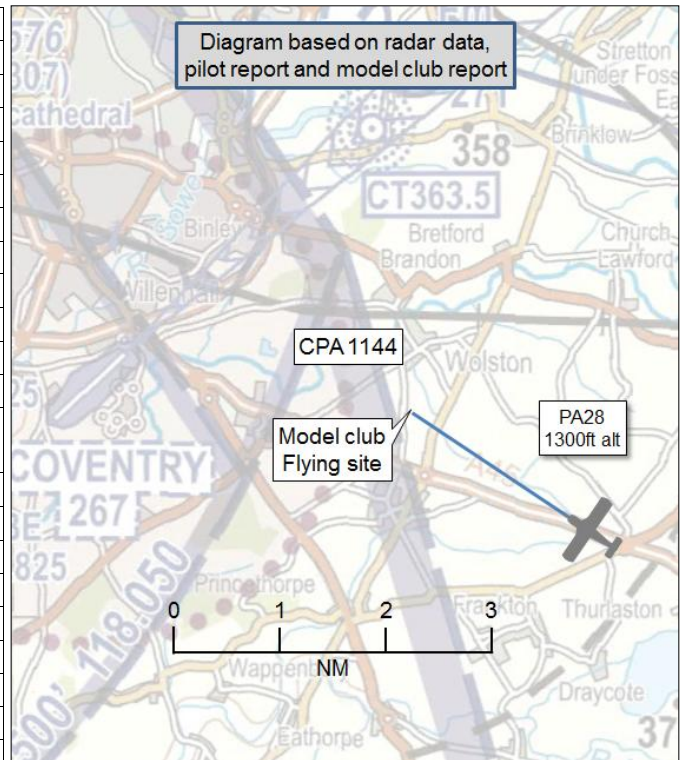


AIRPROX REPORT No 2016106

Date: 18 Jun 2016 Time: 1144Z Position: 5222N 00124W Location: 2½nm E of Coventry

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	PA28	Model Glider
Operator	Civ Trg	Civ Club
Airspace	London FIR	London FIR
Class	G	G
Rules	VFR	
Service	Aerodrome	
Provider	Coventry Tower	
Altitude/FL	1200ft	
Transponder	A, C, S	
Reported		
Colours	White, green	
Lighting	Anti-col, nav, landing	
Conditions	VMC	
Visibility	>10km	
Altitude/FL	1200ft	
Altimeter	QNH (1020hPa)	
Heading	320°	
Speed	90kt	
ACAS/TAS	Not fitted	
Separation		
Reported	0ft V/30m H	
Recorded		NK



THE PA28 PILOT reports conducting a [left] base leg join to the RW23 visual circuit at Coventry. He thought he saw an aircraft at range converging from directly ahead but soon realised it was a UAV in a level turn to its left and was much closer than he had initially thought. He promptly took avoiding action with a steep descending turn to the right. The UAV was white with blue wing-tips.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'High'.

THE MODEL GLIDER OPERATOR: The operator of the Airprox model glider could not be traced, as there were a number of model aircraft flying at the time. The Secretary of the Coventry and District Model Aero Club provided a narrative:

'At the time of the reported Airprox, we were holding a model glider competition based at our flying field south of Wolston village. Other models were flown between competition flights, but it is most likely a competing glider that was spotted by the full size [aircraft] pilot.

At no time were there more than six gliders in the air at any one time. On non-competition days there could be more aircraft flying, with a greater variety of types.

The model glider competition followed standard practice. Each pilot is assigned a timer/observer. If full size aviation activity is detected, the location and course of the aircraft is monitored, and shared with all those on the flight line, pilots and observers. We expect the pilots to maintain constant focus on their aircraft, whilst the spotter's task is to be aware of all the activity in the adjacent air. This would include monitoring full size aircraft likely to travel into the area we are using, signs of lift, such as birds circling, clouds likely to be indicating lift [and] other competitors, and ensure the model pilot is aware of the salient information. Avoiding full size aircraft is of course the primary requirement, whether in a competition or just flying for fun.

Throughout the day, we flew four competition slots. In the main full size aircraft kept well clear of our area, possibly thanks to advice from ATC or careful reading of the notes associated with the airfield indicating our location. However, there were two occasions during the day when full size aircraft flew overhead or very near to our location. When that happens the spotters task is to advise the model pilot which direction to fly to maximise the separation distance. Sometimes it is practical to descend, other times it is considered better to steer away from the flight path of the full size, as we find it difficult to assess vertical separation from the ground.

Identifying which specific model aircraft was spotted as an Airprox may be difficult, as there were a number of gliders all in the air simultaneously, and all the pilots would have been advised of the full size and have been taking appropriate action to maintain safe separation distances.

Coventry and District Model Aero Club was formed approximately 80 years ago, and has always encouraged the safe flying of model aircraft. Our current model flying field is south of Wolston village. We have been operating from this field for approximately 40 years. We operate the nationally accepted pilot achievement scheme managed by the British Model Flying Association, and adhere to CAP 658¹.

We remind Coventry ATC on a regular basis that we operate model aircraft from our field, and have ensured ATC are aware of our exact location. The position is noted in the UK AIP EGBE AD 2.20 [under Warnings].

In this instance CAA exemption was not sought [for the model gliding competition], as the number of models taking part was lower than would be found at the site on a non-competition day (weather permitting) and none of the aircraft taking part were [heavier than] 7kg.

THE AERODROME CONTROLLER reports the PA28 pilot was joining the circuit and reported passing close to a model aircraft at a similar level. The controller offered that it may be from a notified model flying site at Wolston, on the edge of the Coventry ATZ, and gave relevant information to two departing aircrafts' pilots. The PA28 pilot phoned later to say he would file an Airprox. No other reports of model aircraft flying were received.

Factual Background

The weather at Coventry was recorded as follows:

METAR EGBE 181150Z 36004KT 320V060 9999 BKN023 15/10 Q1020=

The UK AIP, EGBE AD 2.20 LOCAL TRAFFIC REGULATIONS, paragraph 4 (Warnings), (e) states:

'Pilots are warned of radio controlled aircraft activity from a private site approximately 3 nm east of Coventry airport, 0.5 miles southeast of Wolston village.'

Analysis and Investigation

UKAB Secretariat

The Air Navigation Order 2009 (as amended), Article 138² states:

'A person must not recklessly or negligently cause or permit an aircraft to endanger any person or property.'

¹ Model Aircraft: A Guide to Safe Flying

² Article 253 of the ANO details which Articles apply to small unmanned aircraft. Article 255 defines 'small unmanned aircraft'. The ANO is available to view at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk>.

Summary

An Airprox was reported when a PA28 and a model glider flew into proximity at about 1144 on 18th June 2016. The PA28 pilot was operating under VFR in VMC in receipt of an Aerodrome Control Service from Coventry Tower.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available consisted of reports from the PA28 pilot and model flying club Secretary and radar photographs/video recordings.

Other than operations under the terms of a CAA permission, the ANO regulations limiting the maximum height for the operation of unmanned air vehicles (UAS) – including model aircraft - that weigh 7kg or less are; 1) If flown using FPV (with a maximum weight of 3.5kg) when 1000ft is the maximum height, 2). The UAS must be kept within direct unaided line of sight. UAS weighing between 7kg and 20kg are limited to 400ft unless in accordance with airspace requirements. Notwithstanding, the requirement to maintain direct, unaided visual contact with the UAS must be sufficient to monitor its flight path in relation to other aircraft, persons, vehicles, vessels and structures for the purpose of avoiding collisions. CAP 722 gives guidance that, within the UK, visual line of sight (VLOS) operations are normally accepted to mean a maximum distance of 500m horizontally and 400ft vertically from the Remote Pilot.

Members agreed that the locally based PA28 pilot had flown over the model flying club site, and that information pertaining to its location and activities was available to him in the UK AIP. The Board noted that both the PA28 pilot and the model glider operator shared an equal responsibility to avoid collision, and members agreed that perhaps all involved could have done more; the PA28 pilot by flying further away from the known site, and the model glider spotter/operator by giving more timely warning and instigating effective avoiding action. Nevertheless, it was agreed that both pilots/operators were entitled to operate in the area, and that both had taken action (PA28 pilot) or reasonable measures (model aircraft club) to avert a collision, which unfortunately had not been wholly effective. As a result, the Airprox was judged to be a conflict in Class G airspace where separation had been such that safety had been much reduced below the norm.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: A conflict in Class G.

Degree of Risk: B.