FREQ 130.405MHZ. FOR LATEST INFO
WWW.GLIDINGTASKS.CO.UK OR 01285 702102.
F) SFC G) 6000FT AMSL

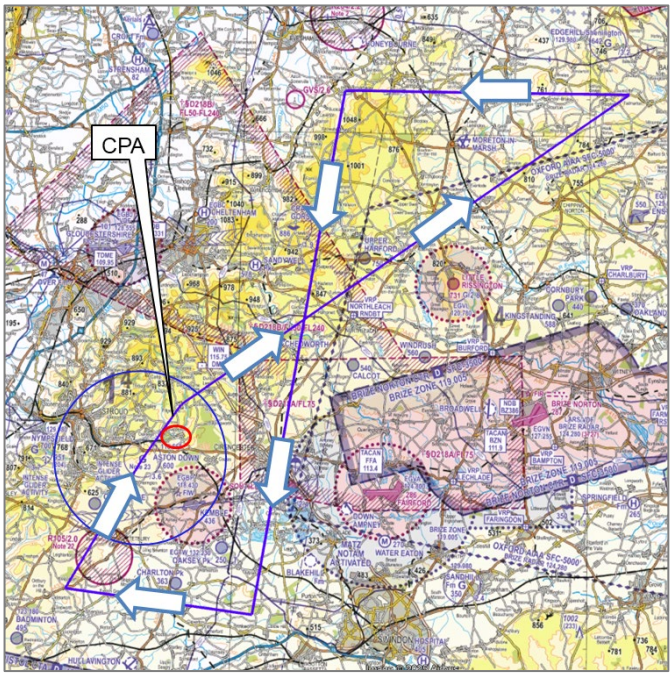


Figure 4: NOTAMed gliding competition routeing and launch area.

The PA18 and PA28 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] If the incident geometry is considered as converging then the PA28 pilot was required to give way to the PA18.[2]

Comments

AOPA

Whilst the start of a glider competition is well co-ordinated with a NOTAM, it might be advantageous to notify local airfields when the actual process starts. In the absence of any electronic conspicuity and Air Traffic [Control input], the see-and-avoid barrier worked.

BGA

The Airprox PA18 was one of eight SEP tow-planes that launched 72 gliders from Aston Down airfield on the day in question as part of a gliding competition based there between Saturday 16th and Sunday 24th August 2025 (inclusive). On each individual day with appropriate weather, 70-80 contestants were given a cross-country "task" involving flying to a series of 2-5 remote turning points in order, then back to Aston Down. Tasks were devised early in the morning each day, taking into account weather and NOTAMed flight restrictions, with aerodromes close to the intended route (including Kemble) notified by email or telephone well before launching commenced. A NOTAM describing each day's intended route was also issued as early in the morning as possible; NOTAM H6650/25, quoted above, is typical of these daily route NOTAMs. However, as noted in H6650/25, the timings, height and route given were approximate, and subject to change, especially if soaring conditions were not as favourable as forecast.

As soon as soaring conditions permitted each day, all contest gliders were launched as quickly as possible, usually in a continuous stream. On the day in question, launching commenced at 1331 and ended at 1445, an average of one aerotow launch every 62 seconds over a period of 1hr 14min. Contestants were not permitted to start their task until all the gliders in their group of 20-40 had launched, instead remaining close to Aston Down. Nearby airspace was therefore expected to be exceptionally busy during a 1–2-hour window at different times each contest day, and a separate NOTAM (H4625/25, also quoted above) was issued several weeks beforehand to warn other airspace users of this very intense activity during launching operations.

At the time of the Airprox, competition launching had indeed been in progress for 24 minutes, and the PA18 was making its 3rd competition aerotow of the day; figure 5 shows the PA18 track up to CPA on the Airprox flight, and also its two previous flights launching other gliders (red track), with the Airprox PA28 track up to CPA in purple. The red flags mark the locations of all 24 gliders that had been, or were being, launched up until the time of CPA; three of these were on tow (including the glider on tow behind the PA18). One other tow-plane on approach for Aston Down RW03 is not shown. The ground tracks of all 72 aerotow launches during the 74-minute launch period were very similar to the PA18 ground tracks shown, with all gliders being towed to a height of 2000ft AAL and released between Sapperton and Daglingworth.

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

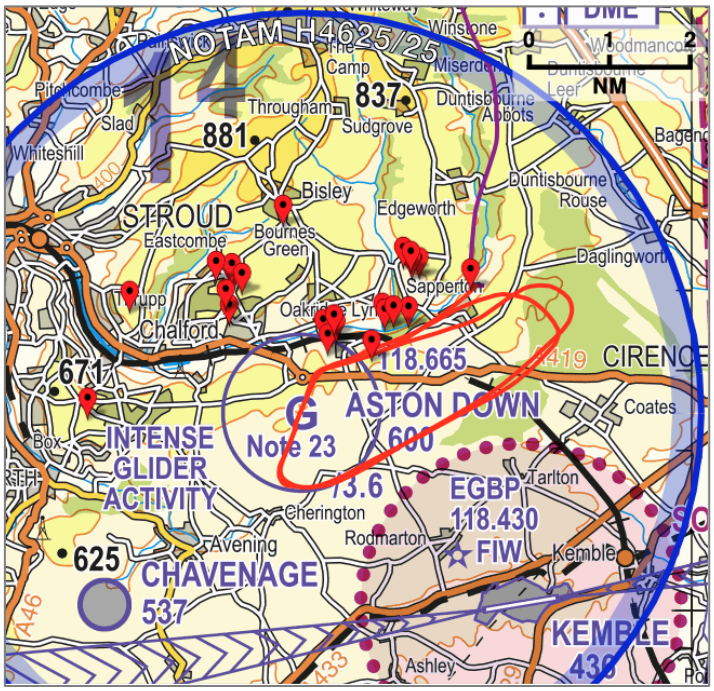


Figure 5

During launch operations tow-pilots monitored the Aston Down VHF channel, as notified in the AIP and on CAA VFR charts (while glider pilots monitored a separate channel for competition-specific announcements). The PA18 pilot is to be commended for additionally monitoring the Kemble channel via "Dual Watch" on the single radio fitted to their aircraft.

All 72 gliders and 8 tow-planes involved in the competition carried the type of EC unit fitted to almost all UK gliders, which enabled their GPS position and altitude to be displayed on a Flight Information Display (FID). Commercially-available FIDs that integrate transponder, glider EC and ADS-B data in a single display in real-time can give ATSU staff situational awareness of gliding activity across the UK. The BGA would be happy to advise any ATSU wishing to use this readily-available, real-time EC data to enhance flight safety in this way.

The PA28 pilot's initial call to Kemble Information for a Basic Service when overhead Gloucester, 7min before CPA, was a missed opportunity for them to be informed that the airspace around 2600ft AMSL near Sapperton, 4NM north of Kemble, was about to briefly become amongst the busiest in the entire country. See-and-avoid remains the final safety barrier in uncontrolled airspace; both aircraft crews are to be commended for maintaining an effective lookout.

Summary

An Airprox was reported when a PA18 and a PA28 flew into proximity at Sapperton at 1355Z on Sunday 17th August 2025. The PA18 pilot was operating under VFR in VMC and had been Listening Out on both the Aston Down gliding and Kemble frequencies, and the PA28 pilot was operating under VFR in VMC in receipt of a Basic Service from Kemble Information.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available consisted of reports from both pilots, radar photographs/video recordings, GPS data and a report from the Aerodrome Flight Information Service Officer involved. Relevant contributory factors mentioned during the Board's discussions are highlighted within the text in bold, with the numbers referring to the Contributory Factors table displayed in Part C.

Members firstly discussed the actions of the PA18 pilot, noting that they had been in the process of towing a glider and therefore had had limited manoeuvrability but had visually acquired the oncoming PA28 and, having been concerned by its proximity (**CF4**), had initiated an avoidance manoeuvre. The

Board praised the PA18 pilot for having monitored both the Aston Down gliding frequency and the Kemble FIS frequency, commending them for their diligence. Additionally, the PA18 had been equipped with an electronic conspicuity (EC) unit common to most gliders in the UK but this had unfortunately been unable to receive any electronic emissions from the PA28 (**CF3**). The PA18 pilot reports having heard the PA28 pilot call up as being number 1 of 2 aircraft returning to Kemble (with the other aircraft having been much lower and had already been spotted at the time by the PA18 pilot) giving the PA18 pilot generic situational awareness of the presence of the PA28 (**CF2**).

In reviewing the actions of the PA28 pilot, members noted that they had been recovering to Kemble as lead of a pair, with the second aircraft at a lower altitude. They noted that the PA28 pilot had been aware of the gliding competition and had been established on a Basic Service with Kemble. It was unclear to the Board whether Traffic Information had been passed to the PA28 pilot by the Kemble AFISO, however, in accordance with relevant regulations, there is no requirement for the AFISO to monitor the flight under a Basic Service (**CF1**). That, together with the absence of EC equipment in the PA28, had led the pilot to have gained only generic situational awareness of the presence of the PA18 (**CF2**). Having visually acquired the PA18 and having been concerned by its proximity (**CF4**), the PA28 pilot had initiated their own avoidance action. Members considered the situation faced by the PA28 pilot in this case; they noted that they had been recovering from the north for an arrival onto RW08 and that there had been 2 separate NOTAMs regarding launch and routeing for competition gliders. The diagram at figure 4 above shows the limited options available to that pilot in this case. As situational awareness is a key barrier to mid-air collision and, in this case, both pilots being in receipt of limited air traffic services, EC becomes a more significant tool in the pilot's armoury. Members wished to encourage all to equip with EC at the earliest opportunity.

The Board then considered the role played by the Kemble FISO. They noted that the event had not been reported on RT and they therefore had no memory of it. Members noted that the letter of agreement between Aston Down and Kemble includes the following:

> *The Kemble FIS or A/G operator will, when appropriate, warn all radio equipped aircraft operating to and from Kemble, or who have notified their intention to transit the area of gliding activity at Aston Down, of the possibility of encountering gliders in the airspace to the north of the A433.*
>
> *When gliding competitions are held at Aston Down and tasks require transit of the airspace which is, or otherwise would be, contained within the Kemble ATZ, the Competition Director will liaise with Kemble to effect safe co-ordination of transit aircraft.*

As the PA28 pilot had been in receipt of a Basic Service from Kemble, and prior to their arrival had been aware of the gliding activity, members wished only to remind all in such circumstances that RT provides a key aspect to situational awareness for pilots and reinforcement of ongoing activity significantly aids in the development of a pilot's air picture.

When determining the risk, members considered the reports from both pilots, noting that the PA18 pilot had been in the process of towing a glider and the PA28 pilot had been aware of gliding activity. Both report having visually acquired the other aircraft and initiated their own avoiding action ensuring that there had been no risk of collision, but members assessed that safety had been degraded; Risk Category C.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS AND RISK

Contributory Factors:

	2025181			
CF	**Factor**	**Description**	**ECCAIRS Amplification**	**UKAB Amplification**
	Ground Elements			
	• Situational Awareness and Action			
1	Contextual	• ANS Flight Information Provision	Provision of ANS flight information	The ATCO/FISO was not required to monitor the flight under a Basic Service

	Flight Elements			
	• Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft and Action			
2	Contextual	• Situational Awareness and Sensory Events	Events involving a flight crew's awareness and perception of situations	Pilot had no, late, inaccurate or only generic, Situational Awareness
	• Electronic Warning System Operation and Compliance			
3	Technical	• ACAS/TCAS System Failure	An event involving the system which provides information to determine aircraft position and is primarily independent of ground installations	Incompatible CWS equipment
	• See and Avoid			
4	Human Factors	• Perception of Visual Information	Events involving flight crew incorrectly perceiving a situation visually and then taking the wrong course of action or path of movement	Pilot was concerned by the proximity of the other aircraft

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:

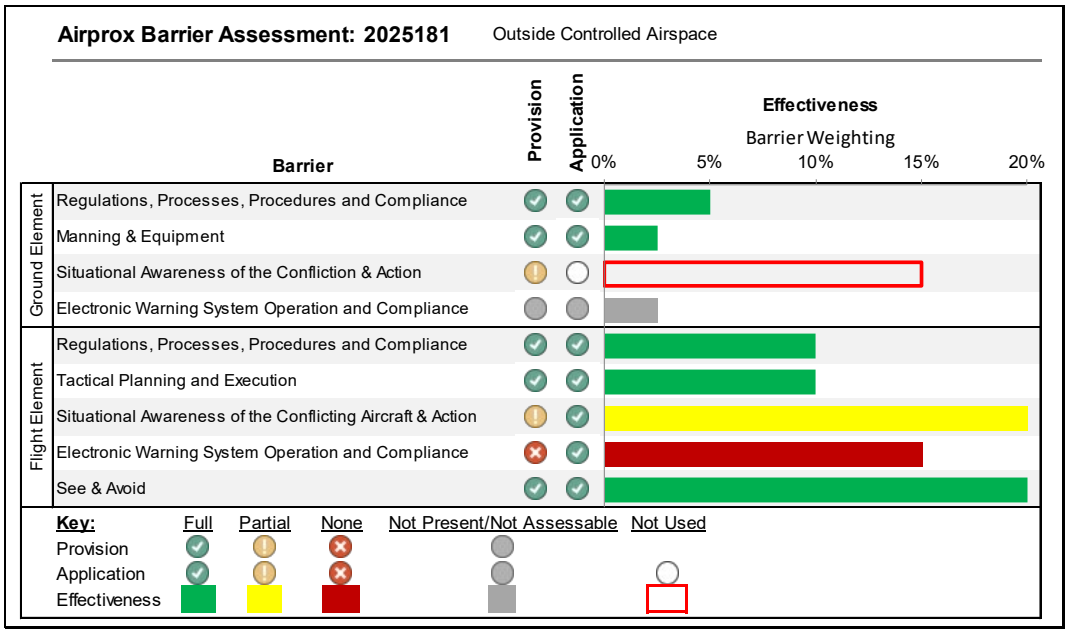
Ground Elements:

Situational Awareness of the Confliction and Action were assessed as **not used** because the Kemble AFISO was not required to monitor the flight of the PA28.

Flight Elements:

Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft and Action were assessed as **partially effective** because both pilots had only generic situational awareness of the proximity of the other aircraft.

Electronic Warning System Operation and Compliance were assessed as **ineffective** because the equipment carried by the PA18 had been unable to detect any electronic emissions from the PA28.



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