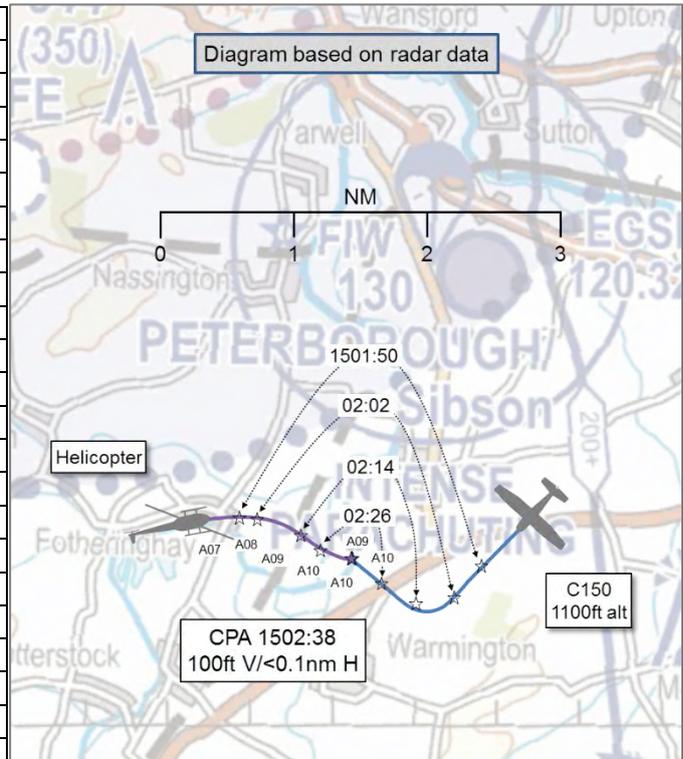


AIRPROX REPORT No 2018094

Date: 21 May 2018 Time: 1503Z Position: 5231N 00025W Location: Sibson

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	C150	Helicopter
Operator	Civ FW	Civ Helo
Airspace	London FIR	London FIR
Class	G	G
Rules	VFR	VFR?
Service	AGCS	NK
Provider	Sibson	N/A
Altitude/FL	900ft	1000ft
Transponder	A, C only	A, C only
Reported		Not reported
Colours	White, blue	
Lighting	Strobes, nav	
Conditions	VMC	
Visibility	>10km	
Altitude/FL	800ft	
Altimeter	QFE (1010hPa)	
Heading	330°	
Speed	70kt	
ACAS/TAS	Not fitted	
Separation		
Reported	NK V/0m H	NK
Recorded	100ft V/<0.1nm H	



THE C150 INSTRUCTOR reports that his student was established on base leg for RW06RH at Sibson when the instructor saw a dark blue or possibly black ‘Robinson helicopter’ in the 10 o'clock position at the same height and less than 100m range. The helicopter was tracking approximately east on a what seemed to be a collision course. He took control and immediately dived; he believed they passed below the helicopter although he lost visual contact during the manoeuvre. He did not know whether the helicopter pilot saw them or took any avoiding action. He noted that the helicopter pilot was not in contact with Sibson Radio.

He assessed the risk of collision as ‘High’.

THE HELICOPTER PILOT could not be traced.

THE SIBSON A/G OPERATOR did not submit a report.

Factual Background

The weather at Wittering was recorded as follows:

METAR EGXT 211450Z 03010KT CAVOK 21/11 Q1015 BLU=

Analysis and Investigation

UKAB Secretariat

The C150 and helicopter pilots shared an equal responsibility for collision avoidance and not to operate in such proximity to other aircraft as to create a collision hazard¹. An aircraft operated on

¹ SERA.3205 Proximity.

or in the vicinity of an aerodrome shall conform with or avoid the pattern of traffic formed by other aircraft in operation².

Summary

An Airprox was reported when a C150 and an unidentified helicopter flew into proximity near Sibson aerodrome at 1503hrs on Monday 21st May 2018. Both pilots were operating in VMC, the C150 pilot under VFR and in receipt of an AGCS from Sibson Radio, the helicopter pilot probably under VFR but with unknown service provision.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available consisted of a report from the C150 Instructor and radar photographs/video recordings.

Members first discussed the applicable regulations and agreed that although traffic was required to conform with or avoid the pattern of traffic at an aerodrome, the helicopter pilot may have considered his range from Sibson (about 2.5nm) was such that he was complying with the requirement to avoid. However, the regulations were somewhat ambiguous in this respect, the requirement was to avoid whatever pattern was being formed rather than any specific pattern. Because the C150 pilot was *de facto* operating in the visual circuit at Sibson, the helicopter pilot should thus have avoided him, although members commented that the C150's range from the airfield was such that another pilot might easily perceive it not to be in the visual circuit. This debate therefore raised the question "How far away should pilots avoid airfields, especially those that do not have an ATZ?" The only answer was "By far enough to avoid whatever pattern of traffic was being formed at any particular time", which was not wholly satisfactory.

Being somewhat open to interpretation, the rules of the air therefore rely on every pilot ensuring that they operate in such a way that enables others to assimilate their intentions; courtesy and consideration are key to resolving situations where there is uncertainty. In this case, members considered that the size of the C150 circuit may have placed it in a position where the helicopter pilot was not expecting circuit traffic. Similarly, members felt that the helicopter pilot would have been much better placed by either avoiding flying at likely circuit altitudes, contacting or listening out on the Sibson AGCS frequency, or remaining further away as he transited in Sibson's vicinity.

In the event, the Board agreed that resolution of the conflict had relied on see-and-avoid and, not knowing the helicopter pilot's perception of the event, they felt that the incident was probably best described as being a conflict in Class G resolved by the C150 pilot. Commending him for his excellent lookout scan and sighting of traffic outside the circuit whilst instructing, members nevertheless agreed that separation at CPA had been much less than desirable, with some wondering whether collision had been avoided by providence alone. After some discussion, it was agreed that the C150 instructor's avoiding action had likely materially increased separation although safety had not been assured.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: A conflict in Class G resolved by the C150 pilot.

Degree of Risk: B.

² SERA.3225 Operation on and in the Vicinity of an Aerodrome.

Safety Barrier Assessment³

In assessing the effectiveness of the safety barriers associated with this incident, the Board concluded that the key factors had been that:

ANSP:

Situational Awareness and Action were assessed as **not used** because an AGCS is not required to provide deconfliction in the visual circuit.

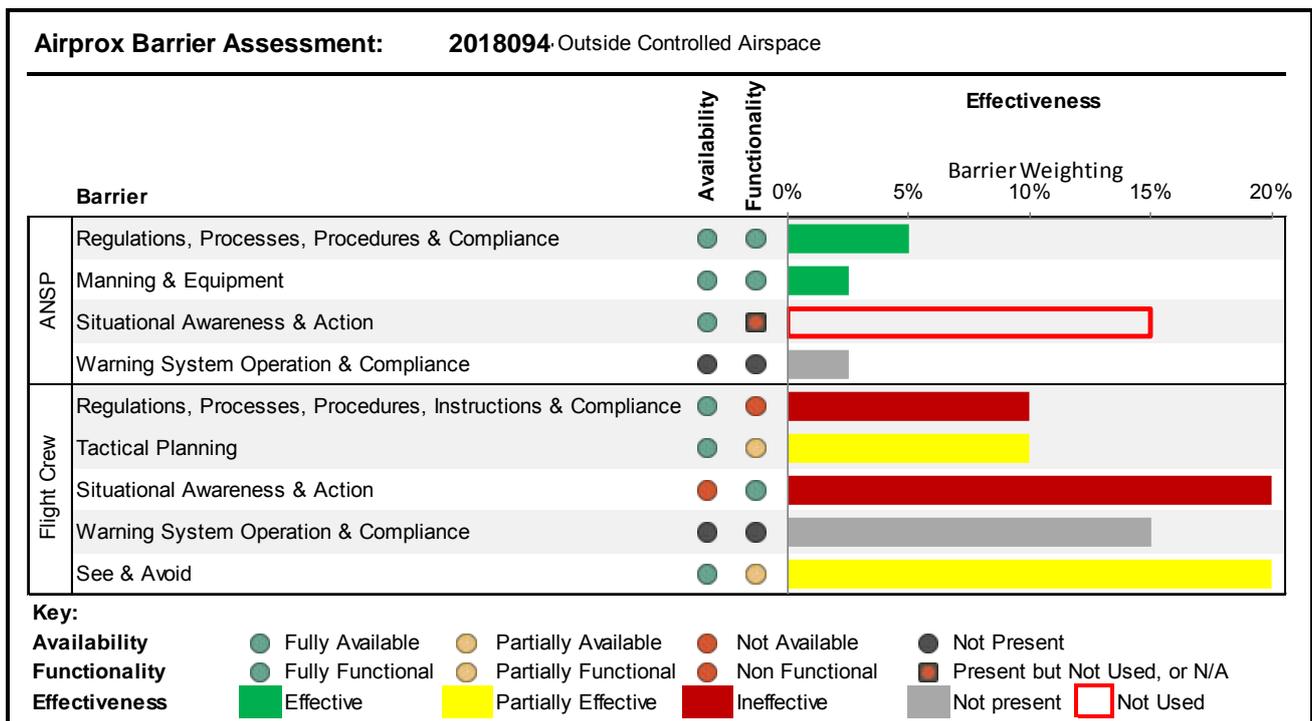
Flight Crew:

Regulations, Processes, Procedures, Instructions and Compliance were assessed as **ineffective** because the helicopter pilot *de facto* did not avoid the pattern of traffic at Sibson.

Tactical Planning was assessed as **partially effective** because the helicopter pilot could have routed further from Sibson, not at circuit altitude, or could have contacted Sibson; and the C150 pilot was flying a circuit pattern beyond normal expectations.

Situational Awareness and Action were assessed as **ineffective** because the C150 pilot, and probably the helicopter pilot given the separation at CPA, received no information to alert them to the other converging aircraft.

See and Avoid were assessed as **partially effective** because although the C150 instructor saw the helicopter at a late stage he was able to take avoiding action.



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