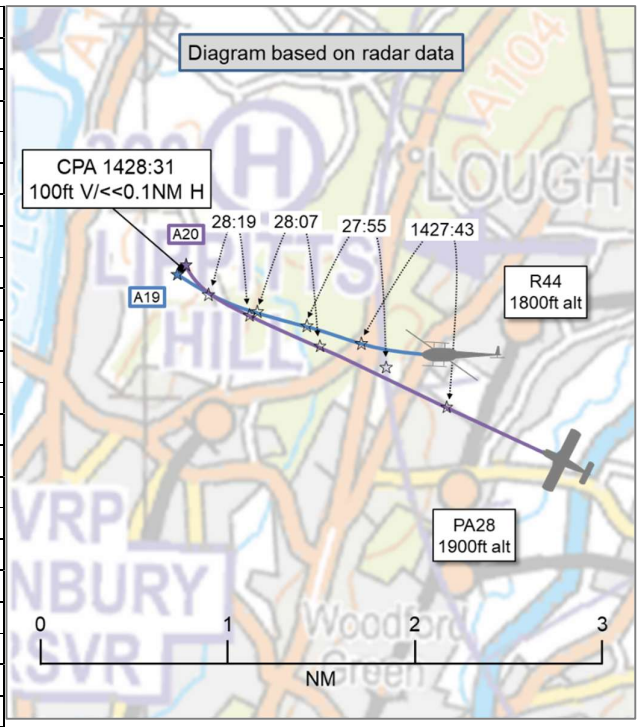
AIRPROX REPORT No 2026021

Date: 17 Mar 2026 Time: 1429Z Position: 5139N 00000W Location: Chingford

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	R44	PA28
Operator	Civ Helo	Civ FW
Airspace	London FIR	London FIR
Class	G	G
Rules	VFR	VFR
Service	Basic	Basic
Provider	Farnborough Nth	Farnborough Nth
Altitude/FL	1900ft	2000ft
Transponder	A, C, S	A, C, S
Reported		
Colours	Red	White/red/blue
Lighting	Nav, anti-col	Anti-col, strobes
Conditions	VMC	VMC
Visibility	>10km	>10km
Altitude/FL	~1900ft	2000ft
Altimeter	QNH (1015hPa)	QNH (NK hPa)
Heading	~300°	294°
Speed	90kt	120kt
ACAS/TAS	PilotAware/TCAS I	Garmin TAS
Alert	None	'TA'
	Separation at CPA	
Reported	50ft V/5m H	~150ft V/~0.25NM H
Recorded	100ft V/<<0.1NM H	



THE R44 PILOT reports that, while travelling straight-and-level at a target altitude of 1800ft, their altitude had increased to 1900ft and they had commenced a shallow right turn towards the north and the M25 motorway. They had no traffic announcement on [TAS] which [was linked] into their headset. They first sighted the aircraft slightly to the right and overhead by what felt like around 50ft. The aircraft was banking to the left and was faster than them. They recalled looking at the altitude [indicator] and seeing 1900ft, perhaps 1940ft, with the indicated airspeed still at 90kt. They remarked to the passenger how close it was but didn't have the feeling to take avoiding action as the threat by that time had already passed. In fact, by the time they saw the aircraft it was no longer a threat in any way. As they were remarking to the passenger, there was an R/T call, which they did not hear clearly, coming from the Farnborough controller, the reply to which was, "*we now have that traffic in sight*". They thought it was [the other pilot] replying but were not certain as it was a very busy frequency and could have been [the pilot of] another aircraft. They did not make an R/T call as they felt it was irrelevant by that stage.

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

THE PA28 PILOT reports flying solo and returning from [departure] to [destination]. They were established in the cruise at 2000ft QNH and the weather was CAVOK. They became aware of the traffic from the ['traffic alert'] showing on [their TAS]. The other aircraft appeared to be on an identical course 100-200ft below. They were scanning for the traffic when they were advised of it by [the] Farnborough LARS [controller]. They responded "*searching for the traffic"* and shortly after, having sighted the traffic, they advised Farnborough LARS "*visual with the traffic"* as they felt that would be helpful for the traffic to know if they were on frequency. They changed course to the right and climbed 100ft to increase separation and overtook the traffic, keeping it in sight. They subsequently resumed the planned routeing. The traffic was initially difficult to see as it was a helicopter at the 12 o'clock and therefore had a very small profile. They were aware of the traffic from [the TAS] but the small size of the [TAS screen]

made it quite difficult to establish the distance without zooming in. However, they were more intent on looking out for the traffic rather than having 'eyes in' on the [TAS].

The pilot assessed the risk of collision as 'None'.

THE FARNBOROUGH CONTROLLER reports they were informed that a retrospective Airprox had been filed for a period whilst they were in position on [Farnborough] LARS North and East. They had no recollection of the event and nothing was raised whilst on frequency.

Factual Background

The weather at London City Airport was recorded as follows:

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METAR EGLC 171450Z AUTO 21008KT 150V240 9999 NCD 15/06 Q1015=
METAR EGLC 171420Z AUTO 18009KT 150V220 9999 NCD 15/07 Q1015=
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Analysis and Investigation

UKAB Secretariat

The R44 and PA28 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 R44 pilot had right of way and the PA28 pilot was required to keep out of the way of the other aircraft by altering course to the right.[2] The radar replay depicted the secondary surveillance response from the PA28 change from VFR conspicuity to a Farnborough allocated code at 1427:55; CPA occurred at 1428:31.

Farnborough Occurrence Investigation

Description of event: LARS [North and East] were band-boxed in light-to-medium traffic, with one [pilot] on LARS East in receipt of a Traffic Service and five [pilots] on LARS North in receipt of a Basic Service. The Stansted PSR/SSR was the primary radar source in use with the Heathrow 10 PSR/SSR available on a second screen. There was no relevant equipment unserviceability reported.

[R44 C/S], R44, [from point of departure] to Chelmsford at 1800ft was already on frequency having called at 1417 and had been issued [transponder code] 5026, QNH and Basic Service. [PA28 C/S] called on frequency at 1427, PA28, [from point of departure] to [destination] at 2000ft and was issued [transponder code] 5027, QNH and Basic Service. Immediately after this transmission, the controller passed Traffic Information to [PA28 C/S] (still squawking 7000 at that point) on [R44 C/S].

1427:49 "[PA28 C/S], *traffic believed to be you has traffic north-west of you by half a mile, indicates 100ft below, R44*."
1427:59 "*Searching for traffic*, [PA28 C/S]."

The controller then passed two pieces of Traffic Information to the [pilot] on LARS East in receipt of a Traffic Service, which were acknowledged by [that] pilot. [PA28 C/S] then displayed the allocated squawk of 5027. The radar returns for [PA28 C/S] and [R44 C/S] merged at 1428:29 as the [other] pilot acknowledgement was completed, with [R44 C/S] indicating 1900ft and [PA28 C/S] indicating 2000ft. [PA28 C/S] then transmitted, advising visual with the traffic.

1428:32 "[PA28 C/S], *visual with the traffic*."
1428:35 "[PA28 C/S], *roger*."

[PA28 C/S] was observed climbing to 2100ft.

[1] (UK) SERA.3205 Proximity.
[2] (UK) SERA.3210 Right-of-way (c)(3) Overtaking.

1428:41 "[R44 C/S], *traffic is visual with you, is a PA28 believed to be just 200ft above you*."
1428:49 "*Yeah, visual*, [R44 C/S]."

[R44 C/S] was observed climbing to 2000ft. The radar display then panned out for a few seconds as an unrelated [] alert was triggered in the vicinity of [an airfield]. When the display panned back into range, the radar returns for [PA28 C/S] and [R44 C/S] were separating and [R44 C/S] indicated 1900ft and [PA28 C/S] indicated 2000ft.

There was no mention of an Airprox on the frequency at the time of the event and the controller had no recollection of the event when advised of the details.

Summary

An Airprox was reported when an R44 and a PA28 flew into proximity near Chingford at 1429Z on Tuesday 17th March 2026. Both pilots were operating under VFR in VMC, both in receipt of a Basic Service from Farnborough LARS North.

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 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.

Members first discussed the outcome of the Airprox and agreed that the measured radar separation at CPA had indicated a close pass. The Board agreed that the R44 pilot had not been aware of the PA28 closing from behind (**CF3**) and that their TAS had not alerted when it could have been expected to have done so (**CF5**), and members wondered if this had perhaps been due to signal blanking by the R44's structure. Members noted that the R44 pilot had seen the PA28 only as it had passed by overhead in close proximity, no doubt at least in part because it had been obscured by the R44's structure (**CF8**) as it had approached from behind. This had been effectively a non-sighting (**CF7**) because they could not have taken action to increase separation at CPA. Members felt that the R44 pilot may have been better served by requesting a Traffic Service (**CF1**), which could have given them situational awareness before the encounter.

Turning to the pilot of the PA28, the Board agreed that they had received situational awareness on the R44 from their TAS (**CF4**) and had been given Traffic Information by the Farnborough controller as soon as they had requested a Basic Service and before being radar-identified. The Board commended the Farnborough controller for their diligence in passing Traffic Information, especially given that they had only just communicated with the PA28 pilot who had requested only a Basic Service, and noted that a Basic Service also allowed for the passing of Traffic Information '*If a controller/FISO considers that a definite risk of collision exists*'. Despite their situational awareness and visual sighting, which the Board felt was at a late stage (**CF6**), the PA28 pilot's manoeuvre had resulted in them passing the R44 within 0.1NM in plan and at a radar-derived height separation of 100ft, reported as 50ft by the R44 pilot, and which had caused understandable concern for the R44 pilot (**CF2**).

Turning to the matter of risk, while some Board members felt that risk of collision had been averted (Risk C), members voted by a ratio of 3 to 1 that the separation at CPA had been such that safety had been much reduced, Risk B (**CF9**). Members felt that the PA28 pilot had had all the information required to pass safely as they overtook the R44 but had passed in close proximity, perhaps without considering that the R44 pilot might not have been aware of the closing PA28 and could have manoeuvred at any time, potentially further eroding an already small safety margin and with little time to react.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS AND RISK

Contributory Factors:

	2026021			
CF	**Factor**	**Description**	**ECCAIRS Amplification**	**UKAB Amplification**
	Flight Elements			
	• Tactical Planning and Execution			
1	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
	• Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft and Action			
2	Human Factors	• Lack of Action	Events involving flight crew not taking any action at all when they should have done so	Pilot flew close enough to cause concern despite Situational Awareness
3	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			
4	Contextual	• Other warning system operation	An event involving a genuine warning from an airborne system other than TCAS.	
5	Human Factors	• Response to Warning System	An event involving the incorrect response of flight crew following the operation of an aircraft warning system	CWS misinterpreted, not optimally actioned or CWS alert expected but none reported
	• See and Avoid			
6	Human Factors	• Identification/ Recognition	Events involving flight crew not fully identifying or recognising the reality of a situation	Late sighting by one or both pilots
7	Human Factors	• Monitoring of Other Aircraft	Events involving flight crew not fully monitoring another aircraft	Non-sighting or effectively a non-sighting by one or both pilots
8	Contextual	• Visual Impairment	Events involving impairment due to an inability to see properly	One or both aircraft were obscured from the other
	• Outcome Events			
9	Contextual	• Near Airborne Collision with Aircraft	An event involving a near collision by an aircraft with an aircraft, balloon, dirigible or other piloted air vehicles	

Degree of Risk: B.

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:

Flight Elements:

Tactical Planning and Execution was assessed as **partially effective** because the R44 pilot did not arrange for the provision of a Traffic Service.

Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft and Action were assessed as **ineffective** because the R44 pilot had no situational awareness on the PA28, and the PA28 pilot flew close enough to cause concern despite their situational awareness on the R44's position and level.

Electronic Warning System Operation and Compliance were assessed as **partially effective** because the R44 TAS did not alert when it could have been expected to do so.

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

See and Avoid were assessed as **partially effective** because the R44 pilot saw the PA28 at about CPA, effectively a non-sighting, and the PA28 pilot saw the R44 at a late stage.