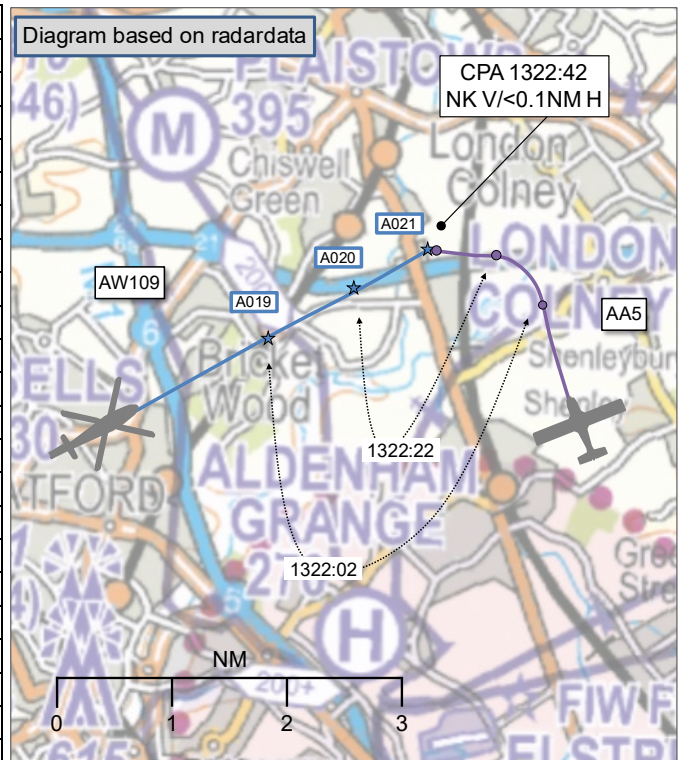


**AIRPROX REPORT No 2026025**

Date: 21 Mar 2026 Time: 1323Z Position: 5143N 00019W Location: 3.5NM N Elstree

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

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	AW109	AA5
Operator	Civ Comm	Civ FW
Airspace	London FIR	London FIR
Class	G	G
Rules	VFR	VFR
Service	None	AFIS
Provider	N/A	Elstree
Altitude/FL	2100ft	NK
Transponder	A, C, S	None
<b>Reported</b>		
Colours	Grey	White, Blue
Lighting	Nav, Strobes, Posn	Strobes, Beacon
Conditions	VMC	VMC
Visibility	>10km	>10km
Altitude/FL	2000ft	2000ft
Altimeter	QNH (1020hPa)	NK
Heading	063°	270°
Speed	130kt	100kt
ACAS/TAS	TAS	Not fitted
Alert	None	N/A
<b>Separation at CPA</b>		
Reported	50ft V/50m H	200ft V/100m H
Recorded	NK V/<0.1NM H	



**THE AW109 PILOT** reports that it was a CAVOK Saturday afternoon, so traffic awareness was their key threat during their transit, particularly in the busy Class G airspace sandwiched between the Heathrow and Luton/Stansted zones. It was one of the first sunny days of the year, and they had already flown the same route in the morning, so they were aware of increased GA activity and it was at the forefront of their mind. They departed [redacted] and left their frequency as soon as they left the ATZ and their next priority was to identify any other aircraft both visually and on the TAS before they committed to climbing to cruising altitude and track. The next agency they intended to utilise was Stansted Radar; they planned to transit their Zone on a regular route as it provides a quieter passage from other GA and, if Stansted are not too busy, also a Traffic Service outside CAS. They delayed changing frequency for a few minutes as they wanted to remain eyes out for threats and concentrate on the climb to establish an altitude from where they could receive a Traffic Service. Prior to the climb, and adding to the delay in switching frequencies, they identified a TAS track in the 1 o'clock that was a potential threat. They adjusted track and planned cruising altitude using the Altitude Acquire function on the 4 axis autopilot to mitigate the conflict. They assessed it to be in the vicinity of Elstree ATZ and, whilst they weren't visual, they were now very comfortable to establish the climb. As they passed through approximately 1800ft, they were alerted by the aircraft that it had failed to capture the selected altitude. They went 'eyes in' momentarily to re-engage the AP and, as they looked up, the windscreen was filled with a head-on, white and blue, low-wing, GA aircraft with dihedral wingtips. This was a different aircraft to the one identified earlier on TAS. The aircraft was performing a break to the right to avoid, as they believe the other pilot had also seen the AW109 late, but slightly before they had. The other pilot's reaction certainly avoided a potential collision – they opined that, had the other pilot not manoeuvred, a collision would have been very likely. They broke right and climbed; it was difficult to say how close they got but it was possibly as close as 20m. They noted that they hadn't seen the other aircraft as it had been on a constant sightline bearing to them. This aircraft had not appeared on the TAS, nor did they receive a Traffic aural alert. On landing, they checked FlightRadar24 and ADS-B Exchange and the aircraft was not visible on either.

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

**THE AA5 PILOT** reports that they know [the area] very well. Being familiar with the area and knowing it can be a busy corridor, they kept a very vigilant lookout and listened out for other traffic. They were aware of a helicopter departing [not the Airprox AW109] and were looking for it. They saw [the AW109] on an approximate path towards them. They had right of way, so decided to maintain course and heading. They turned to the right and lowered the nose to avoid it getting too close, but didn't feel there was a collision risk. They noted that, although they had squawk codes on the transponder, when completing after landing checks, the transponder was still on standby. They tried it again, and it required quite a bit of force on the button to get it to switch on. They noted that they would be double-checking that it was on in future and would inform the other pilots who also use the aircraft.

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

**ELSTREE OPS** reported via telephone call that they were not aware of an Airprox and could not offer any further information.

### Factual Background

The weather at Northolt was recorded as follows:

METAR EGWU 211320Z 09008KT 9999 SKC 13/M05 Q1018 NOSIG RMK BLU BLU=

### Analysis and Investigation

#### CAA ATSI

The AW109 pilot was between frequencies, the AA5 was with Elstree. The Elstree AFISO would not have been aware of the presence of the AW109 and so no Traffic Information could have been passed.

#### UKAB Secretariat

An analysis of the NATS radar replay was undertaken and the AW109 could be seen and identified using Mode S data. A primary-only track following the routing reported by the AA5 pilot could be seen, although this could not be formally identified. Although ADS-B sources were also analysed, neither aircraft could be seen. At Figure 1, the AW109 was tracking northeast, indicating 1900ft. the primary-only contact, believed to be the AA5, was 3.7NM to the east of the AW109, tracking north. Another aircraft, indicating 2200ft, was manoeuvring between the two tracks, this was probably the aircraft that the AW109 pilot reported seeing on their TAS.

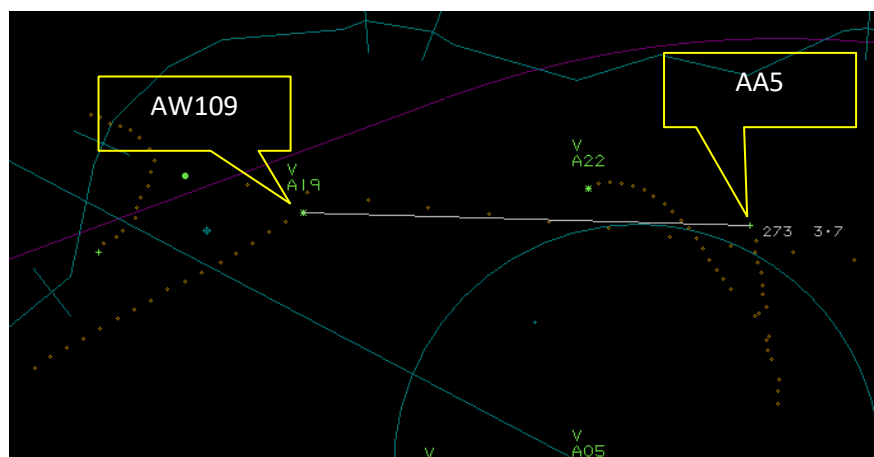


Figure 1: 1321:31

By 1322:18, the AA5 was in the AW109's 12 o'clock at a range of 1.5NM (Figure 2).

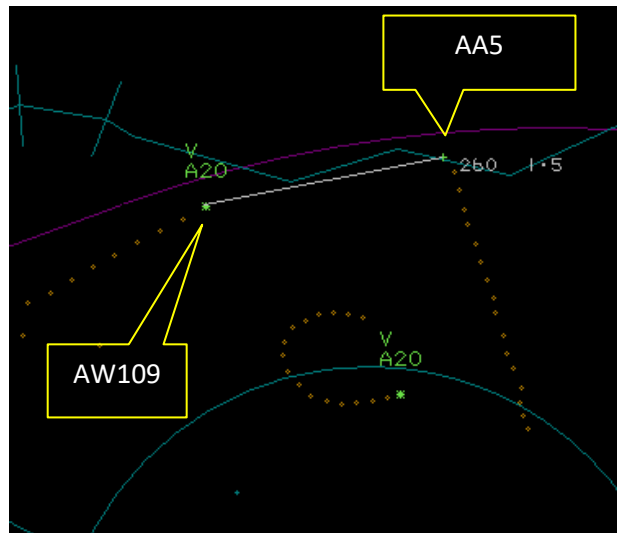


Figure 2 - 1322:18

Shortly afterwards, the AA5 had turned onto a westerly heading and was now tracking towards the AW109 (Figure 3).

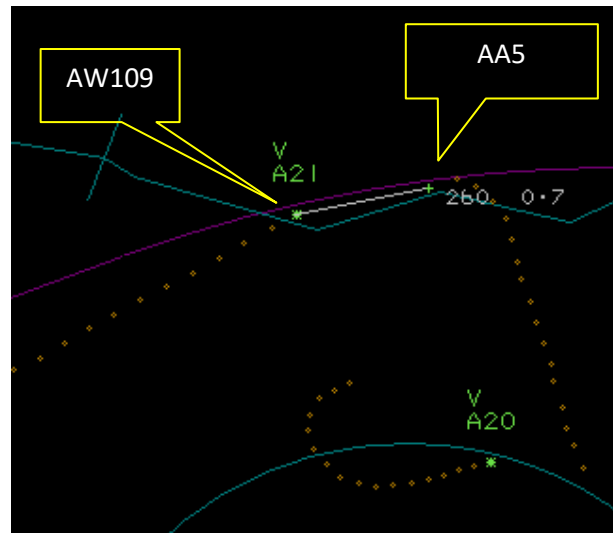


Figure 3 - 1322:30

CPA occurred at 1322:42 (Figure 4), when the radar contacts merged. The altitude of the AA5 was unknown, although the pilot reported being at 2000ft and at this point the AW109 was indicating 2100ft.

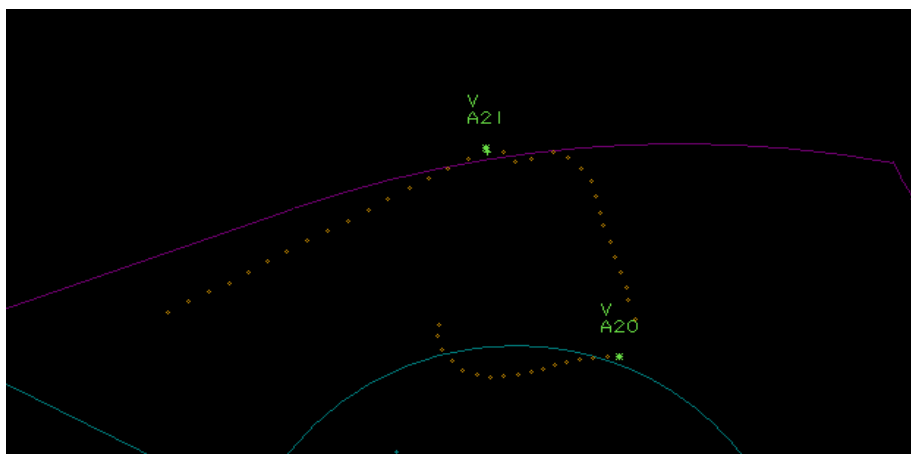


Figure 4 - 1322:43 CPA

The AW109 and AA5 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>1</sup> If the incident geometry is considered as head-on or nearly so then both pilots were required to turn to the right.<sup>2</sup>

## Summary

An Airprox was reported when an AW109 and an AA5 flew into proximity 3.5NM north of Elstree at 1323Z on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2026. The AW109 pilot was operating under VFR in VMC not in receipt of an ATS, and the AA5 pilot was operating under VFR in VMC in receipt of an AFIS from Elstree.

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

Information available consisted of reports from both pilots and radar photographs/video recordings. 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 discussed the actions of the AW109 pilot. They noted that the pilot had reported being familiar with the area, and those members also familiar with flying in this vicinity attested that it can be very busy with GA traffic and helicopters, and is constrained by controlled airspace above. Although members thought that the plan to call Stansted ATC for a Traffic Service had been sensible, members opined that the AW109 pilot could also have called Elstree as they had transited past (**CF1**); had they done so, they may have been given information about the AA5 which had been departing to the northwest. The AA5 had not been transponding, and so the Board agreed that the TAS on the AW109 could not have alerted to it (**CF4**) and so, without a TAS alert or any information from, for example, a controller, the AW109 pilot had not been aware of the AA5 in the vicinity (**CF3**). The AW109 pilot had reported being distracted by in-cockpit activities and that, when they had looked out, they had seen the AA5 taking avoiding action away from them. Members agreed that it had been too late for them to have taken any action to have increased separation, effectively making this a non-sighting by the AW109 pilot (**CF6**).

Turning to the actions of the AA5 pilot, members agreed that the helicopter that the AA5 pilot had described as being ahead of them had not been the Airprox AW109, and that, because the Elstree AFISO had not known about the AW109, no Traffic Information had been passed. Therefore, the AA5 pilot had not had any prior situational awareness that the AW109 had been in the vicinity (**CF3**). The AA5 pilot reported that they had only realised that their transponder had been left off after they had landed at the end of the sortie. Members noted that transponders were typically equipped with an indicator light showing they were operational, and that it was good practice to check for that light, either during take-off checks or shortly after becoming airborne (**CF2**). They also noted that, had the transponder been turned on, the TAS on the AW109 would likely have detected it, but that the AA5 had not been equipped with any additional form of EWS to alert the pilot to the presence of the AW109. The AA5 pilot reported seeing the AW109 and, as they had been on the right of a converging situation as they perceived it, had maintained course and speed; members thought that a wiser course of action may have been to have made an altitude adjustment to increase the vertical separation. That being said, members agreed that this had probably been a late sighting by the AA5 pilot (**CF5**) and that, once the pilot had seen that the AW109 had not altered course, they had taken avoiding action to increase the separation.

When determining the risk, members considered the reports from both pilots together with the radar replay screenshots. Members quickly agreed that, with a late sighting by the AA5 pilot and effectively a non-sighting by the AW109 pilot, safety had not been assured and that there had been a risk of collision (**CF7**). Whilst some members thought that the late avoiding action by the AA5 pilot had materially increased the separation (Risk Category B), others countered that the late nature of this action meant that separation had been reduced to the bare minimum and that providence had played a large factor

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<sup>1</sup> (UK) SERA.3205 Proximity.

<sup>2</sup> (UK) SERA.3210 Right-of-way (c)(1) Approaching head-on.

in the final separation (Risk Category A). The Chair put it to a vote and, by a very small majority, the Board agreed on Risk Category B.

## **PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS AND RISK**

### Contributory Factors:

	2026025			
CF	Factor	Description	ECCAIRS Amplification	UKAB Amplification
<b>Flight Elements</b>				
<b>• Tactical Planning and Execution</b>				
1	Human Factors	• Accuracy of Communication	Events involving flight crew using inaccurate communication - wrong or incomplete information provided	Ineffective communication of intentions
2	Human Factors	• Transponder Selection and Usage	An event involving the selection and usage of transponders	
<b>• Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft and Action</b>				
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
<b>• Electronic Warning System Operation and Compliance</b>				
4	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
<b>• See and Avoid</b>				
5	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
6	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
<b>• Outcome Events</b>				
7	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<sup>3</sup>

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 Conflicting Aircraft and Action** were assessed as **not used** because the Elstree AFISO would not have been aware of the AW109.

#### **Flight Elements:**

**Tactical Planning and Execution** was assessed as **partially effective** because the AW109 pilot could have called Elstree as they transited past. Additionally, the transponder on the AA5 had not been selected correctly, rendering it inoperative.

**Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft and Action** were assessed as **ineffective** because neither pilot had been aware of the presence of the other aircraft.

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

**Electronic Warning System Operation and Compliance** were assessed as **ineffective** because the TAS on the AW109 could not detect the non-transponding AA5.

**See and Avoid** were assessed as **partially effective** because, although the AW109 pilot had not seen the AA5 in time to take any avoiding action, the AA5 pilot had seen the AW109 late, and taken action to avoid it.

<b>Airprox Barrier Assessment: 2026025</b>		Outside Controlled Airspace						
<b>Barrier</b>		<b>Provision</b>	<b>Application</b>	<b>Effectiveness</b>				
				<b>Barrier Weighting</b>				
				0%	5%	10%	15%	20%
Ground Element	Regulations, Processes, Procedures and Compliance	✔	✔					
	Manning & Equipment	✔	✔					
	Situational Awareness of the Conflication & 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>		<u>Full</u>	<u>Partial</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>Not Present/Not Assessable</u>	<u>Not Used</u>		
Provision	✔	⚠	✘	●				
Application	✔	⚠	✘	●	○			
Effectiveness								