

AIRPROX REPORT No 2011164

Date/Time: 11 Dec 2011 1331Z (Sunday)

Position: 5152N 00142W (0.5nm S Little Rissington - elev 722ft)

Airspace: Oxford AIAA (Class: G)

Reporting Ac Reporting Ac

Type: Vigilant C340

Operator: HQ Air (Trg) Civ Pte

Alt/FL: 800ft 2000ft
QFE (979hPa) QNH

Weather: VMC CLBC

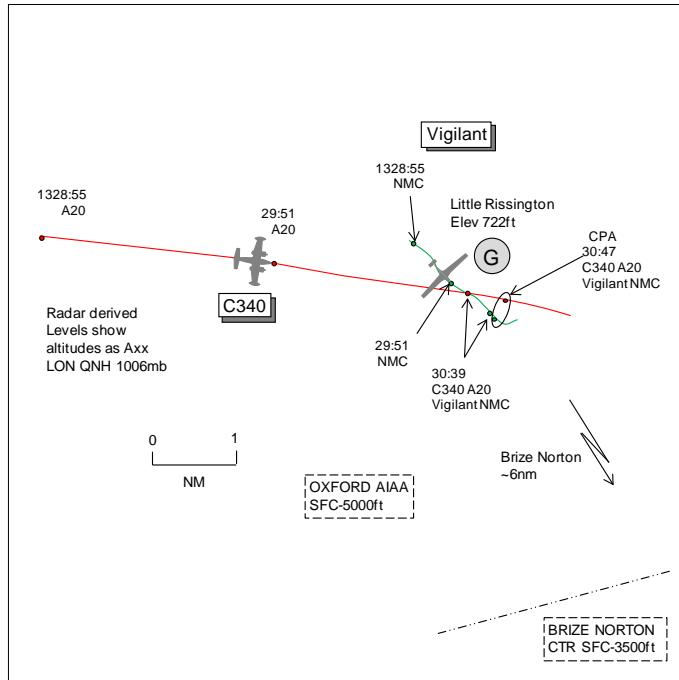
Visibility: 10km >10km

Reported Separation:

200ft V/0.25nm H 500ft V/1nm H

Recorded Separation:

0.25nm H



PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE VIGILANT PILOT reports flying a local dual training sortie, VFR and in receipt of an A/G service from Little Rissington on 124.1MHz, squawking 7000 with NMC. The visibility was 10km flying clear below cloud in VMC and the ac was coloured white/day-glo with landing, nav and strobe lights all switched on. Heading 175° at 60kt, level at 800ft QFE 979hPa, as he was commencing a crosswind join for RW22, a light twin engine ac was seen to his L and behind at range 0.25nm approaching from the NW on a SE'ly heading at an estimated height of 1000ft aal. This ac was then seen to fly through the established cct pattern, passing 200ft above and 0.25nm away laterally behind his ac. He maintained straight and level on the crosswind leg, delaying his turn onto downwind. The other ac was observed to continue SE'ly and then commence a climb before disappearing into a cloud layer. TI was given to him by the Duty Instructor, which assisted him to visually acquire the twin-engine as it passed. He assessed the risk as medium. Brize were contacted by telephone in order to attempt tracing action and a controller stated that he was not working the traffic but saw a 7000 squawk tracking SE at about 180kt indicating 2000ft.

THE C340 PILOT reports en-route from Gloucestershire to Oxford, VFR and in receipt of a BS from Gloucestershire then Oxford, squawking 7000 with Modes S and C. The visibility was >10km flying 1500ft below cloud in VMC and the ac was coloured white/blue; lighting was not reported. Heading 100° at 2000ft QNH and 145kt, a white with pink/red wing-tips coloured motor-glider was seen at about 1500ft passing ahead and about 500ft below on an approximate heading of 170° (70° relative to his ac) in uncontrolled airspace to the S of Little Rissington. The Motor-glider was seen clear to his R 500ft below and 1nm clear at the CPA and he assessed the risk of collision as none. His track had taken him close to the S of Little Rissington and the airfield was seen as inactive on the ground and in the area at the time of passing, other than the sighted ac. No course change was initiated or was considered necessary as there was no conflict.

ATSI reports that Gloucestershire ATC confirmed that the C340 flight was in receipt of a BS and was requested to report 10nm E of Gloucestershire which it duly did with the C340 pilot reporting changing frequency to Oxford at 1328:17. At the time of the Airprox the C340 pilot would have been establishing contact with Oxford for a BS. Oxford is not surveillance equipped and would not have been aware of the presence of the Vigilant.

UKAB Note (1): The Brize METARs show EGVN 111250Z AUTO 20010KT 9999 -SHRA BKN039// BKN049// 09/05 Q1004= and EGVN 111344Z 20012KT 9999 SCT017 BKN040 09/06 Q1003 WHT TEMPO 6000 RA SCT012 GRN=

UKAB Note(2): The UK AIP at ENR 5-5-1-4 promulgates Little Rissington as a glider launching site centred on 515200N 0014136W where tug ac/Motor-gliders may be encountered sunrise to sunset Fri, Sat, Sun & PH or as notified by NOTAM; site elevation 722ft.

UKAB Note (3): The recorded radar clearly captures the incident. At 1328:55 the C340 is seen 5.3nm W of Little Rissington tracking 095°, G/S 175kt, indicating altitude 2000ft LON QNH 1006hPa. At the same time a 7000 squawk with NMC, believed to be the Vigilant, is seen in the C340's 1130 position range 4.4nm, just 1nm W of Little Rissington, tracking 135° G/S 45kt. The ac converge and by 1329:51, separation has reduced to 2.1nm as the Vigilant is about to cross obliquely ahead of the C340 from L to R. At 1330:39 as the C340 is passing 0.6nm SW of Little Rissington the Vigilant is still tracking SE'ly on the crosswind leg for RW22 in the C340's 1 o'clock range 0.3nm. The CPA occurs on the next sweep 8sec later at 1330:47 as the C340 passes through the Vigilant's 0830 position range 0.25nm. Thereafter the C340 continues to the E and the Vigilant is seen to turn L towards the NE onto the downwind leg for RW22. The Vigilant pilot reported level at 800ft QFE 979hPa during the incident which equates to 1500ft QNH, which would place the Vigilant 500ft below the C340 level at altitude 2000ft as they pass with 0.25nm lateral separation at the CPA.

HQ AIR (TRG) comments that the Duty Instructor provided an excellent service to his ac by providing TI that allowed the pilot to gain tally on an ac approaching from astern. The C340 pilot appears to have seen the Vigilant from some distance ahead as it crossed his nose and perceived no need to take further avoiding action. Whilst he appears to have passed through an active glider site, he was aware of the traffic and maintained sufficient separation, albeit that the Vigilant pilot was still concerned by his proximity. Operations in uncontrolled airspace attract a certain level of risk, which is mitigated through good awareness and lookout. The highest risk, around launch and recovery sites, is reduced if transiting ac remain sufficiently clear.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available included reports from the pilots of both ac, radar video recordings, and reports from the appropriate operating authorities.

Little Rissington is depicted on the topographical charts as a glider launching site but with no maximum activity height as winch launching does not take place. A pilot Member commented that although activity is infrequent, transiting pilots should take due regard of traffic operating in an aerodrome cct environment by avoiding the airspace with sufficient separation margins. The C340 pilot had seen the Vigilant as crossing traffic at 1500ft and had deemed that, as it was passing 500ft below his flightpath, there was no need to take avoiding action, Little Rissington appearing to be inactive. However as Little Rissington is on high ground over 700ft amsl, the Vigilant was actually at cct height and joining on a crosswind leg and it was the C340's passage through the cct area which had caused the Vigilant pilot concern and led to the filing of an Airprox. Members commended the Duty Instructor's provision of TI to the Vigilant pilot which enabled him to visually acquire the C340 passing behind and to his L. The Vigilant pilot estimated vertical separation as 200ft; however, this was not borne out from the radar recording which shows the C340 in level flight at altitude 2000ft, 500ft above the Vigilant and the visual cct, with lateral separation measured at 0.25nm. In the circumstances that pertained, the C340 pilot had maintained visual contact on the Vigilant and watched it pass clear to his R and below which allowed the Board to conclude that no risk of collision existed during this encounter.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: The C340 pilot flew close to the cct area of an active glider site causing the Vigilant pilot on the crosswind leg concern.

Degree of Risk: C.