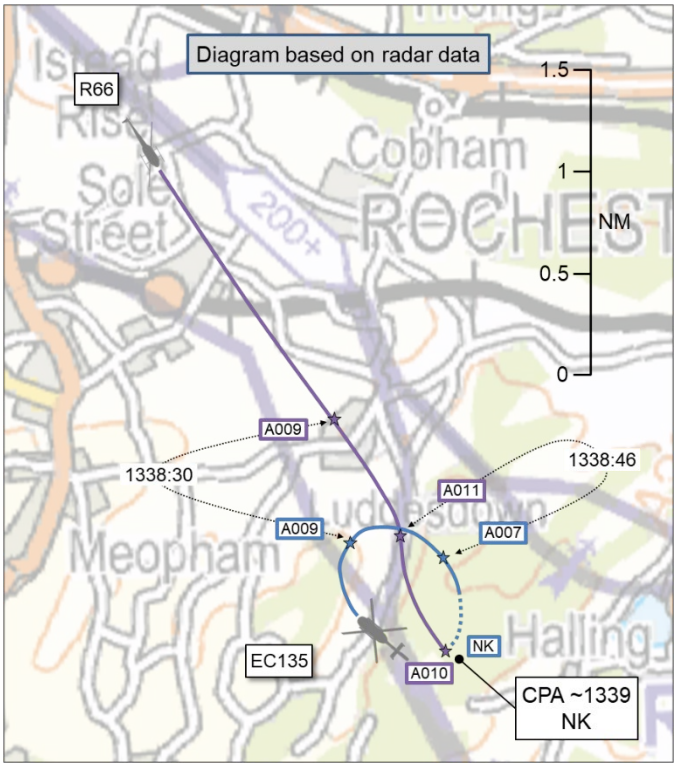
AIRPROX REPORT No 2026040

Date: 11 Apr 2026 Time: ~1339Z Position: 5121N 00025E Location: 3.5NM W Rochester Airport

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	EC135	R66
Operator	NPAS	Civ Helo
Airspace	London FIR	London FIR
Class	G	G
Rules	VFR	VFR
Service	AFIS	Basic
Provider	Rochester Info.	F'borough LARS E
Altitude/FL	NK	1000ft
Transponder	A, C, S	A, C, S+
Reported		
Colours	Blue, yellow	Blue
Lighting	Position, HISL, landing	Nav, strobe
Conditions	VMC	VMC
Visibility	>10km	NR
Altitude/FL	1100ft	1200ft
Altimeter	QNH (1007hPa)	QNH
Heading	360°	150°
Speed	124kt	90kt
ACAS/TAS	TCAS I	TAS
Alert	TA	None
	Separation at CPA	
Reported	25ft V/20m H	500ft V/0.3NM H
Recorded	NK	



THE EC135 PILOT reports that they were on-task 4NM west of Rochester Airport, talking to Rochester Information and orbiting at 1100ft on QNH 1007hPa. A TCAS contact was noticed on the TCAS screen, followed by an audio alert. Seeing on the screen that the other aircraft was at their level and exact location, they decided to quickly descend (it would be easier to spot the other aircraft against sky, rather than the ground). They completed one full orbit before spotting the aircraft straight ahead, [reported at a range of less than 50m and 200ft above], and moving left-to-right [they recall] across the nose of their aircraft. Had they not taken the avoiding action, the minimum separation according to ADS-B Exchange would have been 25ft. They believe this would very likely have resulted in a collision. They informed Rochester Information and asked if they had an R44 on frequency [although, subsequently, realised that it had actually been an R66]. [The Rochester AFISO] said that they did not. They reported the Airprox and stated that the 'R44' was near the airfield but [its pilot was] not talking to them. The task was completed and they returned to [their destination].

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

THE R66 PILOT reports that ATC had informed them of another aircraft to be aware of. They vaguely recall seeing the aircraft [initially sighted at a reported distance of 500ft, 010° relative], and did not feel [that there was] any risk of collision and continued on their way.

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

THE ROCHESTER AFISO reports that, at 1323, [the pilot of the EC135] was on frequency routeing from [airfield] to Strood, just north of Rochester. At 1331, [the pilot of the EC135] was on-task westbound.

At 1338, [the pilot of the EC135 asked]: "*Do you have a 44 on frequency? Near miss approx 1000ft or less*".

'Tower' replied: "*Our R44 is on the heli route*".

[The pilot of the EC135 replied] "*This one is travelling west-to-east*".

At 1341, [the pilot of the EC135 transferred] to [an en-route frequency]. [The Rochester AFISO] opened up the ADS-B Exchange website, and [the R66] had crossed through the path of [the EC135]. Rochester Information had had no calls from that helicopter pilot.

The AFISO perceived the severity of the incident as 'High'.

THE FARNBOROUGH CONTROLLER reports that they have been informed that an Airprox was filed involving [the EC135] and [R66]. They were working LARS North and East at the time and have no recollection of this event.

Factual Background

The weather at Biggin Hill Airport was recorded as follows:

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METAR EGKB 111320Z 25013G23KT 220V280 9999 FEW048 12/M02 Q1007
METAR EGKB 111350Z 24016G26KT 220V280 CAVOK 12/M03 Q1007
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Analysis and Investigation

Farnborough Unit investigation

The RT and radar replays have been replayed, the EFPS recording has been viewed. LARS North and East were operating as a bandboxed function.

At 1320:19, [the pilot of the R66] called on frequency with Farnborough LARS West, which was coupled with Approach and Zone. They reported their flightplan details and requested a Basic Service. [The pilot] was asked to standby whilst the LARS West controller dealt with Farnborough traffic. [The pilot] was given a Basic Service, the QNH 1006hPa, instructed to squawk 0430 and instructed to report their squawk to LARS North on 132.800MHz.

[The pilot of the R66] contacted LARS North at 1321:24 and they were given the London QNH, a Basic Service and were instructed to Squawk 5024. This was read back correctly and their level checked.

[The R66] could be seen on radar, eastbound, tracking approximately 1NM north of the Heathrow CTR [sic]. [The pilot of the R66] tracked beneath the London City Airport CTA as they turned southbound.

At 1331, the LARS North controller asked [the pilot of the R66] what their next turning point was, to which the reply was that they were routeing in a straight line from their position to [an airport on the continent].

At 1331:45, they were transferred to LARS East on 123.225MHz.

At 1332:07, [the pilot of the R66] checked in on the LARS East frequency. They were given a Basic Service, a squawk of 1734 and checked the QNH 1006hPa.

At 1332:40, a handover of controllers for LARS North and East took place ([the pilot of the R66] was handed over) and was completed at 1333:28. [The R66] was fractionally south of Damyns Hall. The vector line was added to [the R66] on the [radar display].

The next transmission by the LARS North and East ATCO was to [the pilot of the R66] as they reached approximately 6NM NW of Rochester Airport. They were tracking southwest-bound [UKAB Secretariat note: the R66 pilot had tracked southeast-bound] on a track to route to the west of the Rochester ATZ. LARS North and East had only one other pilot on frequency which was in the northern sector.

An aircraft could be seen on a [UK Police aircraft] squawk operating in the 12 o'clock of [the R66] indicating A010 and climbing (from Mode C). [The R66] was indicating A009 on Mode C. The vector line was still on the [radar display].

Traffic Information was passed:

1338:04 LARS E controller: "[R66 c/s] *caution, there's traffic just ahead of you manoeuvring indicating same altitude*".

1338:09 [R66 pilot]: "*Looking out* [R66 c/s], *affirm, I see a fixed wing left-to-right, thank you*".

The [UK Police] aircraft, [the EC135], squawking 0045, was not on the LARS E frequency and was in the 12 o'clock at approximately 1NM.

1338:19 [R66 pilot]: "*Negative, rotary, turning towards me now*".

1338:19 LARS E controller: "*Roger*".

1338:28 [The EC135] faded from radar cover.

1338:38 [R66 pilot]: "*Sorry, I think it's a police helicopter actually*".

1338:40 LARS E controller: "*Roger*".

A few trail dots could be seen in the vicinity of [the R66] but no solid returns were indicating in the area of [the EC135].

1338:42 [R66 pilot]: "*He's just turned, right in front of me*".

1338:43 [The R66] could be seen to climb 200ft.

1338:57 [R66 pilot]: "*Thanks so much for the warning, ah he's behind me now, I believe*".

1339:01 LARS E controller: "*Roger*".

1339:56 [R66 pilot]: "*Thank you so much that was very helpful*".

1339:58 LARS E controller: "*You're welcome*".

1340:02 [R66 pilot]: "*That's unusual, umm his transponder's off, or he's, I couldn't see him*".

1340:08 LARS E controller: "*Ahh OK*".

1340:11 [R66 pilot]: "*I couldn't see him on any of my screens or anything, bit strange*".

1340:14 [R66 pilot]: "*Him or her actually*".

1343:35 [The pilot of the R66] was transferred en-route, squawking conspicuity, and the suggested frequency was London Information 124.600MHz. That was read back correctly. The [EC135] was not seen to paint on radar again during that time.

CAA ATSI

The Rochester AFISO would not have been aware of the presence of the R66 and so no Traffic Information was passed. The Farnborough controller passed Traffic Information to pilot of the R66 who reported visual.

UKAB Secretariat

An analysis of the NATS radar replay was undertaken and both aircraft could be positively identified from Mode S data (Figure 1). The R66, but not the EC135, was observed by refence to ADS-B data sources.

The EC135 faded from the radar replay after 1338:46

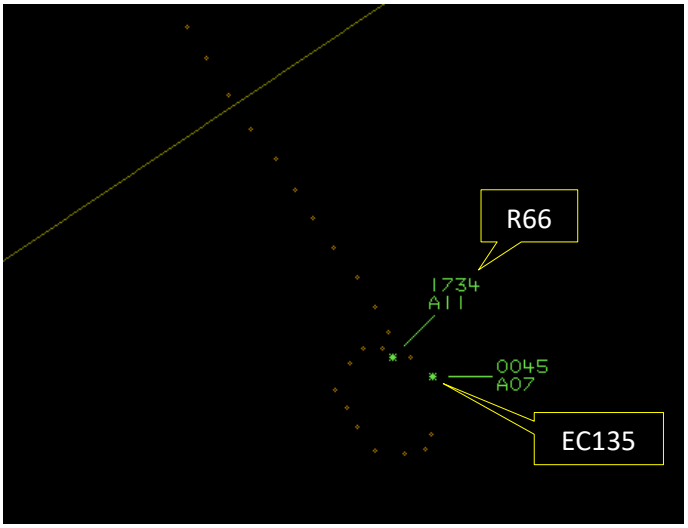


Figure 1 - Aircraft positions at 1338:46

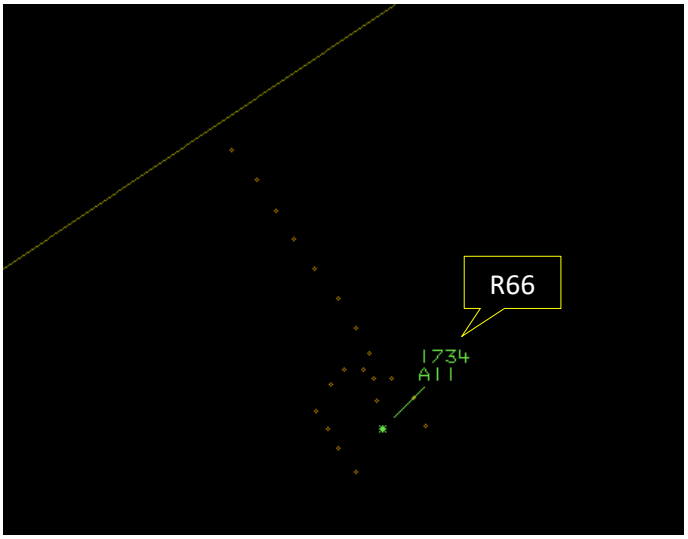


Figure 2 - CPA at approximately 1339

The diagram was constructed from the radar data. The track of the EC135 has been shown as a partial dotted line showing its most probable track. The exact moment of CPA could not be determined and has been shown as an approximate time. The separation at CPA could not be determined.

The EC135 and R66 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]

Summary

An Airprox was reported when an EC135 and an R66 flew into proximity 3.5NM west of Rochester Airport at approximately 1339Z on Saturday 11th April 2026. The EC135 pilot was operating under VFR in VMC in receipt of an AFIS from Rochester Information. The R66 pilot was operating under VFR in VMC in receipt of a Basic Service from Farnborough LARS East.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available consisted of reports from both pilots, reports from the AFISO and controller involved, radar photographs/video recordings 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 EC135. Noting the location of their tasking, members pondered their selection of radio frequency and FIS. It was agreed that, at such a low altitude, a Traffic Service from the Farnborough controller would not have been available to them and that an AFIS from Rochester Information may have been the most reasonable selection of service in the circumstances. Notwithstanding, some members suggested that, if possible, a second radio could have been tuned to the Farnborough LARS East frequency to bolster their situational awareness. Nevertheless, members agreed that the TCAS equipment fitted to the EC135 had provided an alert to the presence of the R66 (**CF2**) and that it had prompted the pilot to take action. Noting that the R66 had not been sighted at that stage, members agreed that it had been a prudent decision to have descended to assist with its visual acquisition and to generate a degree of vertical separation. It was agreed that the R66 had subsequently passed in front (and above) the EC135, and had been visually acquired by the EC135 pilot too late for them to have taken further avoiding action if it had been necessary. Therefore, it was agreed that, effectively, it had been a non-sighting (**CF4**).

Turning to the actions of the pilot of the R66, members recalled their thoughts on the most appropriate FIS available at that location and altitude. It was agreed that, on balance, a Basic Service from the Farnborough LARS controller may have been the most reasonable option available to them. Nevertheless, some members suggested that it may have been beneficial to have tuned a second radio to the Rochester Information frequency given that they had tracked abeam the Rochester ATZ by a couple of miles.

It was agreed by members that the EC device fitted to the R66 would not have been expected to have detected the presence of the EC135 (**CF1**). However, members noted that the R66 pilot had received Traffic Information from the Farnborough controller pertaining to the EC135 and had subsequently acquired it visually. Members pondered the timing and geometry of the encounter and concluded that the R66 pilot had, perhaps, sighted the EC135 a little later than had been comfortable but it had been in time to have taken avoiding action by altering their track to the right. Noting that the R66 pilot appeared to have been surprised that the EC135 had subsequently turned 'in front of them', it was agreed by members that the R66 pilot had not perceived that the EC135 had been in an orbit at that location and, perhaps, had only had time to have assessed that it had simply crossed their path from right-to-left. Members agreed that, essentially, they had flown into conflict with the EC135 as they had not assimilated the orbit and, therefore, had not given it a sufficiently wide berth (**CF3**).

Members next turned their attention to the actions of the Farnborough LARS East controller. Noting that they had provided a Basic Service to the pilot of the R66, members commended their awareness of the Police-aircraft squawk on their radar display and the passage of Traffic Information. Members noted that it had been somewhat fortuitous that the information had been passed seconds before the EC135 had subsequently disappeared from the radar display.

[1] (UK) SERA.3205 Proximity.

Members considered the involvement of the Rochester AFISO, and it was agreed that they had not had situational awareness of the R66 and that there had, therefore, been little that they could have done to have assisted matters.

Concluding their discussion, members summarised their thoughts. It was agreed that, despite there not having been a common frequency in use by the pilots, both had gleaned situational awareness of the presence of the other aircraft in time to have taken action. It was agreed that the EC135 pilot had reacted to a TCAS alert and had taken a precautionary measure by initiating a descent. However, they had not sighted the R66 in time to have reacted further to its proximity. The R66 pilot had gleaned situational awareness of the EC135 and had manoeuvred to the right to increase the separation. However, they had not appreciated that the EC135 pilot had been conducting an orbit and had not afforded them a wider berth. Although an exact measurement of the separation at CPA could not be determined, members concluded that providence had played a part in events and that the safety of the aircraft had not been assured. The Board consequently agreed that there had been a risk of collision (**CF5**) and assigned Risk Category B to this event.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS AND RISK

Contributory Factors:

	2026040			
CF	**Factor**	**Description**	**ECCAIRS Amplification**	**UKAB Amplification**
	Flight Elements			
	• Electronic Warning System Operation and Compliance			
1	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
2	Contextual	• ACAS/TCAS TA	An event involving a genuine airborne collision avoidance system/traffic alert and collision avoidance system traffic advisory warning triggered	
	• See and Avoid			
3	Contextual	• Loss of Separation	An event involving a loss of separation between aircraft	Pilot flew into conflict
4	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
	• Outcome Events			
5	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.

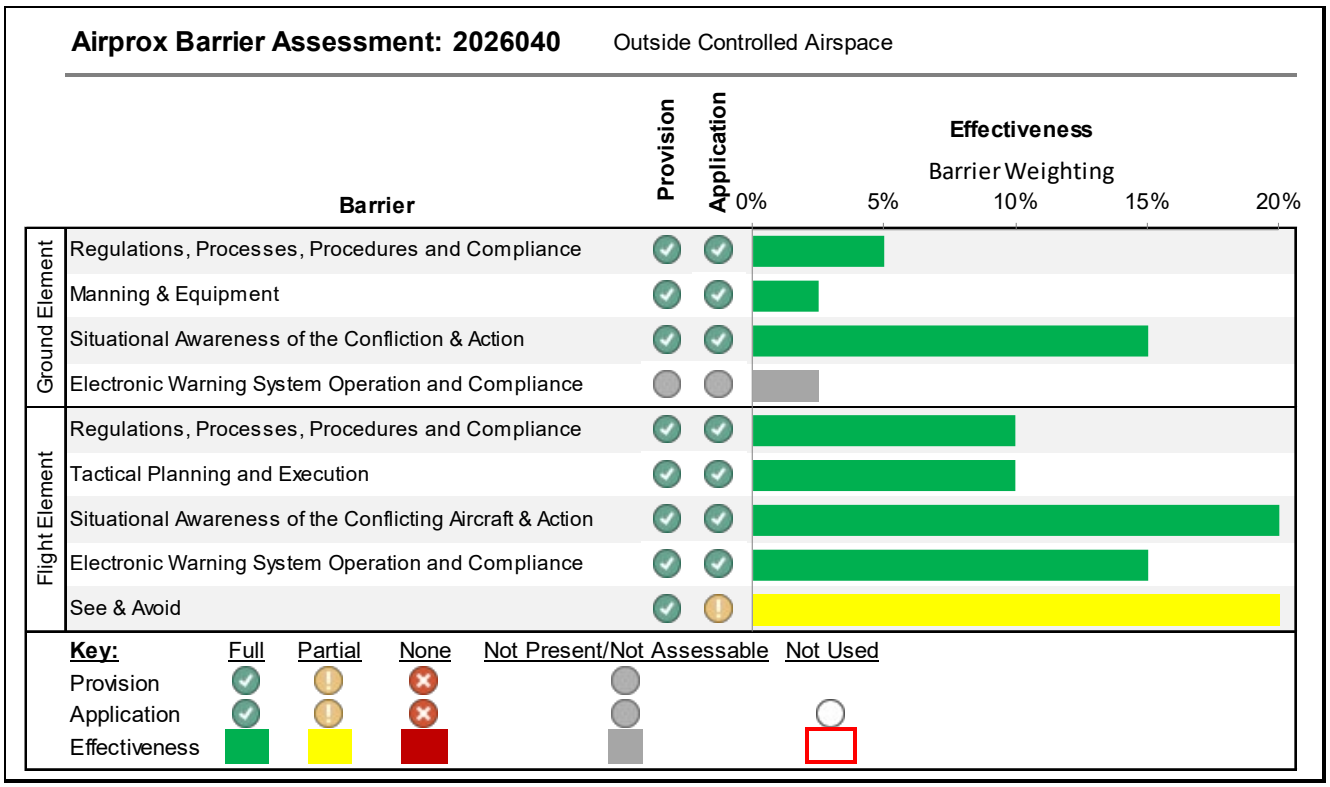
Safety Barrier Assessment[2]

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

Flight Elements:

See and Avoid were assessed as **partially effective** because the pilot of the EC135 had not visually acquired the R66 until the moment of CPA. The pilot of the R66 had visually acquired the EC135 in time to have taken avoiding action, but had subsequently flown into conflict with it.

[2] 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: 2026040
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
Key:
Full
Partial
None
Not Present/Not Assessable
Not Used
Provision
Application
Effectiveness