

AIRPROX REPORT No 2026046

Date: 18 Apr 2026 Time: 1334Z Position: 5202N 00005W Location: 2NM SW of Royston

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	PA28	Commander
Operator	Civ FW	Civ FW
Airspace	London FIR	London FIR
Class	G	G
Rules	VFR	VFR
Service	Basic	Establishing contact
Provider	Luton App	Farnborough Rdr
Altitude/FL	2040ft	2165ft
Transponder	A, C, S	A, C, S+
Reported		
Colours	White/blue/silver	White/blue/red
Lighting	Nav	Strbs, ldg, taxi
Conditions	VMC	VMC
Visibility	>10km	>10km
Altitude/FL	2000ft	2200ft
Altimeter	QNH (1021hPa)	QNH (1022hPa)
Heading	250°	170°
Speed	100kt	140kt
ACAS/TAS	SkyEcho	TAS & PilotAware
Alert	None	Information
Separation at CPA		
Reported	150ft V/0m H	250ft V/500m H
Recorded	125ft V/0.1NM H	



THE PA28 PILOT reports that they were flying with 2 other PPLs, one in the P2 seat, one in the back, as passengers. The other aircraft was first spotted by the P2 seat passenger then the back seat passenger. The PIC immediately located the aircraft and descended straight away by approximately 200ft. They further reported that they would usually get a visual alert on their navigation display, but the other aircraft had not displayed. They first saw the other aircraft at 2NM heading about 170°.

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

THE COMMANDER PILOT reports that they were settled in the cruise. As they approached LOREL,¹ they called Farnborough and asked for a Basic Service, and they came back with a squawk and warned them of traffic in their 11 o'clock, similar altitude and heading. The [electronic conspicuity device] and TAS followed that [Traffic Information] with their visual and audible warnings. They then saw the aircraft about 1NM ahead and ½NM left of their track, 200ft below. As they got closer to LOREL the other aircraft appeared to turn half right. As it was still well ahead and below they continued on their heading and passed behind and above. Shortly after, they passed the other aircraft when it was in their 3 o'clock. They were visual the whole time.

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

THE LUTON CONTROLLER reports that they were on position INT (Intermediate Approach) providing a Basic Service to [the pilot of the PA28]. Unknown to them, the pilot came into proximity [with a Commander] which was in communication with Farnborough LARS at the time. The pilot subsequently filed an Airprox report.

¹ LOREL is an Airways Reporting Point to the southwest of Royston.

THE FARNBOROUGH LARS CONTROLLER reports that they were working LARS North and East, but had no recollection of the event.

Factual Background

The weather at Luton and Stansted Airports was recorded as follows:

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METAR EGGW 181320Z AUTO 29012KT 220V310 9999 FEW046 16/03 Q1021  
METAR EGSS 181320Z AUTO 29008KT 260V330 9999 BKN044 14/04 Q1021
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Analysis and Investigation

NATS Safety Investigations

Summary

[The pilot of the PA28], under a Basic Service from the Luton INT controller, came into proximity with [a Commander aircraft] whose pilot was in the process of contacting Farnborough LARS North. The pilot of [the PA28] subsequently filed an Airprox report relating to the event.

Description and Investigation

Information available to the investigation included:

A report from the Luton INT controller, a report from the Farnborough LARS North controller, the UK Airprox Board Notification 2026046, the [redacted] pilot's report from [the PA28] and CAP774, UK Flight Information Services.

The UK Airprox Board notified Safety Investigations of a reported Airprox between [a PA28] and [a Commander] outside controlled airspace in the vicinity of position LOREL.

The pilot of [the PA28], from [departure] to [destination], called onto the Luton Intermediate Approach (Luton INT) frequency at 1329:55 (all times UTC) and requested a Basic Service and Zone transit from north to south. The pilot was instructed to squawk 4672 and a Basic Service was agreed.

The pilot of the Commander called onto the Farnborough LARS North frequency at 1332:57. The pilot reported their position, but no radar service was requested by the pilot. The LARS controller instructed the pilot to squawk 5021 and issued a Basic Service (Figure 1).

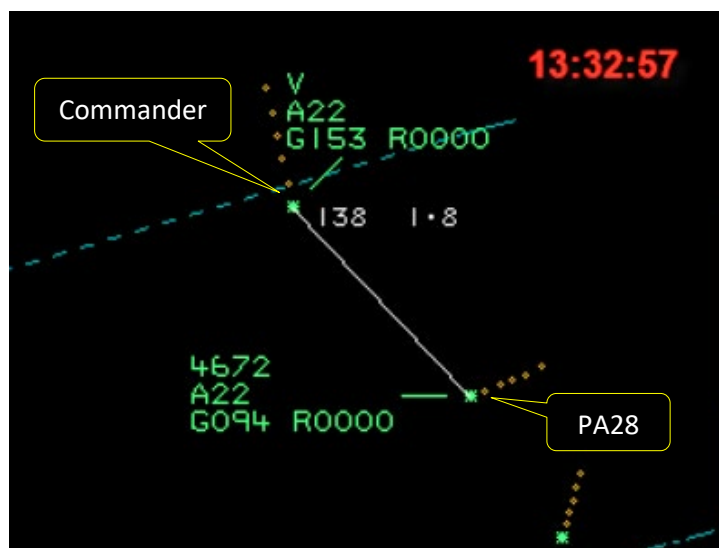


Figure 1

The closest point of approach between [the PA28] (4672) and [the Commander] (V) occurred at 1333:35 and was measured on the NODE Multi-Track Radar as 0.1NM and 0ft (Figure 2).

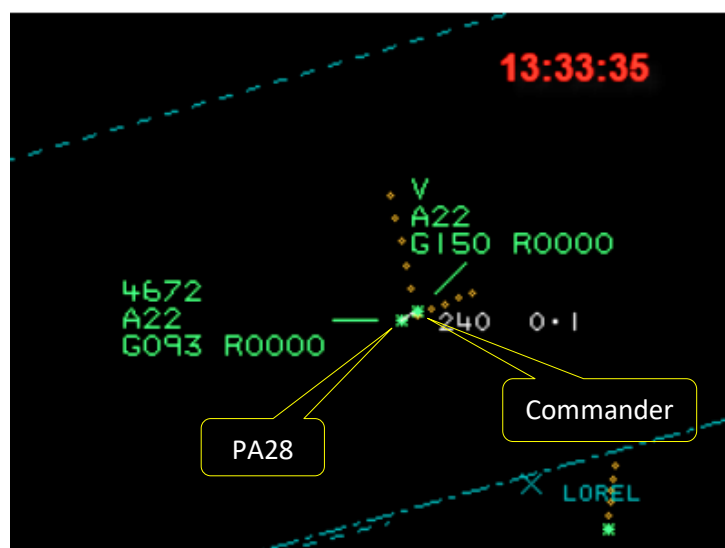


Figure 2 – CPA

[The Commander pilot] changed squawk to 5021 at 1333:39, after the closest point of approach between the two aircraft. Neither pilot reported the confliction on their respective frequencies, and therefore neither controller was aware of the Airprox until notified by the UK Airprox Board.

CAP774, 2.1 stated:

Basic Service relies on the pilot avoiding other traffic, unaided by controllers/ FISOs. It is essential that a pilot receiving this ATS remains alert to the fact that, unlike a Traffic Service and a Deconfliction Service, the provider of a Basic Service is not required to monitor the flight.

CAP774 Chapter 2, 2.7 further stated,

'A controller with access to surveillance-derived information shall avoid the routine provision of traffic information on specific aircraft but may use that information to provide a more detailed warning to the pilot. If a controller/ FISO considers that a definite risk of collision exists, a warning shall be issued to the pilot ((UK) SERA.9005(b)(2) and GM1 (UK) SERA.9005(b)(2)). Whether traffic information has been provided or not, the pilot remains responsible for collision avoidance without assistance from the controller.'

The radar replay indicated that no descent was made by the pilot of [the PA28] until after the closest point of approach, however, the aircraft descended to 1900ft after the aircraft had passed. At the time of writing this investigation report, no pilot information had been received from the pilot of [the Commander].

Conclusions and Assessment

The Airprox occurred when [a PA28] and [a Commander] flew into proximity outside controlled airspace. The pilot of [the PA28] was in receipt of a Basic Service from Luton INT, whilst [the pilot of the Commander] was in the process of obtaining a service from Farnborough LARS North.

The Closest Point of Approach occurred at 1333:35 and was recorded on Multi-Track Radar as 0.1NM and 0ft. There were no separation requirements.

The incident was resolved by the pilot of [the PA28] sighting [the Commander] at a range of 2NM and initiating a descent. [The Commander] passed behind [the PA28].

CAA ATSI

ATSI has reviewed the NATS report and has nothing further to add.

UKAB Secretariat

An analysis of the NATS radar replay was undertaken and both aircraft were positively identified using Mode S data. At 1333:34 the Commander was displaying a VFR squawk, 100ft above and with 0.2NM lateral separation from the PA28 (Figure 3).

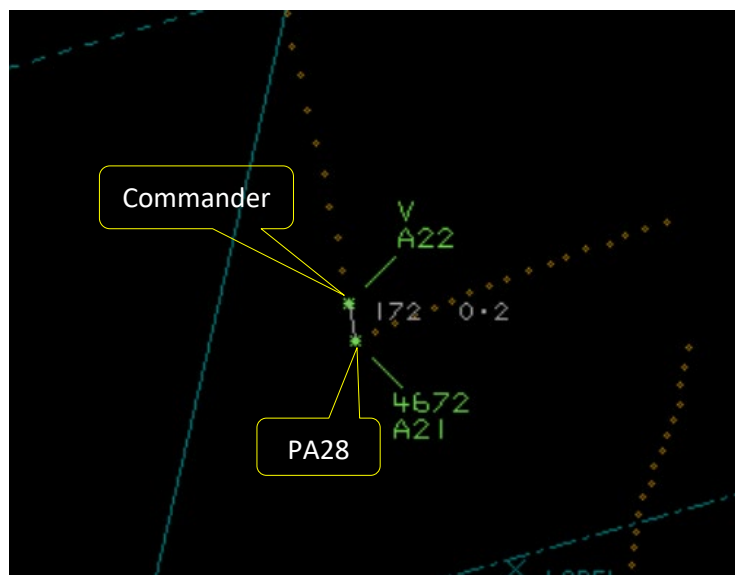


Figure 3 - Time 1333:34

At 1333:38 the Commander displayed a 5021, Farnborough LARS, squawk and the PA28 had descended further (Figure 4).

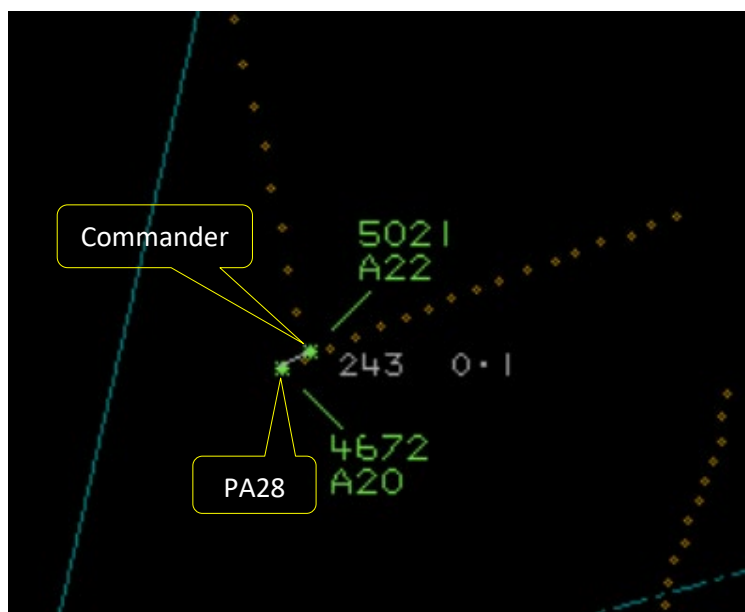


Figure 4 – CPA 1333:38

Further analysis of aircraft tracking data was undertaken and both aircraft were positively identified using ADS-B data sources. Both pilots provided their GPS navigation track and altitude data for the corresponding flights and CPA was assessed to have occurred as the Commander passed behind the PA28 at 1333.38 with 0.1NM lateral and 125ft vertical separation.

The PA28 and Commander pilots shared an equal responsibility for collision avoidance and not to operate in such proximity to other aircraft as to create a collision hazard.² If the incident geometry is considered as converging then the PA28 pilot was required to give way to the Commander.³

Summary

An Airprox was reported when a PA28 and a Commander flew into proximity 2NM southwest of Royston at 1334Z on Saturday 18th April 2026. Both pilots were operating under VFR in VMC, the PA28 pilot in receipt of a Basic Service from Luton Approach, and the Commander pilot establishing a Basic Service with Farnborough LARS North.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available consisted of reports from both pilots, radar photographs/video recordings, GPS track data for the flights of both the PA28 and the Commander, reports from the air traffic controllers 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 PA28 pilot, and noted that they had requested a Basic Service on contacting Luton Radar. Members agreed the pilot may have been better served had they requested a Traffic Service (**CF3**) as this may have provided the PA28 pilot with improved situational awareness by virtue of receiving Traffic Information on the conflicting Commander. Furthermore, members noted that the electronic conspicuity device carried in the PA28 had been able to detect the presence of the Commander, but thought it unfortunate that no alert had been provided (**CF7**). With no information from the controller or their on-board EC equipment, the Board agreed that the PA28 pilot had, therefore, had no situational awareness of the Commander until their passengers had first seen it from their viewpoint (**CF6**). The Board further agreed that the PA28 pilot sighting the Commander with no prior warning as to its presence may have generated a degree of concern (**CF10**), noting that the PA28 pilot had then descended to avoid the Commander.

The Board then considered the actions of the Commander pilot, noting that the pilot had not requested any particular type of service on contacting Farnborough Radar, but had been provided a Basic Service by the controller. Members discussed whether the pilot had received Traffic Information from the Farnborough controller, and concluded that the Commander pilot recalled having been passed Traffic Information on a different contact, but that information had not been regarding the approaching PA28 and had likely been after the Airprox event. Notwithstanding, members agreed that it may have been prudent for the Commander pilot to have requested a surveillance-based service on first contact with Farnborough, to aid the pilot's situational awareness with early Traffic Information from the controller (**CF3**). Members discussed the limitations of a Basic Service, and considered this a timely opportunity to remind pilots that if a controller is unable to provide a Traffic Service when requested, then this can be reported by completing a Form FCS 1522.⁴ Only by reporting these instances will sufficient data be gathered to drive improvements in the provision of Air Traffic Services. Returning to the Airprox itself, members acknowledged that the Commander pilot had received information on the PA28 from their onboard TAS and had stated that they '*were visual the whole time*'. The Board noted that, although the pilot had seen the PA28 and had maintained course and speed as required by (UK)SERA, they could have adjusted their altitude to provide greater separation (**CF4**). By continuing their flightpath, members felt that the Commander pilot may not have appreciated how close they would pass behind the PA28 and had therefore caused the PA28 pilot some concern (**CF5**, **CF9**). The Board also noted that the Commander's transponder code had changed at or around the point of CPA, and members agreed that the pilot's lookout had probably been slightly compromised by undertaking this action (**CF8**).

The Board then turned their attention to the actions of the Luton controller, and noted that they had not been required to monitor the PA28 under the terms of a Basic Service (**CF1**). Furthermore, because

² (UK) SERA.3205 Proximity.

³ (UK) SERA.3210 Right-of-way (c)(2) Converging.

⁴ [Clued Up GA Update: AIRSPACE REFUSAL](#) and [FCS 1522 - UK Airspace Access or Refusal of ATS Report](#)

both the PA28 and Commander squawks had been outside the select frame of the STCA (**CF2**), there had been no STCA alert to draw the controller's attention to the potential conflict. The Board agreed that there had been little that the Luton controller could have done to assist matters.

Finally, considering the actions of the Farnborough controller, the Board agreed that the Commander pilot had been placed under a Basic Service by the controller at or around CPA and that, therefore, the controller had not been required to monitor the flight of the Commander (**CF1**). The Board agreed that there was little that the Farnborough controller could have done to influence the outcome.

In concluding their discussions and determining the risk category, some Board members felt safety had been much reduced and, therefore, not assured (Risk Category B), while others considered that safety had been degraded, but there had been no risk of collision (Risk Category C). The Board was assessing the potential urgency with which the PA28 pilot's avoiding action had been made against the degree of awareness of each pilot at the point of CPA. The decision was put to the vote and the Board was equally split between Risk Category B and Risk Category C. Therefore, the Chair had the casting vote, determining that safety had been degraded with no risk of collision due to the timely actions taken by the PA28 pilot, and assigned Risk Category C to this Airprox.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS AND RISK

Contributory Factors:

	2026046			
CF	Factor	Description	ECCAIRS Amplification	UKAB Amplification
	Ground Elements			
	• Situational Awareness and Action			
1	Contextual	• ANS Flight Information Provision	Provision of ANS flight information	The ATCO/FISO was not required to monitor the flight under a Basic Service
	• Electronic Warning System Operation and Compliance			
2	Technical	• Conflict Alert System Failure	Conflict Alert System did not function as expected	The Conflict Alert system did not function or was not utilised in this situation
	Flight Elements			
	• Tactical Planning and Execution			
3	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
4	Human Factors	• Insufficient Decision/Plan	Events involving flight crew not making a sufficiently detailed decision or plan to meet the needs of the situation	Inadequate plan adaption
	• Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft and Action			
5	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
6	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			
7	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			
8	Human Factors	• Distraction - Job Related	Events where flight crew are distracted for job related reasons	
9	Human Factors	• Lack of Individual Risk Perception	Events involving flight crew not fully appreciating the risk of a particular course of action	Pilot flew close enough to cause concern
10	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 Assessment⁵

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

Ground Elements:

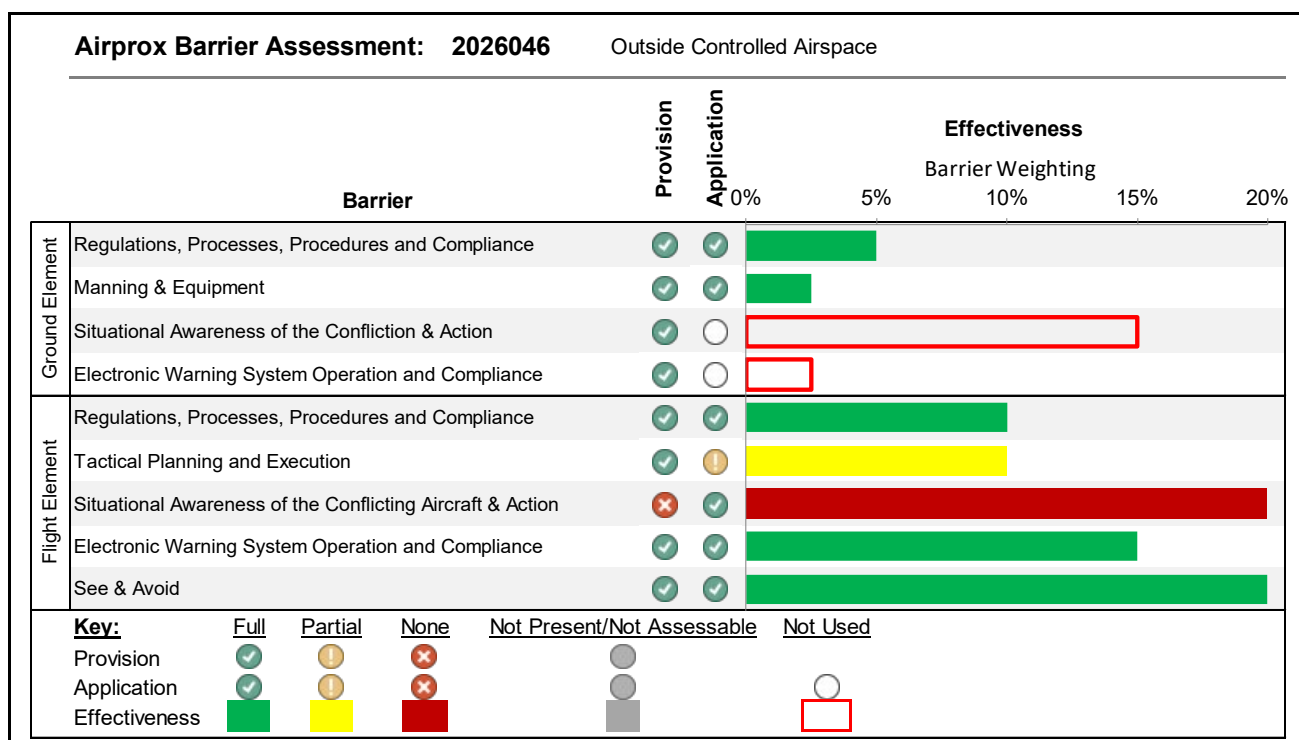
Situational Awareness of the Confliction and Action were assessed as **not used** because neither the Luton nor the Farnborough controllers were required to monitor the flight of the PA28 or Commander under the terms of a Basic Service.

Electronic Warning System Operation and Compliance were assessed as **not used** because the aircraft squawks were outside the select frame of the Luton STCA .

Flight Elements:

Tactical Planning and Execution was assessed as **partially effective** because both the pilots of the PA28 and the Commander could have requested a Traffic Service from their respective service providers.

Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft and Action were assessed as **ineffective** because the PA28 pilot had no situational awareness of the presence of the Commander, and the pilot of the Commander, having received indications of the presence of the PA28 on their EC device, flew close enough to the PA28 to cause concern.



⁵ The UK Airprox Board scheme for assessing the Availability, Functionality and Effectiveness of safety barriers can be found on the [UKAB Website](#).