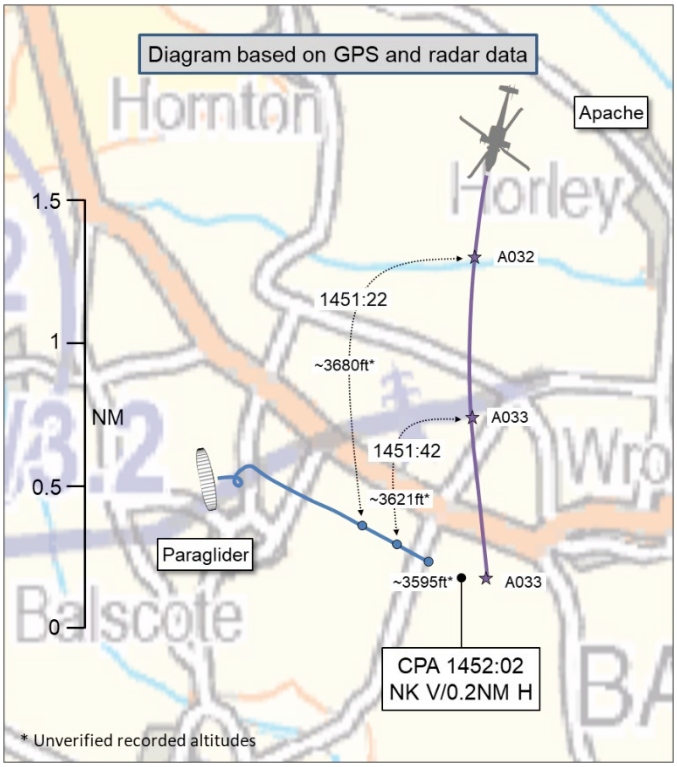
AIRPROX REPORT No 2025102

Date: 02 Jun 2025 Time: 1452Z Position: 5204N 00125W Location: 2.5NM W Banbury

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	Paraglider	Apache
Operator	Civ Hang	HQ JAC
Airspace	London FIR	London FIR
Class	G	G
Rules	VFR	IFR
Service	None	Traffic
Provider	N/A	Brize Radar
Altitude/FL	NK	3300ft
Transponder	Not fitted	A, C, S
Reported		
Colours	White, pink, grey	Black, green
Lighting	None	HISL, nav, landing
Conditions	VMC	VMC
Visibility	>10km	NR
Altitude/FL	3500ft	3500ft
Altimeter	QNH	QNH
Heading	115°	180°
Speed	NK	100kt
ACAS/TAS	FLARM	Not fitted
Alert	None	N/A
Separation at CPA		
Reported	0ft V/200m H	200ft V/0.5NM H
Recorded	NK V/~0.2NM H	



THE PARAGLIDER PILOT reports that they were 3.5hr into a cross-country paragliding flight, on a final-glide to their goal of Banbury, flying wings-level. They heard a loud rotor sound to their rear-left quarter. They looked to their left (7 o'clock position) and saw the Apache at the same altitude, 200m away, heading directly for them. They quickly turned right about 60° and the Apache turned left about 30° to avoid the risk of collision.

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

THE APACHE PILOT reports that they were routeing under IFR in VMC in Class G airspace from [...] to [...] as part of a training sortie, under a Traffic Service from Brize Norton. The non-handling pilot (NHP) called traffic 'low and right' having seen the orange canopy of a paraglider 0.6NM away. Their course was altered by 10-15° to the left to pass down the left-hand side of the paraglider. They estimate that the separation was about 0.5NM and 200ft above was maintained throughout. As they were behind and above the paraglider, this may have impacted the assessed severity as the paraglider pilot may not have been aware of their presence until the Apache had passed by. They do not believe that the paraglider pilot was in radio contact with Brize Norton at the time. As they had the paraglider visual, and had taken the necessary action to ensure adequate separation, they did not feel that it was an Airprox. Due to the conditions of the day, there was a period of intense glider activity, most of which did not appear on radar to be called as traffic (including the paraglider).

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

THE BRIZE NORTON CONTROLLER reports that they had worked the Apache after [the pilot had made a] free-call north-east of the Brize CTR. They had had several issues with WAM (radar system) with the Apache, however, they had handed the console over before that. They have no recollection of anything painting on the radar that had not been called to the pilot of the Apache.

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

Factual Background

The weather at Oxford was recorded as follows:

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METAR EGTK 021450Z 23009KT 190V270 9999 FEW040 19/03 Q1015
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Analysis and Investigation

Military ATM

Sequence of Events

At 1451:33, the Apache pilot contacted Brize Norton Radar for a Traffic Service and a Zone transit. They were cleared for a full TAC to ILS with Traffic Information provided throughout the transit but not associated with the Airprox. The CPA was unknown as the paraglider did not appear on radar.

Local BM Investigation

A local investigation was conducted by Brize Norton following the event to identify the ATS-related causal/aggravating factors. It was deemed the ATS provision was suitable as the paraglider did not appear on the radar.

2 Gp BM Analysis

The Brize Norton Radar controller carried out their duties to a satisfactory standard iaw with ATM standards as the paraglider did not appear on radar.

UKAB Secretariat

An analysis of the NATS radar was undertaken and the Apache could be positively identified from Mode S data. At 1452:02 (CPA), the altitude of the Apache was displayed on the replay as 3300ft based on the 'radar QNH' of 1016hPa (Figure 1). The paraglider was not observed on the replay.

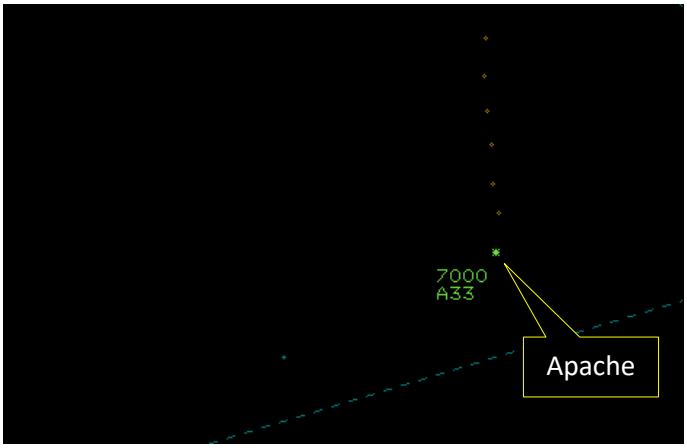


Figure 1 – CPA at 1452:02

The pilot of the paraglider kindly supplied GPS track data for their flight. The altitude data for the paraglider indicated that, at 1452:02, it had been approximately 300ft above the Apache. A still image from a video taken by the pilot of the paraglider appeared to indicate that the two aircraft had been at a similar altitude (Figure 2).

The vertical separation between the aircraft at CPA could not be determined. The diagram was constructed and the horizontal separation at CPA determined by combining the data sources.

Figure 2

The paraglider and Apache 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 Apache pilot was required to give way to the paraglider.[2] An aircraft that is being overtaken has the right-of-way and the overtaking aircraft, whether climbing, descending or in horizontal flight, shall keep out of the way of the other aircraft by altering its heading to the right, and no subsequent change in the relative positions of the two aircraft shall absolve the overtaking aircraft from this obligation until it is entirely past and clear.[3]

Comments

JAC

The Apache pilot was conducting a routine LARS training sortie between […] and […], with the intention of performing an IF approach at […]. During the sortie, the crew encountered significant glider activity, much of which was not reported by ATC. This heightened the crew's vigilance, with the HP in the rear seat maintaining a lookout to port, while the NHP in the front seat focused to starboard. In the vicinity of Banbury, the NHP spotted a paraglider "*low and right*" and promptly alerted the HP, who adjusted the aircraft's course to avoid further conflict.

The crew had obtained a Traffic Service from Brize Norton but did not recall receiving any Traffic Information regarding the paraglider. On initial contact with Brize Norton ATC, Traffic Information was provided on other traffic, but this was determined not to include the paraglider. While a close encounter with a rotary-wing aircraft would understandably be alarming for a paraglider pilot, the Apache crew visually identified the paraglider's bright canopy in time and took appropriate action to increase separation.

It is worth noting that the Apache is not equipped with TAS or ADS-B-in, making the crew reliant on vigilant visual lookout and timely Traffic Information from ATC. General Aviation pilots should be aware that, even with EC devices installed, some military aircraft may lack the capability to detect their presence. As such, GA pilots are encouraged to contact local ANSPs to inform them of their intentions, thereby enhancing situational awareness for all airspace users.

This incident serves as a reminder to all JAC crews of the congestion and potential risks posed by other aircraft operating in Class G airspace. Maintaining a robust visual lookout, effective

[1] (UK) SERA.3205 Proximity. MAA RA 2307 paragraphs 1 and 2.
[2] (UK) SERA.3210 Right-of-way (c)(2) Converging. MAA RA 2307 paragraph 12.
[3] (UK) SERA.3210 Right-of-way (c)(3) Overtaking. MAA RA 2307 paragraph 14.

communication with ATC, and the use of appropriate EC measures are critical mitigations to reduce the risk of MAC.

BHPA

The BHPA notes that, once again, the paraglider pilot was carrying an EC device which, for background information, is often a substantial percentage of the total cost of the flying equipment. It is noted that the multi-million dollar Apache helicopter was not carrying any form of EC except a standard Mode S transponder and was unable to digitally acquire the paraglider. The BHPA commends the paraglider pilot's situational awareness in hearing the Apache approach from behind (which is quite a visual black-spot for a paraglider) and we also commend the Apache's NHP who did visually acquire the paraglider pilot's position and initiated avoiding action.

The Apache pilot reports that they were not aware if the paraglider pilot was in contact with an ATC unit. The BHPA wishes to highlight that only a tiny percentage of their membership (who might also be GA or microlight pilots) would have a FRTOL and even those pilots probably would not own or carry a hand-held air-band radio. As paraglider and hang-glider pilots tend to avoid controlled airspace, and their altitude and track constantly varies when seeking thermals to stay airborne, it is doubtful whether their transmissions would be of any practical use to other pilots. It is therefore highly unlikely that any paraglider or hang-glider pilot would communicate with ATC or ask for any kind of service using an air-band radio.

The BHPA also notes that there was a slight anomaly between what the Apache pilot saw (i.e. an orange canopy 200ft below them) whereas the paraglider pilot said that their canopy was pink, grey and white and, from GPS and radar data, appeared to be 300ft above the Apache. A conclusion could be drawn that the Apache pilot may have seen a different paraglider pilot than the reporting one, especially as the paraglider pilot said that they were 'on final glide to goal at Banbury' which would indicate that they were flying a competition task and there were other pilots with them in that gaggle that they would have been racing against.

Paraglider pilots will never be able to carry and operate any of the currently available transponders, they rarely carry or operate air-band radios, they are practically invisible to ATC radar, they fly slowly, have low manoeuvrability and are visually difficult to acquire. This puts paraglider, paramotor and hang-glider pilots at a distinct disadvantage compared with other aircraft despite many of the BHPA membership purchasing EC devices. The BHPA believes this is a situation that needs urgent attention in order to avoid an almost inevitable mid-air collision. Certainly, the BHPA will continue to educate their members on the importance of using the CANP system, carrying an EC device, maintaining a good lookout and informing ATC by telephone of their intentions.

Summary

An Airprox was reported when a paraglider and an Apache flew into proximity 2.5NM west of Banbury at 1452Z on Monday 2nd June 2025. The paraglider pilot was operating under VFR in VMC not in receipt of a FIS. The Apache pilot was operating under IFR in VMC in receipt of a Traffic Service from Brize Radar.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available consisted of reports from both pilots, radar photographs/video recordings, GPS data for the flight of the paraglider pilot, a report from the air traffic controller involved and a report from the appropriate operating authority. 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 considered the actions of the pilot of the paraglider. A member with particular knowledge of paragliding operations explained that it would be almost completely impractical for a paraglider pilot to carry and operate an air-band radio. Members noted the paraglider pilot in question had carried an EC device to assist with their situational awareness. However, for this encounter, it was agreed that it

would not have been expected to have detected the presence of the Apache (**CF3**). Nevertheless, it was noted that the paraglider pilot had heard the Apache approach and had turned to visually acquire it. Members agreed that the paraglider pilot had gleaned late situational awareness of the Apache (**CF2**), but had had sufficient time to have taken avoiding action.

Members next turned their attention to the actions of the pilot of the Apache, and noted that they had been in receipt of a Traffic Service from Brize Radar. Whilst members were agreed that they had selected the most appropriate service, they had not received Traffic information on the paraglider and had not had situational awareness of it (**CF2**) until visually acquired. Members commended the 'good spot' of the paraglider and noted that they had turned left to increase the separation.

Focussing their attention on the actions of the Brize Radar controller, members noted that they had passed Traffic Information on observed contacts to the pilot of the Apache along their route. However, members agreed that the paraglider had not appeared on their radar display and, consequently, they did not have situational awareness of it (**CF1**). Members agreed that there had been little else that the Brize controller could have done to have assisted matters.

Members pondered the relative positions of the two aircraft at CPA and noted that there appeared to be a discrepancy between the recorded values and the reported vertical separation. Whilst the recorded data indicated that the Apache had been at a lower altitude than the paraglider, the reported separation, and the video supplied by the paraglider pilot, suggested that the Apache had been co-altitude or even above the level of the paraglider. Members could not determine the reason for the discrepancy but discounted the suggestion that the Apache pilot had sighted, and had reacted to, a different paraglider.

Concluding their discussion, members appreciated that to have sighted an approaching helicopter had caused concern (**CF4**), but agreed that effective and timely avoiding action had been taken by both pilots to have ensured that the separation had not reduced further. Although there had been a reduction in safety margins, members were satisfied that no risk of collision had existed. The Board assigned Risk Category C to this event.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS AND RISK

Contributory Factors:

	2025102			
CF	**Factor**	**Description**	**ECCAIRS Amplification**	**UKAB Amplification**
	Ground Elements			
	• Situational Awareness and Action			
1	Contextual	• Traffic Management Information Action	An event involving traffic management information actions	The ground element had only generic, late, no or inaccurate Situational Awareness
	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[4]

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

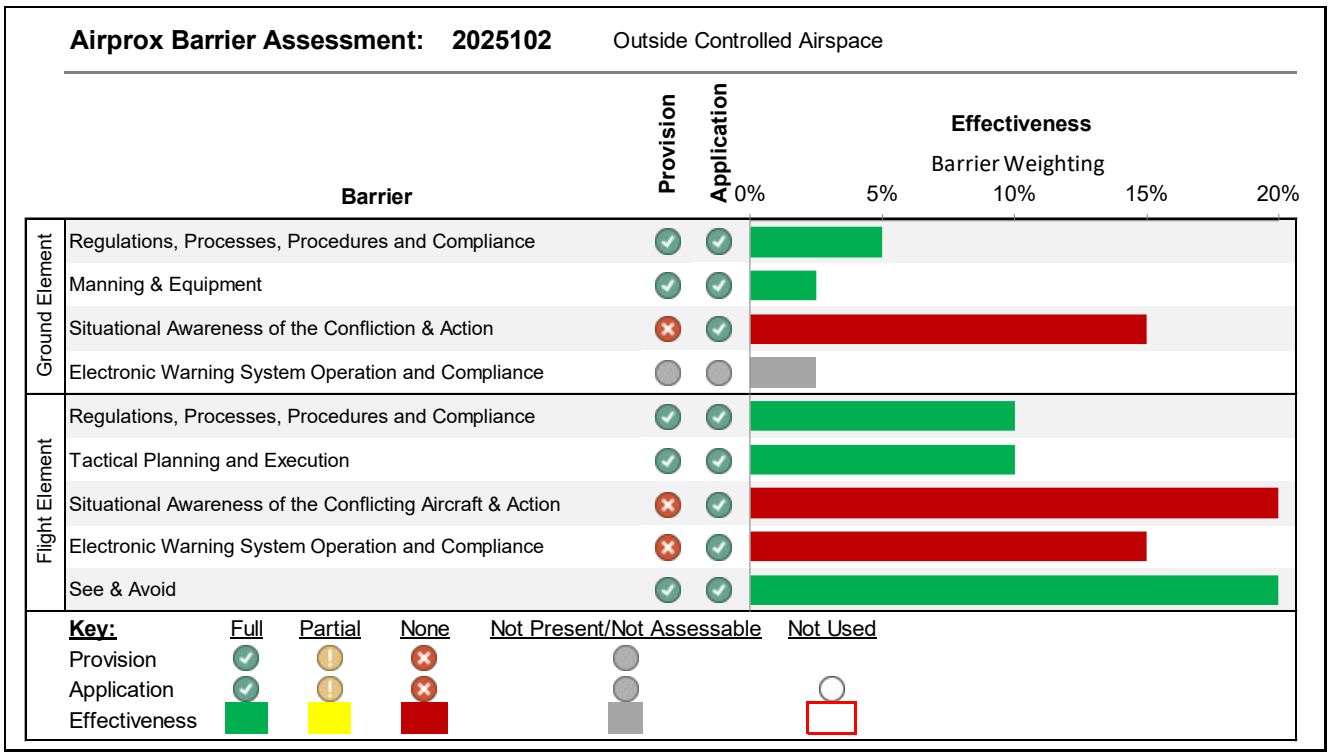
Ground Elements:

Situational Awareness of the Confliction and Action were assessed as **ineffective** because the Brize Norton controller had not had situational awareness of the presence of the paraglider.

Flight Elements:

Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft and Action were assessed as **ineffective** because the pilot of the Apache had not had situational awareness of the presence of the paraglider.

Electronic Warning System Operation and Compliance were assessed as **ineffective** because the EC device carried by the paraglider pilot would not have been expected to have detected the presence of the Apache.



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