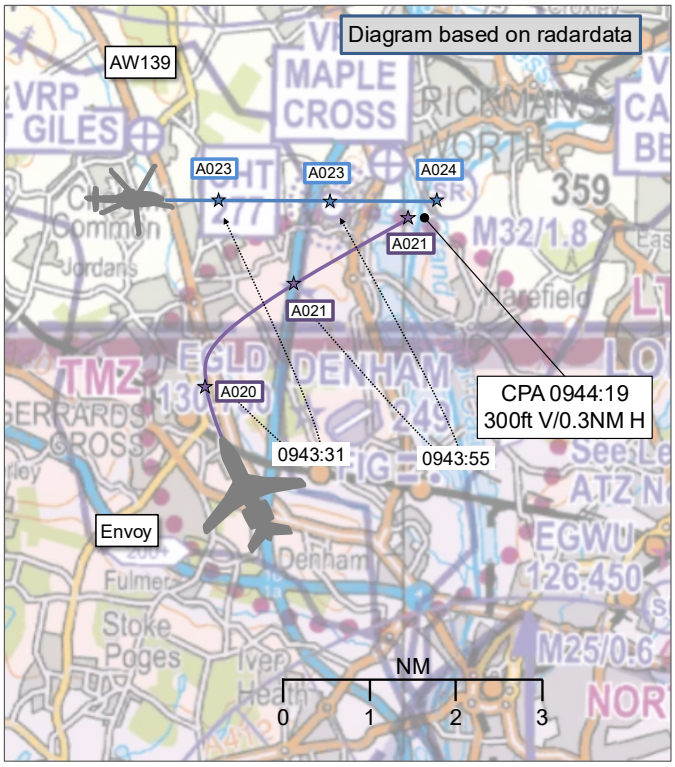
AIRPROX REPORT No 2026010

Date: 12 Feb 2026 Time: 0944Z Position: 5137N 00029W Location: IVO Rickmansworth

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	AW139	Envoy
Operator	Civ Comm	HQ Air (Ops)
Airspace	London FIR	London FIR
Class	G	G
Rules	IFR	IFR
Service	Traffic	Traffic
Provider	Northolt Director	Northolt Director
Altitude/FL	2400ft	2100ft
Transponder	A, C, S+	A, C, S+
Reported		
Colours	Company	White
Lighting	Strobes, Anti-Col, Nav	NR
Conditions	IMC	NK
Visibility	<5km	NR
Altitude/FL	2300ft	2000ft
Altimeter	QNH (982hPa)	QNH
Heading	085°	NR
Speed	140kt	185kt
ACAS/TAS	TCAS II, SkyEcho	TCAS II
Alert	RA	RA
	Separation at CPA	
Reported	200ft V/100m H	0ft V/500ft H
Recorded	300ft V/0.3NM H	



THE AW139 PILOT reports that they were conducting a pre-booked ILS to RW25 at RAF Northolt to cloud-break and proceed visually to a private site. The pilot contacted Northolt Approach initially, with intentions, and was instructed to contact Northolt Director. They were IMC maintaining 2300ft on Northolt QNH. Once on frequency, they were informed of an aircraft on the go-around at Northolt, apparently conducting testing of the RNP to RW25. They asked to confirm whether they were under the controller's vectors and the controller informed them that they could self-position towards the south of Elstree. The controller asked if they could accept a delay; they declined due to positioning for a task and the controller agreed that they could continue as previously directed. When 5NM west of the CHT NDB, the crew identified the aircraft on the go-around was a potential threat and this was relayed to the controller. There followed a number of radio calls whereby the threat was also apparent to the Envoy pilot. The Envoy pilot was given further Traffic Information and, due to a localised break in the cloud, the Envoy pilot called visual with them and they also gained visual with the Envoy shortly after. At this point the Envoy was in the 4 o'clock heading towards them on a steady bearing, 300m range and 200ft below. As the crew discussed a possible TCAS RA, their aircraft issued TCAS RA instructions to climb, which the aircraft Captain followed. The Co-Pilot called 'TCAS RA climbing' which was acknowledged by the controller, who then told them not to climb above 2400ft. The Envoy pilot then said on frequency that they had also received a TCAS RA. Once clear of the conflict, they resumed 2300ft heading east.

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

THE ENVOY PILOT reports that, whilst flying a standard missed approach at RAF Northolt, contact was made with Northolt Director and they became aware of another callsign on frequency, [the AW139]. The AW139 was inbound under vectors for an ILS at Northolt. On the missed approach they [the Envoy] climbed to 2000ft on Northolt QNH. The AW139 was higher than them by less than 500ft. There was some discussion with ATC regarding traffic sequencing between the Envoy and the AW139, by which

time they were converging, so they restated their altitude of 2000ft on the radio. They became visual with [the AW139] and began a left-hand turn to increase separation behind it, at which point the other pilot reported a TCAS RA and climbed, and they received a TCAS RA and descended.

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

THE NORTHOLT DIRECTOR CONTROLLER reports that on the afternoon of 10th February, Ops communicated the intention to carry out a short-notice trial of the new Northolt PBN (RNP) for 12th Feb AM. Northolt Radar advised Ops on 11th February that this wasn't suitable due to the operation of normal commercial and other traffic, and the inability for [standards personnel] to be present at the time of the flight, making the conditions not ideal for a trial of a brand new procedure not flown yet. Ops went ahead with the flight for 2 PBN flyability approaches. The weather was cloudy and Heathrow had experienced missed approaches already. They were the Northolt Director at the time of the incident, split out with an Approach controller also in position. There were two aircraft on Dir frequency, the Envoy and the AW139 – the Envoy taking an unplanned 3rd circuit for another PBN approach and the AW139 en-route for an ILS cloud-break.

Northolt circuit is between 2000-2400ft due to airspace and terrain limitations, and the best separation possible outside CAS is 400ft. [The AW139] came on frequency when the Envoy was over Northolt runway and own navigation was given to the AW139 pilot. They made [the AW139 pilot] aware of the [Envoy] coming out on a MAP. They called the AW139 to the Envoy pilot when the Envoy was at 3 miles upwind on RW25 RW track. They called traffic a second time to the Envoy pilot at 2 miles (although they mistakenly said 3 miles on frequency) 12 o'clock, while the Envoy was still in Class D airspace heading to the waypoint (PBN WUM02). Separated by boundary of CAS, and the Envoy on track to pass behind when it reached WUM02 in Class G airspace. They assumed that, with awareness of traffic at 12 o'clock already 2-3 miles away passing left-right ahead, they would not be merging and still have 300ft of separation.

[The Envoy pilot] then asked for an immediate right turn and climb, taking them off the PBN procedure, they [the controller] were taken by surprise and believed that the crew was aware of the AW139 position from TCAS – or were perhaps already visual but hadn't yet said. As there was little time to question their decision they told them to take turn as required, rather than end up telling them to turn left and balloon them to end up closer. The AW139 pilot asked if they were clear of traffic to which they said yes, trusting [the Envoy pilot's] movement decision, but realised while transmitting that the Envoy was not turning hard out of the way. With hindsight, they thought that they could have handled the situation differently. The AW139 pilot said they could see the Envoy turning towards them, but it was uncertain whether this was visually or on TCAS. They asked the Envoy pilot whether they were visual with the AW139. The AW139 pilot confirmed they were continuing heading and level. They carried on with approach admin for the AW139 and they then said they were effecting a TCAS RA and requested a level-out altitude (at this time they didn't quite realise they were asking for an altitude to level out at, as their understanding for TCAS RA is to leave the pilot to do as they need and not to interfere). The Envoy pilot then effected their own TCAS RA. This situation was influenced by the feeling of need to facilitate an effective trial of a procedure not yet undertaken by any parties involved, in unsuitable circumstances, and an unexpected last moment 3rd circuit, rather than being in a position to simply and objectively control.

The controller perceived the severity of the incident as 'Low'.

Factual Background

The weather at Northolt was recorded as follows:

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METAR EGWU 120920Z 26007KT 9999 BKN009 BKN023 08/07 Q0982 TEMPO SCT006=
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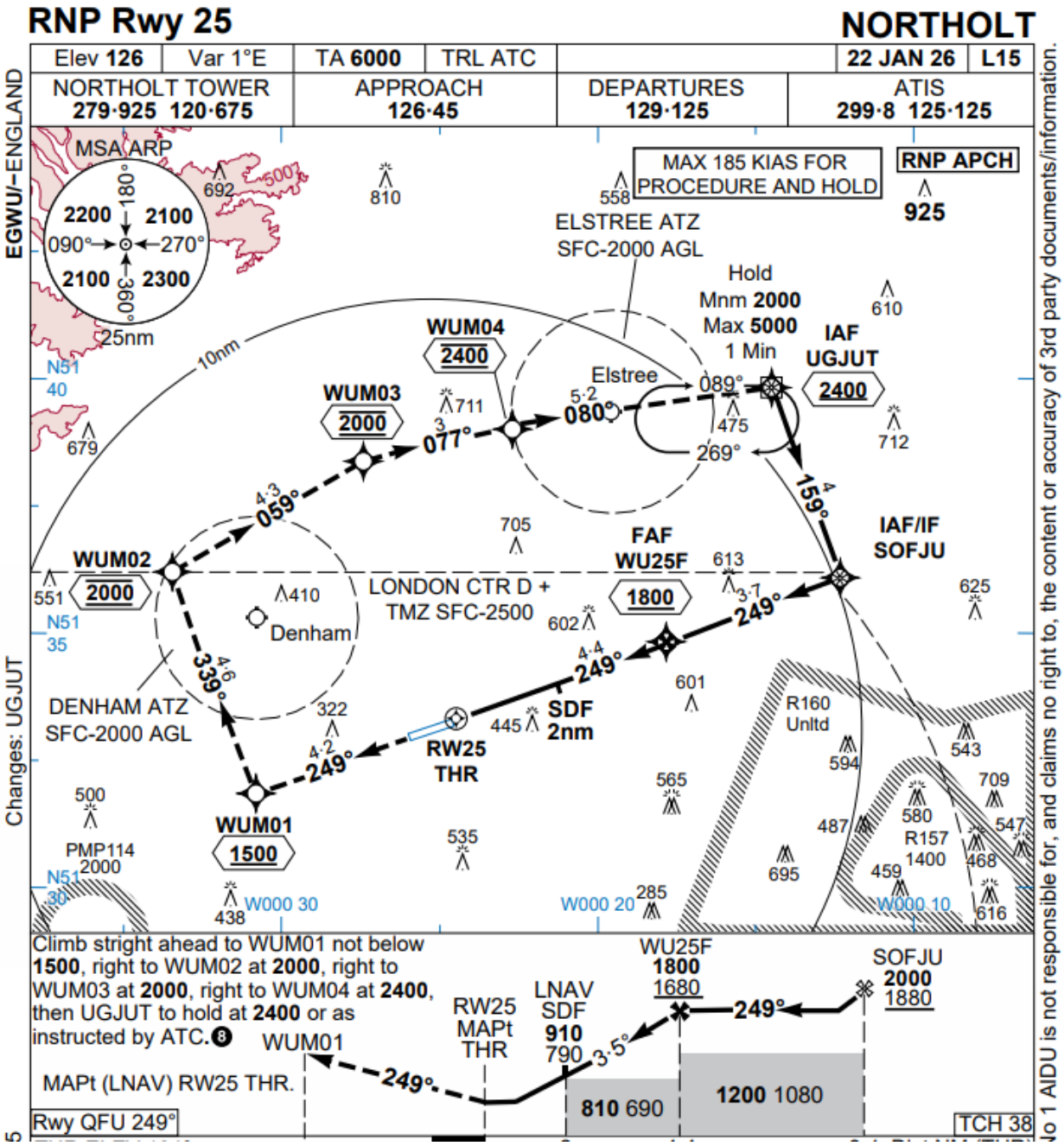

Figure 1 – RAF Northolt RNP RW 25

Analysis and Investigation

Military ATM

Background

The AW139 was conducting a pre-booked ILS at RAF Northolt for a cloud-break descent to then proceed visually to a private site.

The Envoy was conducting a flyability test at RAF Northolt and was conducting a missed approach with the intentions to position for a final approach.

Sequence of Events

At 0940:45, the AW139 pilot contacted Northolt Radar "*maintaining altitude 2300 QNH 982hPa requesting vectors ILS RW25*".

At 0941:01, the AW139 pilot agreed to take own navigation to the south of Elstree.

At 0941:11, the Envoy pilot contacted Northolt Radar "*on the missed approach from RW25*".

At 0941:35, the Envoy pilot informed Northolt Radar of their intentions "*Apologies change of intentions ahh we'd like to fly the missed approach but the ah de disregard the hold and go straight for the RNP RW25 again*".

At 0941:50, Northolt Radar confirmed order of recovery "*Roger no problem I've also got an AW139 coming in for an ILS too so you will be number one in the pattern*".

At 0942:05, the Envoy pilot was provided Traffic Information on the AW139 "*That traffic is NW 7 miles travelling east at 2300 you will come across him at some point soon, but I'll update you*".

At 0942:35, the AW139 pilot gave a position report "*now heading 085° altitude 2300 feet*".
Northolt Radar responded that they would be number two in the pattern and gave the reasoning.

At 0942:37, the AW139 pilot stated they needed to be afforded priority due to onward tasking.

At 0942:47, Northolt Radar transmitted to the Envoy "*Are you to take a hold or two in the pattern as I've got a positioner flight to do ILS for cloud-break*". The Envoy pilot agreed to the hold and requested instructions to climb or maintain 2000ft.

At 0943:06, the Envoy pilot was informed "*Currently maintain 2000 feet that previously called traffic is at your 12 o'clock 3 miles crossing left right ahead 2300 feet it's an AW139*". The Envoy pilot replied; "*request immediate right turn in that case for the vertical separation*", to which Northolt Radar instructed the Envoy to "*take turn as you require*".

At 0943:22, the AW139 pilot informed Northolt Radar "*we are proceeding east confirm we are clear of that traffic*". Northolt Radar controller replied "*You are clear of that traffic it is going to climb ahhhh it is to your south 1 mile, 1.5 miles, in the turn at 2100 feet*".

At 0943:42, the Envoy pilot confirmed they were visual with the AW139 and this was passed to the AW139 pilot.

At 0944:10, the AW139 pilot transmitted "*standby, we just need to deconflict with that traffic for a TCAS RA*". The AW139 pilot requested a "*level-out altitude*" and was directed not to climb above 2400ft for CAS however, the AW139 pilot informed they were climbing into Class A due to the TCAS RA.

At 0944:40, the Envoy also had a TCAS RA and descended to 2000ft.

At 0944:59, the AW139 pilot gave another position report and requested vectors to the ILS.

CPA occurred at 0944:19 with 0.3NM horizontal separation and approximately 300ft vertical separation.

Local BM Investigation

A local investigation was conducted by Northolt Radar following the event, to identify the ATS-related causal/aggravating factors.

The investigations found that a lack of assertiveness from ATC put the two aircraft in direct conflict with each other.

a. Cause: Poor phraseology reduced the time and capacity to make critical decisions.

b. Cause: Due to the nature of the Envoy's sortie, the controller had not had adequate training for the procedure, which created ambiguity and confusion.

c. Mitigations: Controllers will receive adequate training before flyability assessments are carried out.

2Gp BM Analysis

Due to a lack of confidence in the procedure and confusion with the Envoy's sortie profiles, the controller performed below the standard expected. Although the procedure was unfamiliar to the controller, they remained responsible for providing an appropriate ATS provision.

Due to the confines of the Class G fillet in this area, the only altitudes available for vectoring/sequencing were 2000-2400ft QNH. The AW139 was booked in for a cloud-break ILS and the Envoy [pilot] had a last-minute change of intentions to conduct another approach. The controller felt they did not have sufficient time to coordinate a climb to 3000ft for separation.

The controller's ambiguity with the situation caused confusion and a lack of capacity at the time of, and leading up to, the Airprox. Whilst the limitations of the airspace naturally forced the aircraft to be within close proximity, more separation could have been achieved between the aircraft if the controller had provided a more positive service.

Given the complexity of the airspace and considering that this was the first trial of this approach, it would be reasonable to expect that an independent ATCO IC would be in position to provide appropriate oversight and augment the controller's capacity.

UKAB Secretariat

An Analysis of the NATS radar replay was undertaken and both aircraft could be identified using Mode S data. Whilst the Northolt Director was based at Swanwick and would therefore use the NATS radars, the screenshots provided here are not necessarily the view presented to the controller at the time. At Figure 2, the Envoy could be seen climbing out of Northolt; 0942:06 is the approximate time that the Northolt Director provided Traffic Information to the Envoy pilot on the AW139, which is approximately 7NM north-northwest of the Envoy.

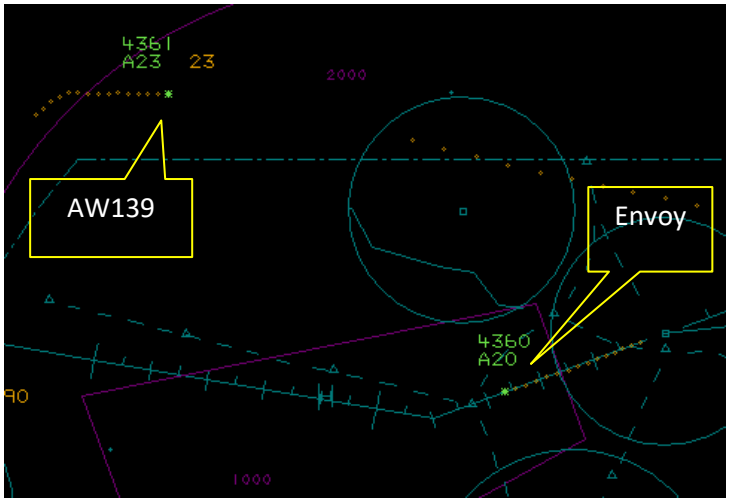

Figure 2 – 0942:06

At 0942:47 (Figure 3), the controller asked the Envoy pilot whether they would be able to take a Hold for sequencing behind the AW139.

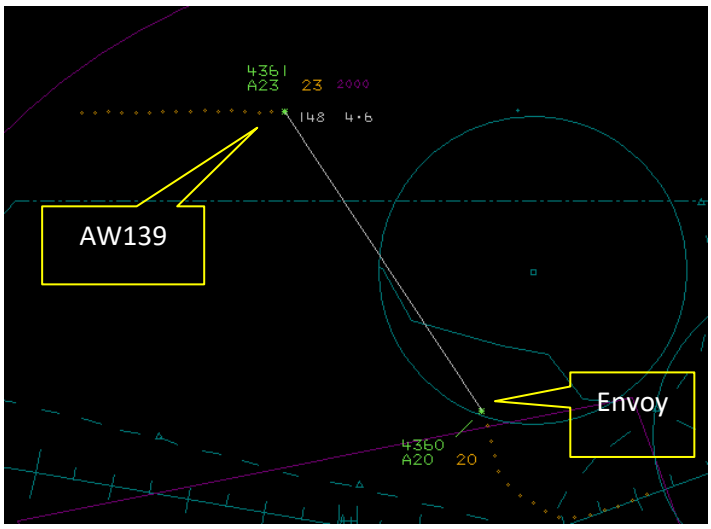

Figure 3 – 0942:47

Figure 4, 0943:06 when the controller again passed Traffic Information to the Envoy pilot, to which the Envoy pilot asked to make a right turn (although no right turn was evident on the radar at this point).

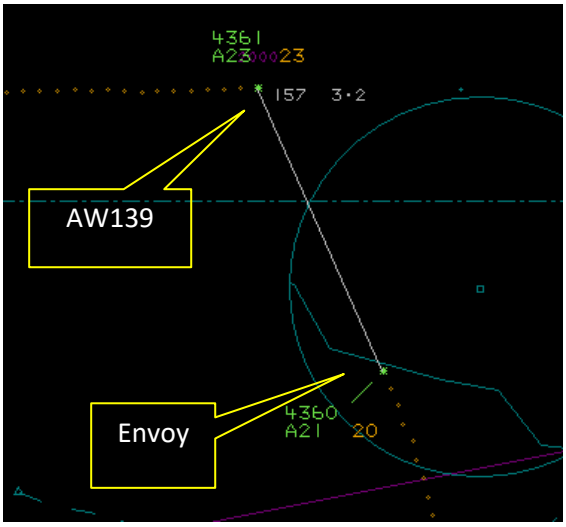

Figure 4 – 0943:06

Figure 5, 0943:42 when the Envoy pilot reported visual with the AW139.

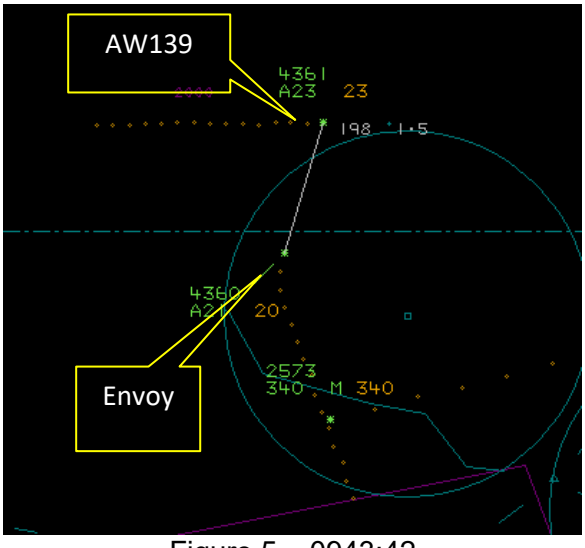

Figure 5 – 0943:42

Figure 6, 0944:10 was the approximate time that the AW139 pilot reported that they had received the TCAS RA.

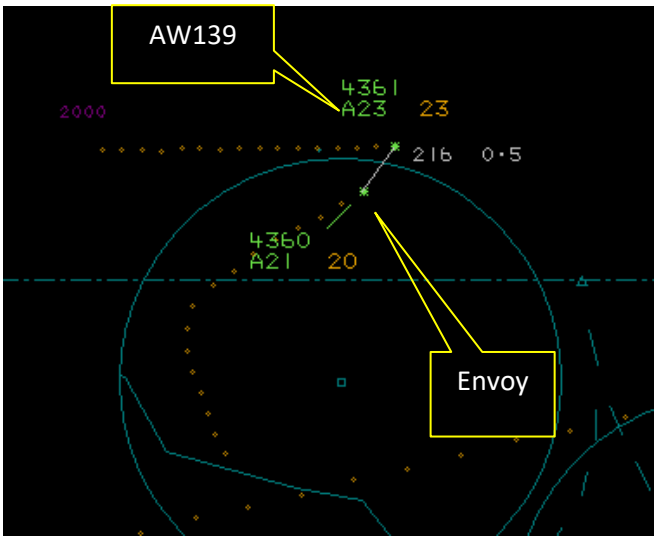

Figure 6 – 0944:10

Radar CPA occurred at 0944:20, with separation recorded as 300ft vertical 0.3NM horizontal (Figure 7). The following radar sweep showed the Envoy had turned behind the AW139 and had descended, and the AW139 had climbed (Figure 8).

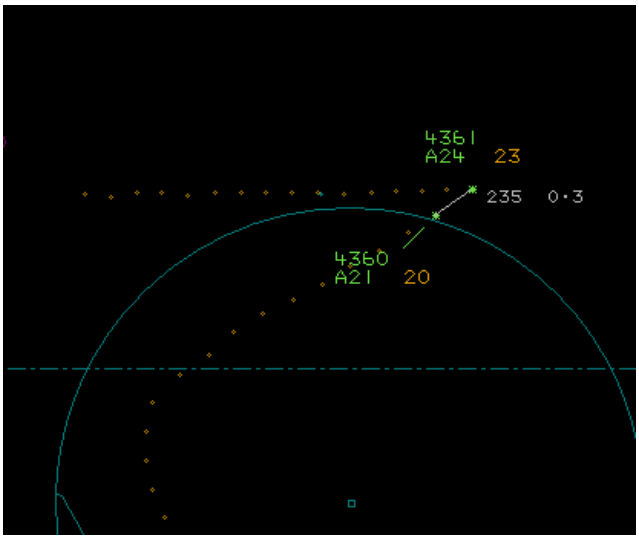

Figure 7 – 0944:20, Radar CPA

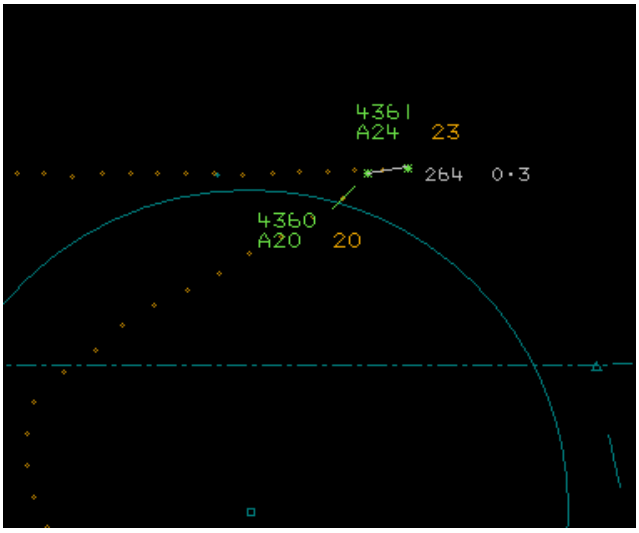

Figure 8 – 0944:24

The AW139 and Envoy 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 overtaking then the AW139 pilot had right of way and the Envoy pilot was required to keep out of the way of the other aircraft by altering course to the right.[2]

Comments

HQ Air Command

Following validation of the RAF Northolt PBN procedures in a simulator, the decision was taken to conduct a flyability assessment at RAF Northolt utilising an Envoy IV aircraft. The sortie was initially

[1] (UK) SERA.3205 Proximity. MAA RA 2307 paragraphs 1 and 2.
[2] (UK) SERA.3210 Right-of-way (c)(3) Overtaking. MAA RA 2307 paragraph 14.

cancelled as ATC Standards personnel were not available to support the sortie. Following consultation, it was later reinstated as a flyability assessment conducted iaw CAP 785B, which does not specifically require the presence of ATC Standards personnel. To facilitate the flyability assessment, commercial arrivals were moved outside the sortie window, but this did not include the planned AW139 ILS approach to cloud-break.

On completion of their second approach, the Envoy IV crew transmitted that they were carrying out the MAP and requested a further RNP approach to RW25. Given their relative positions and speeds, the Northolt Director initially planned to sequence the Envoy IV ahead of the AW139, but the AW139 [pilot] was unable to accept a delay due to onward tasking. The airspace structure limited the options for vertical separation while keeping the aircraft in Class G airspace, and the Northolt Director had insufficient time to coordinate a climb into Class A airspace.

While more proactive control by the Northolt Director and/or enhanced supervision could have resulted in increased separation, Traffic Information was passed to both crews who were also aware of each other via TCAS. Subsequently, the two crews became visual with each other and the Envoy IV turned left to pass behind the AW139 with a separation of 300ft and 0.3NM. This was coincident with a TCAS RA for the AW139 crew which instructed them to climb, followed by a TCAS RA for the Envoy IV crew which instructed them to descend.

Given the specific complexities of Northolt Radar, a thorough review will be conducted ahead of any future changes to procedures to decide what additional safety measures are required.

AW139 Operating Authority

The detailed and honest reporting from all agencies was appreciated. For clarity the following points were added:

a. The decision to not accept the delay was because the crew were positioning for a [priority flight] task, in addition to the weather conditions requiring lengthy marshalling (distance and time) for a pre-booked ILS RW25 at Northolt to cloud-break.

b. The crew were receiving a Traffic Service because their experience demonstrates that a Deconfliction Service (DS) is neither viable, nor often provided in that confined airspace, with the usual volume of traffic in that area. A DS has been frequently denied in that area in the past.

c. The crew's perception of the risk was High, and this is noticeably different to the other agencies.

Summary

An Airprox was reported when an AW139 and an Envoy flew into proximity in the vicinity of Rickmansworth at 0944Z on Thursday 12th February 2026. The AW139 pilot was operating under IFR in IMC in receipt of a Traffic Service from Northolt Director, and the Envoy pilot was operating under IFR in unreported met conditions in receipt of a Traffic Service also from Northolt Director.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available consisted of reports from both pilots, radar photographs/video recordings, a report from the air traffic controller involved and reports from the appropriate operating authorities. 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.

The Board first discussed the actions of the AW139 pilot. They had booked a cloud-break ILS at Northolt for an onward tasking, and had reported being in IMC. Whilst noting the AW139's operating authority's comment on why they had asked for a Traffic Service when in IMC, nevertheless, members urged pilots to request a Deconfliction Service where necessary. In this particular instance, it would have meant that

the controller would have needed to provide separation between the two aircraft, rather than just provide Traffic Information (**CF2**). Military controller members confirmed that there was no blanket restriction on providing a Deconfliction Service in the area and, had the pilot asked for one, they should have received it. Members agreed that, having received Traffic Information on the Envoy, and having received information from their TCAS, the AW139 crew had remained uncomfortable with the situation and had been concerned by the Envoy's positioning (**CF5**). Controller members pointed out that, even when receiving a Traffic Service, pilots can still ask for deconfliction advice if they are not visual with the aircraft in question, although in this case, when the AW139 pilot had asked for updated Traffic Information, both the AW139 crew and the controller had probably been satisfied that the Envoy pilot had reported visual with the AW139. Members heard how the situation had continued until the AW139 pilot had received, and followed, their TCAS RA to climb (**CF6**), at the same time as the Envoy crew had turned to go behind the helicopter and had also received their own TCAS RA.

Turning to the actions of the Envoy pilot, the Board heard that the crew had been on a trial of the new RNP at Northolt, and had conducted 2 approaches as briefed but, when on finals for the second approach, had decided to conduct a third. As the Envoy crew had conducted their missed approach and had reported back to the controller, they had been given Traffic Information on the AW139 and the controller had outlined a sequencing plan, which had had to be changed once the AW139 pilot had confirmed that they could not have accepted a delay. Notwithstanding the change to the controller's plan, the Envoy pilot had been given Traffic Information twice when they had made their request to turn right early due to 'vertical separation'. Members debated what the pilot had meant with this call, with some believing the pilot had not been happy with the 400ft separation but had been continuing with the procedure, whilst others surmised that the pilot had been aware of the separation but had been trying to turn ahead of the helicopter. Either way, it had been likely that the controller had believed the Envoy pilot to have been content with the separation, as they had simply cleared the pilot to take the turn. Members noted that this interaction highlighted the need to clearly articulate intentions to controllers; at this stage the controller had been content that the Envoy crew had made a plan to maintain separation, whereas in reality this early right turn had reduced the separation between the two aircraft (**CF3**). Once the AW139 pilot had questioned the position of the Envoy and ATC had given updated Traffic information, the Envoy crew had reported visual; this had occurred around 30sec before either crew had received their TCAS RA. Members thought that the Envoy pilot had received enough information both from ATC, and from the TCAS, to have taken a wider berth earlier and avoided the TCAS RA (**CF4**). In continuing on track until they had received the TCAS RA (**CF6**), members agreed that the Envoy pilot had flown close enough to cause the AW139 pilot concern (**CF7**).

The Board then discussed the role of ATC. Members were told that, although the Envoy pilot had been conducting a new procedure, the MAP had not been new and controller members thought that the controller should have simply controlled as they normally would, without worrying about the RNP. Members acknowledged that the controller had been repeatedly presented with a changing scenario, requiring constant updates to their plan; firstly, that the Envoy pilot had conducted a MAP and had asked to repeat the procedure, then, when the controller had decided to put the faster Envoy ahead in the pattern, the AW139 pilot could not have taken the delay. Nevertheless, controller members opined that this was the very nature of Air Traffic Control and that controllers were trained to take control of the situation and plan accordingly. Members with London TC experience wondered why the controller had not simply requested a clearance to climb into controlled airspace for one of the aircraft in order to achieve vertical separation, but were told that the controller had been surprised by the Envoy's MAP and, from then, believed that they had not had the time to make the request. Some members opined that the controller had been too accommodating, in that by trying to allow both pilots to achieve their aims, they had allowed themselves to be pushed into an uncomfortable situation without an obvious solution, indicating a lack of planning, and that the controller had been relying on the pilots becoming visual with each other's aircraft and taking their own separation, without fully appreciating that, despite both pilots taking a Traffic Service, the weather had meant that at least one had been in IMC. Overall, members agreed that, although the controller had been presented with a scenario not of their own making, the controller had needed to maintain their authority over the situation but had not done so (**CF1**).

When determining the risk, the Board considered the reports from both pilots and that of the controller, together with the RT transcript and the radar replay screenshots. Members discussed how the situation had been uncomfortable for the AW139 crew, who were intermittently in IMC and had not had sight of the Envoy until just prior to receiving the TCAS RA, which probably led to their 'high' assessment of the risk. However, the Envoy pilot had called 'visual' and had taken action to turn behind the AW139 prior to receiving the TCAS RA, so for this reason the Board agreed that, whilst safety had been degraded, there had been no risk of collision; Risk Category C.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS AND RISK

Contributory Factors:

	2026010			
CF	**Factor**	**Description**	**ECCAIRS Amplification**	**UKAB Amplification**
	Ground Elements			
	• Situational Awareness and Action			
1	Human Factors	• Traffic Management Information Provision	An event involving traffic management information provision	
	Flight Elements			
	• Tactical Planning and Execution			
2	Human Factors	• Communications by Flight Crew with ANS	An event related to the communications between the flight crew and the air navigation service.	Pilot did not request appropriate ATS service or communicate with appropriate provider
3	Human Factors	• Insufficient Decision/Plan	Events involving flight crew not making a sufficiently detailed decision or plan to meet the needs of the situation	Inadequate plan adaption
	• Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft and Action			
4	Human Factors	• Incomplete Action	Events involving flight crew performing a task but then not fully completing that task or action that they were intending to carry out	Pilot did not sufficiently integrate with the other aircraft despite Situational Awareness
5	Human Factors	~~• Unnecessary Action~~	~~Events involving flight crew performing an action that was not required~~	Pilot was concerned by the proximity of the other aircraft
	• Electronic Warning System Operation and Compliance			
6	Contextual	• ACAS/TCAS RA	An event involving a genuine airborne collision avoidance system/traffic alert and collision avoidance system resolution advisory warning triggered	
	• See and Avoid			
7	Human Factors	• Incorrect Action Selection	Events involving flight crew performing or choosing the wrong course of action	Pilot flew close enough to cause concern

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 **partially effective** because the Northolt controller had allowed the scenario to develop without fully taking control of the situation.

Flight Elements:

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

Tactical Planning and Execution was assessed as **ineffective** because the Envoy pilot could have adapted their plan and deviated off the RNP procedure once they had been told that they were No2 in the pattern, behind the AW139. Additionally, the AW139 pilot could have requested a Deconfliction Service.

Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft and Action were assessed as **partially effective** because the Envoy pilot had received Traffic Information and had TCAS information on the position of the AW139, but had not adjusted their routeing accordingly.