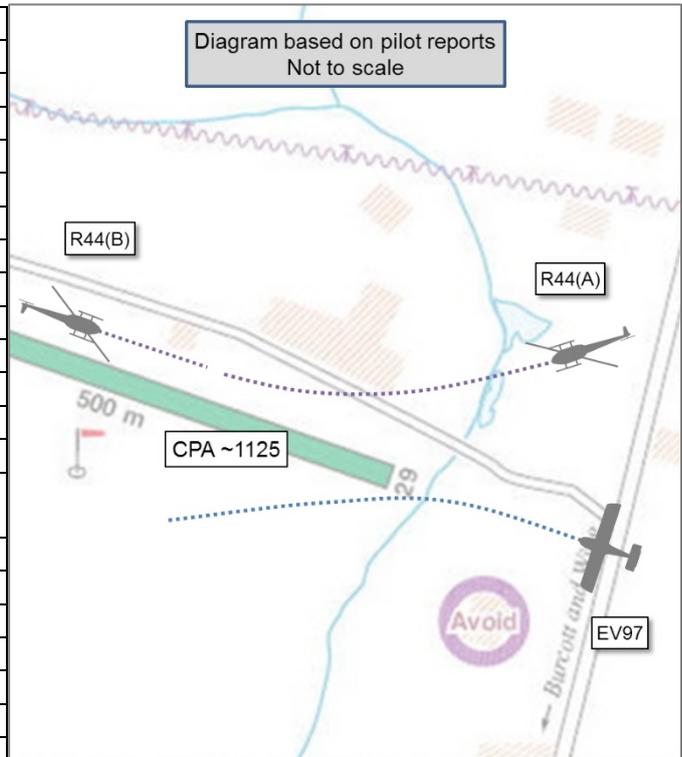


**AIRPROX REPORT No 2019024**

Date: 30 Jan 2019 Time: 1125Z Position: 5155N 00044W Location: Holmbeck Farm airfield

**PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB**

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	EV97	R44(A), R44(B)
Operator	Civ FW	Civ Helo
Airspace	London FIR	London FIR
Class	G	G
Rules	VFR	VFR
Service	Listening out	Listening Out
Provider	Safety Com	Luton Approach
Transponder	Not fitted	A, C, S
Reported		
Colours	Silver alloy	Mainly blue
Lighting	None	Strobe anti-coll.
Conditions	VMC	VMC
Visibility	>10km	>10km
Altitude/FL	500ft agl	A=600ft/B=700ft agl
Altimeter	QFE (NK hPa)	QFE (NK hPa)
Heading	290°	A=280°/B=100°
Speed	60kt	A=60kt/B=50kt
ACAS/TAS	Not fitted	Not fitted
Separation		
Reported	200ft V/300ft H	100ft V/0.5nm H
Recorded	NK	



**THE EV97 EUROSTAR MICROLIGHT PILOT** reports that he was on a training flight with a student so he was sitting on the right-hand side. They were returning to the airfield to carry out an overhead join for RW29RH to land. After descending deadside, he joined the circuit crosswind at 800ft agl. On turning right base, he noticed an R44 300ft below him about 100m on his right, to the left of the high voltage cables, roughly at cable height. He made a call to the R44 pilot on SafetyCom but received no response. The R44 pilot was tracking towards the runway but he was not sure if he was arriving or checking the cables. He slowed down on final approach; the R44 was now on his right and below. He called on the frequency again. Not knowing his intentions he decided to go-around. He stayed high and went around at 400ft agl. On the start of the go-around as the nose of the aircraft was passing through level attitude, he noticed another R44 coming towards the first R44 at the same height and moving slow, with the cables on his left. He turned left by approximately 30° and continued to climb up to just above circuit height levelling at 1000ft agl. Because he was sitting on the right as they turned early crosswind he noticed the two R44s stop and face each other. He then made another call on the frequency. The EV97 pilot then crossed over to the downwind leg keeping them on his right and approximately 700ft below over the runway. The R44 facing RW29 lowered and the one facing RW11 climbed over the other R44 with, he estimated, 50-70ft separation. At this point he did not think their pilots were aware of him and he hoped that as he flew over the airfield the shadow of his aircraft might make them aware of him. They then left the airfield, one flying towards Wing airfield and the other to the south of Leighton Buzzard. He commented that because the R44s were well below circuit height and moving very slowly, it was hard to spot them.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'Medium'.

**THE ROBINSON R44(A) PILOT** reports that the aircraft [the EV97] was sighted at a range of 2nm flying an opposite parallel track, then it turned behind him and flew a parallel track. Initially it was not clear what the pilot of the reporting aircraft's intentions were. He considered that the pilot was possibly trying to land. He then departed the area.

**THE ROBINSON R44(B) PILOT** reports that the aircraft [the EV97] was sighted at a range of 2nm operating at a similar level. Because he was unclear of the pilot's intentions he departed the area.

Both R44 pilots assessed the risk of collision as 'None'.

### **Factual Background**

The weather at Luton was recorded as follows:

METAR EGGW 301120Z AUTO 28009KT 9999 NCD 01/M00 Q0995=

Holmbeck Farm airfield is depicted as follows<sup>1</sup>:

---

<sup>1</sup> Pooleys Flight Guide.

N51 54.62 W000 43.77		HOLMBECK FARM		2006 420 ft AMSL	
1 nm NNE of Wing disused Airfield.			CFD 116-50 207 10-8		
2-6 nm W of Leighton Buzzard.			BNN 113-75 332 12-9		
<b>No Radio.</b>					
Rwy	Dim(m)	Surface	TORA(m)	LDA(m)	Lighting
11/29	500x14	Grass		Unlicensed	Nil
Down slope at end of Rwy 11.					
<b>Op hrs:</b> SR-SS. PPR by telephone essential .					
<b>Landing Fee:</b> £3.00.			<b>Customs:</b> Nil.		
<b>Hangarage:</b> Nil.			<b>Maintenance:</b> Nil.		
<p><b>Remarks:</b> Operated by Mrs. Rita Perkins, Holmbeck Farm, Burcott, Nr. Wing, Leighton Buzzard LU7 0JW.          Unlicensed airfield situated beneath Luton CTA base 4500' ALT.          Home base of Holmbeck Farm Flying Club. Visiting pilots PPR by telephone and must obtain a briefing and a Circuit Plan prior to arrival.          Pilots use the airfield at their own risk.          Standard overhead joins preferred. Circuits at 800 ft aal, LH on Rwy 11, RH Rwy 29.          Avoid overflying local habitation.</p>					
<p><b>Warnings:</b> Pylon cables to north of airfield.          Beware of non-radio traffic.</p>					
<p><b>Restaurant:</b> Pubs in village.  <b>Taxi:</b> Wing cabs, Tel: 01296-681013.</p>					
<b>Fuel:</b> Nil.			<b>Tel:</b> 01296-681 925 PPR/Briefing. 07748-557202 Mobile.		

## Analysis and Investigation

### UKAB Secretariat

The EV97 and R44 pilots shared an equal responsibility for collision avoidance and not to operate in such proximity to other aircraft as to create a collision hazard<sup>2</sup>. An aircraft operated on or in the vicinity of an aerodrome shall conform with or avoid the pattern of traffic formed by other aircraft in operation<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> SERA.3205 Proximity.

<sup>3</sup> SERA.3225 Operation on and in the Vicinity of an Aerodrome.

The R44 pilots did not provide information about the nature of their flight, why they were carrying it out close to Holmbeck Farm airfield, or whether they were aware of Holmbeck Farm airfield. On further enquiry, the company Operations Manager stated that further elaboration was not possible due to the terms of a customer non-disclosure agreement.

## Comments

### Holmbeck airfield owner

The owner of Holmbeck airfield commented that the airfield was unregistered but had been in existence for 32 years and was shown on UK charts. He was at the airfield and was aware, from the engine noise, that a helicopter was approaching. He could see an R44 helicopter descending on final to RW11. He was then quickly aware that another R44 was on final to RW29. At this point he was aware that the EV97 was being compressed by the R44 on final to RW29. His estimate was that the helicopters were about 500ft descending. The EV97 pilot broke away to the southwest and climbed. The two helicopters, as if synchronised, slowed and levelled at about 300ft agl and then slowly approached each other. At a point approximately halfway along the runway they hovered, then one held steady as the other lifted, albeit not by much, and crossed over the other. There was no attempt to make contact on SafetyCom.

## Summary

An Airprox was reported when an EV97 and two R44s flew into proximity at Holmbeck Farm airfield at about 1125hrs on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2019. All three pilots were operating under VFR in VMC, and none were in receipt of an ATS.

## **PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS**

Information available consisted of reports from the pilots and the owner of Holmbeck Farm airfield. 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 noted that the EV97 pilot was inbound to the airfield and had joined overhead for RW29RH. On turning right base he had seen an R44 300ft below him. Because he was not sure of the pilot's intentions he decided to carry out a go-around. After the go-around he then saw another R44 in a similar position to the first R44. He described seeing the two R44s stop, then cross over each other opposite direction, separated, he estimated, by 50-70ft vertical separation. Whilst they were carrying this out they were situated very close to the eastern side of the airfield. The Board considered that the R44 pilots' actions had not ensured that they had sufficiently avoided the airfield and its pattern of traffic which had already formed by the EV97, which was a SERA requirement (**CF1/CF3**). Although the R44 pilots reported seeing the EV97 at a range of 2nm, it was clear that they did not sufficiently keep away from, or integrate with it (**CF6**).

The Board was disappointed that the R44 pilots, or their operating company, had not been able to communicate to the Board the details of their operation close to Holbeck Farm airfield. This denied the Board the opportunity to understand their perspective and therefore the ability to learn any lessons or themes. Although their activities may well have been subject to a non-disclosure agreement, there was probably much that could be offered to provide a greater degree of fidelity and help them to avoid similar incidents in future.

The airfield had not been aware beforehand that the R44s would be operating close to it, and the pilots had not contacted the airfield's operator prior to the flight either by telephone or on the SafetyCom frequency once airborne when close to the airfield (**CF4**). The Board wondered whether the pilots were even aware of the presence of the airfield and suspected that their planning had been sub-optimal in this respect given that the airfield not only appeared on the CAA charts but also in pilot guides (**CF2**). The airfield would have been apparent from the air given its marked runway and a number of hangars and, assuming that the R44 pilots could see that the airfield was close to them, they should have had

at least a generic situational awareness of the likelihood of airfield traffic in the vicinity (**CF5**). Members further noted that, although both R44 pilots reported seeing the EV97 at 2nm, they had flown sufficiently close to cause the EV97 pilot concern (**CF7**).

Turning to the risk, the Board praised the actions of the EV97 pilot who, not knowing the intentions of the R44 pilots, had taken action to avoid them. Additionally, the R44 pilots reported that they had seen the EV97 at 2nm and, although they had continued to fly into proximity that was close enough to cause the EV97 pilot concern, they would presumably not have flown into collision. Therefore, although safety had been degraded, the Board agreed that there had been no risk of a collision. Accordingly, the Airprox was assessed as risk Category C.

## PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS AND RISK

### Contributory Factors:

CF	Factor	Description	Amplification
	Flight Elements		
	• Regulations, Processes, Procedures and Compliance		
1	Human Factors	• Flight Crew ATM Procedure Deviation	Regulations/procedures not complied with
	• Tactical Planning and Execution		
2	Human Factors	• No Decision/Plan	Inadequate planning
3	Human Factors	• Aircraft Navigation	Did not avoid/conform with the pattern of traffic already formed
4	Human Factors	• Accuracy of Communication	Ineffective communication of intentions
	• Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft and Action		
5	Contextual	• Situational Awareness and Sensory Events	Pilot had no, or only generic, Situational Awareness
6	Human Factors	• Monitoring of Other Aircraft	Pilot did not sufficiently integrate with the other aircraft
	• See and Avoid		
7	Human Factors	• Lack of Individual Risk Perception	Pilot flew close enough to cause the other pilot concern

Degree of Risk: C

### Safety Barrier Assessment<sup>4</sup>

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

#### **Flight Element:**

**Regulations, Processes, Procedures, Instructions and Compliance** were assessed as **ineffective** because the R44 pilots did not remain sufficiently clear of a published airfield and its active pattern of traffic.

**Tactical Planning and Execution** was assessed as **ineffective** because the R44 pilots did not avoid the pattern of traffic already formed.

**Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft and Action** were assessed as **ineffective** because neither the R44 nor the EV97 pilots had situational awareness of each other prior to visual sighting.

<sup>4</sup> The UK Airprox Board scheme for assessing the Availability, Functionality and Effectiveness of safety barriers can be found on the [UKAB Website](#).

Airprox Barrier Assessment: 2019024		Outside Controlled Airspace						
Barrier	Provision	Application	Effectiveness					
			Barrier Weighting					
			0%	5%	10%	15%	20%	
Ground Element	Regulations, Processes, Procedures and Compliance	●	●					
	Manning & Equipment	●	●					
	Situational Awareness of the Confliction & Action	●	●					
	Electronic Warning System Operation and Compliance	●	●					
Flight Element	Regulations, Processes, Procedures and Compliance	✓	✗					
	Tactical Planning and Execution	✓	✗					
	Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft & Action	✗	✓					
	Electronic Warning System Operation and Compliance	●	●					
	See & Avoid	✓	✓					
<b>Key:</b>			Full	Partial	None	Not Present	Not Used	
Provision	✓	!	✗	●	○			
Application	✓	!	✗	●	○			
Effectiveness	■	■	■	■	■			