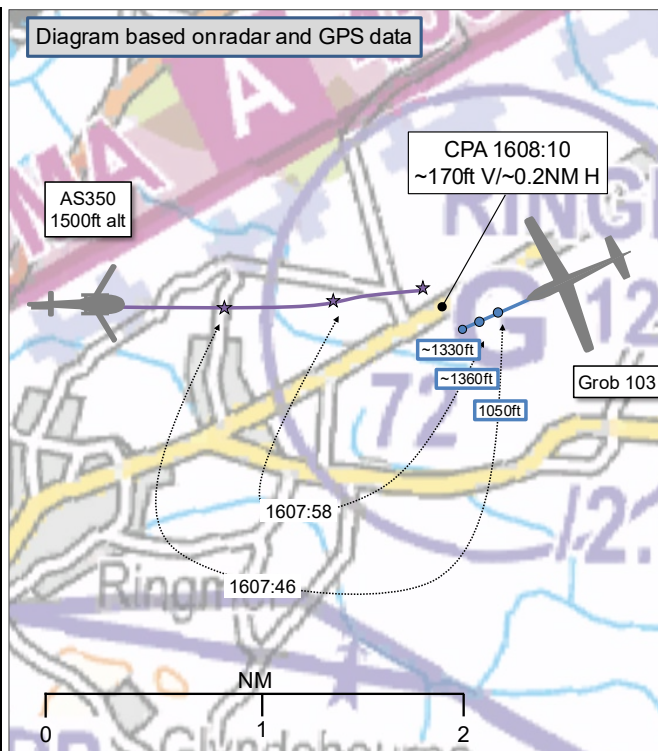


AIRPROX REPORT No 2026092

Date: 31 May 2026 Time: 1608Z Position: 5054N 00006E Location: Ringmer

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	Grob 103	AS350
Operator	Civ Gld	Civ Helo
Airspace	London FIR	London FIR
Class	G	G
Rules	VFR	VFR
Service	Listening Out	Changing Frequency
Provider	Ringmer	Lydd
Altitude/FL	~1330ft	1500ft
Transponder	Not fitted	A, C, S
ADS-B	Not Observed	Not Observed
Reported		
Colours	White	Grey
Lighting	Nil	Nav
Conditions	VMC	VMC
Visibility	>10km	>10km
Altitude/FL	1250ft	1500ft
Altimeter	QFE	QNH
Heading	240°	NR
Speed	50kt	100kt
ACAS/TAS	FLARM	Not fitted
Alert	Unknown	N/A
Separation at CPA		
Reported	0ftV/300m H	Not Seen
Recorded	~170ft V/~0.2NMH	



THE GROB 103 PILOT reports that they were PIC instructing a student in [the Grob 103] on winch launch. The student had just completed a pitch down to level flight to release the winch cable, at approximately 1250ft QFE, when the PIC noticed a helicopter co-altitude in the 3 o'clock position emerging from where it had been hidden by the glider wing, heading in the opposite direction to the glider. The helicopter was judged to be about 300m away (2 thermal diameters). While the risk of collision at the point of sighting was low, because the aircraft were on opposing headings and departed horizontally, until that point the glider crew had no indication of an aircraft approaching the launch site at winch launching height and, due to the angle of climb on ascent, the helicopter was hidden 'underneath' the glider. The PIC had not spotted the helicopter during a visual search ahead just prior to launch, nor had the ground launch crew spotted the helicopter during their pre-launch observation. A call had been made by the ground crew, on the Ringmer gliding frequency, just prior to launch of 'Ringmer traffic winch launch in progress'.

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

THE AS350 PILOT reports that they did not see the airfield on the 'standard ICAO chart'.

LYDD ATC reports that the AS350 did not call on frequency until 10min after the Airprox occurred and there was no mention of an Airprox on frequency.

Factual Background

The weather at Shoreham was recorded as follows:

METAR EGKA 311550Z 24016KT 9999 FEW049 20/15 Q1017=

Analysis and Investigation

UKAB Secretariat

The NATS radar replay was reviewed and the AS350 was identified through Mode S data, the Grob 103 could not be detected. Further analysis of ADS-B data sources could detect the AS350 using MLAT only, and the Grob 103 using FLARM data.

At Figure 1, the AS350 can be seen in proximity to Ringmer gliding site, indicating 1500ft (radar QNH 1016hPa). The Grob 103 could not be seen on the radar, but the pilot provided their GPS track and the diagram at the top of the report was compiled using this data.

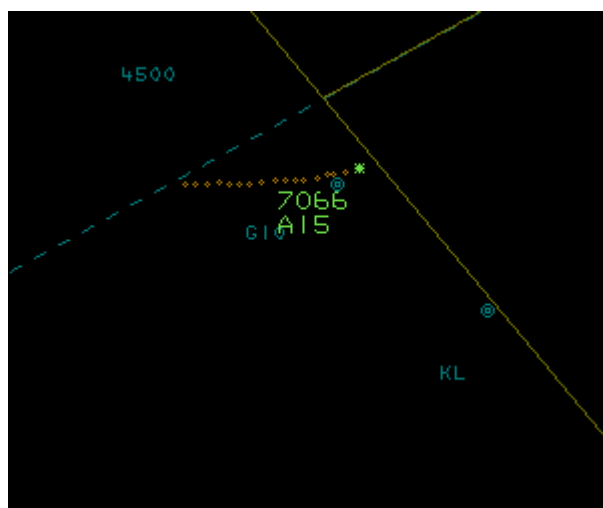


Figure 1 – 1608:39

The Grob 103 and AS350 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 An aircraft operated on or in the vicinity of an aerodrome shall conform with or avoid the pattern of traffic formed by other aircraft in operation.²

Comments

BGA

Before a glider is launched, both the pilot and the ground crew conduct a visual check of the airspace around the launch site and no launch takes place before the ground crew calls “all clear above and behind”. This check apparently failed in this case. However, the AS350 created the hazard by flying close to a notified winch launch site.

UK glider launch sites are listed in UK AIP ENR 5.5 and typically labelled on CAA VFR charts with a “G in a circle” symbol, as shown in the diagram at the top of this report. A greater density of gliders may be expected nearby at any time during daylight hours, and at any altitude up to cloudbase.

Where winch launching is used, the maximum winch launch altitude is listed in the AIP and marked on the VFR chart; this is 2600ft AMSL at Ringmer. A glider being winch-launched achieves a climb angle of 45° and an initial climb rate in excess of 4000ft/min within 10sec of starting its ground roll. Under the right conditions it will then take about a minute to climb to 2500ft AGL; hence the pilot of an aircraft overflying a winch site below its notified maximum winch altitude will have little warning of a launching glider that suddenly appears at or above their level. Overflying a winch site below the

¹ (UK) SERA.3205 Proximity.

² (UK) SERA.3225 Operation on and in the Vicinity of an Aerodrome.

notified altitude during daylight hours also risks encountering high tensile strength cable connecting a launching glider to the winch on the ground, or the drogue parachute which regulates its descent.

The CAA publishes advisory materials on “Flying over Gliding Sites”:

(<https://www.caa.co.uk/general-aviation/safety-topics/flying-over-gliding-sites/#>)

It is not clear how the AS350 pilot was navigating and whether they had immediate access to a VFR chart. The BGA remains concerned that the symbology and ability to “declutter” some moving map devices/packages leaves pilots under-informed about winch launch hazards.

Summary

An Airprox was reported when a Grob 103 and an AS350 flew into proximity in the vicinity of Ringmer gliding site at 1608Z on Sunday 31st May 2026. Both pilots were operating under VFR in VMC, neither in receipt of an ATS.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD’S DISCUSSIONS

Information available consisted of reports from both pilots together with radar photographs/video recordings and GPS data. 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 glider pilot. They had not known about the AS350 when they had commenced their winch launch, and gliding members told the Board that, had the ground crew been visual with the helicopter, the launch would not have taken place. The Board agreed that the FLARM on the glider could not have detected the emissions from the transponder on the AS350 (**CF4**), which meant that the glider pilot had not had any prior situational awareness that the AS350 had been in the vicinity (**CF5**). Whilst in the winch launch, the glider would have been in a nose-up attitude which would have prevented the glider pilot from seeing the helicopter ahead, until the point at which they had released from the cable and levelled. Once they had achieved level flight, they had become visual with the helicopter transiting in the opposite direction, however, they had not seen the other aircraft until it had been in their 3 o’clock, too late to have taken avoiding action, which members agreed had been effectively a non-sighting (**CF5**). Fortunately, the trajectory of the two aircraft had been such that they had not been on a collision course.

Turning to the actions of the AS350 pilot, the members noted that there was an unfortunate lack of detail in the pilot’s report. The pilot had reported being unaware of Ringmer gliding site because it had not featured on their ‘standard ICAO chart’; members questioned which chart had been used, noting that UK gliding sites are depicted on all UK VFR charts. However, some members observed that, when using certain electronic flight bag systems, it is possible to configure them so that gliding sites are not displayed. Nevertheless, members thought that thorough pre-flight planning of the route should have highlighted the existence of the gliding site (**CF2**). Gliding members reiterated the BGA comments, emphasizing that, in addition to the danger presented by gliders launching, the winch launch cable itself posed a danger to aircraft and that the winch launch height was published on VFR charts specifically to warn pilots of the operating altitude of the cable. In this case, the altitude of the Ringmer winch launch was up to 2600ft and, in flying close to the airfield at 1500ft, members agreed that the AS350 pilot had risked endangering both the glider and their own aircraft (**CF1**). The Board noted that the AS350 had not been fitted with any form of CWS, and so agreed that the pilot had not received any prior situational awareness about the glider (**CF3**) and had reported that they had not seen the glider at all (**CF5**). Members noted that the AS350 pilot had not been receiving any form of FIS and, whilst acknowledging that the area further east of Ringmer was not best served for a LARS provision, they highlighted that Farnborough LARS East could have provided a service for a large part of the AS350’s route, and that in utilizing such a service, the pilot could have requested relevant information on gliding activity.

When determining the risk, the Board considered the reports from both pilots together with the radar replay screenshots and the GPS data provided by the glider pilot. Members noted that neither pilot had seen the other aircraft until more or less at CPA, and too late to take any avoiding action. However, the

separation had been such that the glider pilot had not considered that the aircraft were on a collision course. Accordingly, some members thought that although safety had been degraded, there had been no risk of collision. However, others countered that the fact that neither pilot had taken any avoiding action meant that the separation had been down to chance and that therefore safety had not been assured. The Chair put it to a vote and, by a small majority, the latter view prevailed; Risk Category B.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS AND RISK

Contributory Factors:

	2026092			
CF	Factor	Description	ECCAIRS Amplification	UKAB Amplification
	Flight Elements			
	• Tactical Planning and Execution			
1	Human Factors	• Aircraft Navigation	An event involving navigation of the aircraft.	Flew through promulgated and active airspace, e.g. Glider Site
2	Human Factors	• Pre-flight briefing and flight preparation	An event involving incorrect, poor or insufficient pre-flight briefing	
	• Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft and Action			
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	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			
5	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			
6	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 Assessment³

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 **ineffective** because the pre-flight planning by the AS350 pilot had not identified the Ringmer gliding site and so the pilot had flown in close proximity to the airfield.

Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft and Action were assessed as **ineffective** because neither pilot had received any prior situational awareness that the other aircraft had been in the vicinity.

Electronic Warning System Operation and Compliance were assessed as **ineffective** because the EC equipment on the glider could not detect the transponder emissions from the AS350.

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 **ineffective** because neither pilot saw the other aircraft in time to materially affect the separation.

