

Safe Shared Airspace - **Lakenheath & Mildenhall**

This is a self-briefing for sailplane pilots.

The charts included here are illustrative only. Please refer to the current chart and instrument procedures for detail.

Published March 2026

Updated September 2026



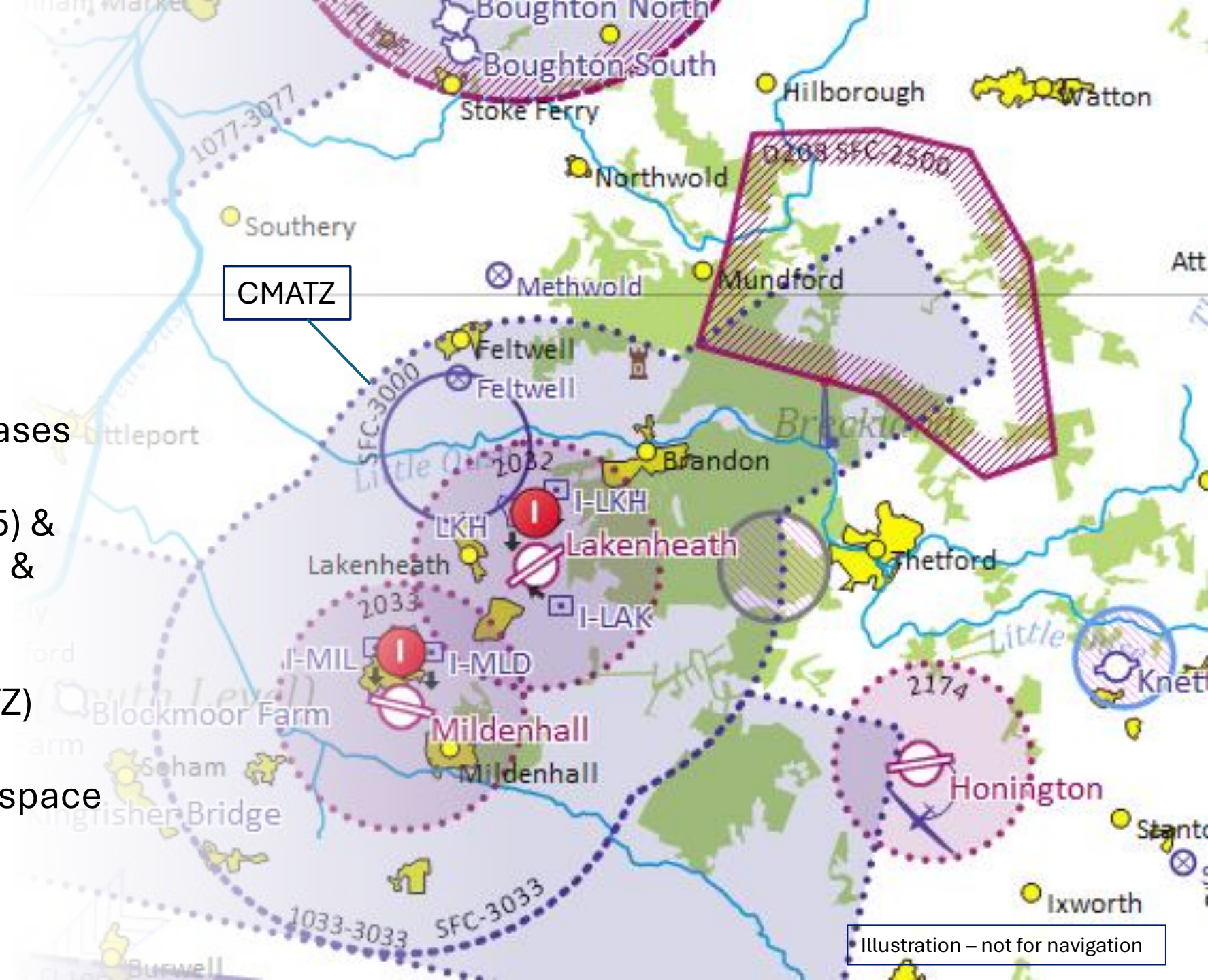
Lakenheath & Mildenhall - overview

Two very active USAF bases

Mix of fast jets (F15, F35) & transport (KC135, C130 & CV22 rotary) + visitors

Combined MATZ (CMATZ)

Surrounding class G airspace



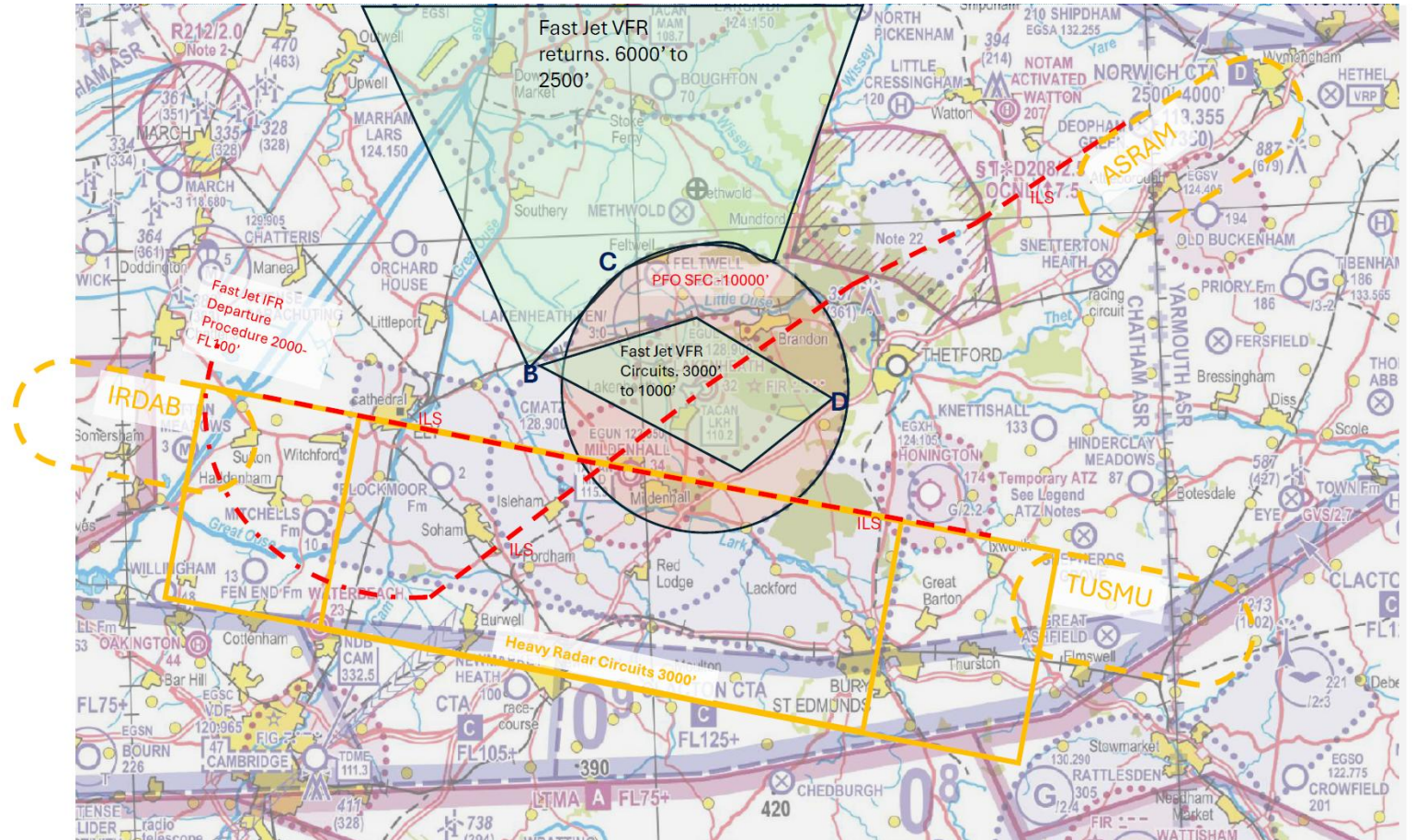
Key conflict areas

Conflict Area	Typical Activity	Altitude Range	Primary Location	Critical Hazard Note
Northern Fast Jet VFR Arrivals	High-speed (300 kt) VFR arrivals; frequently in formations of 2 to 4 jets.	Descending 6,000 ft down to 2,500 ft	North of Lakenheath airfield, funneling towards Feltwell (VFR entry point).	Jets on IFR clearance may descend rapidly through cloud cover and transition to VFR in this area.
Eastern ILS Arrivals	Continuous descent arrivals for Instrument Landing System (ILS) approaches to Runway 23.	Descending from 6,000 ft (FL060)	Direct line from the northeast (near Thetford) southwest to the runway.	Jets will cross the western edge of restricted area R-208 at approximately 1,800 ft.
RAF Lakenheath VFR Circuit	Fast Jet VFR Circuits and Precautionary Flameout (PFO) practice.	Standard: 1,000 ft – 3,000 ft PFO Practice: Up to 10,000 ft	Within 3 NM of the airfield and inside the MATZ.	PFO maneuvers involve high-rate descents. Treat this area as extremely high risk during clear skies.
RAF Mildenhall Airfield Circuits	Heavy radar circuits on IFR/VFR clearances (KC-135, MC-130J, CV-22).	IFR: 2,000 ft – 3,000 ft VFR: 1,200 ft and below	Extending West, South, and East out of the MATZ (overflight of Bury St. Edmunds & Ely is common).	Heavy aircraft operate primarily on IFR. Crew visibility is highly restricted; do not assume they can see gliders.

Big picture

Expect Lakenheath/Mildenhall traffic in the areas highlighted

Please read on for important detail.



Mildenhall

- radar circuits



Airline sized
aircraft



Radar circuits
are standard
procedure



Circuits outside the
CMATZ. NB 14-mile
approach

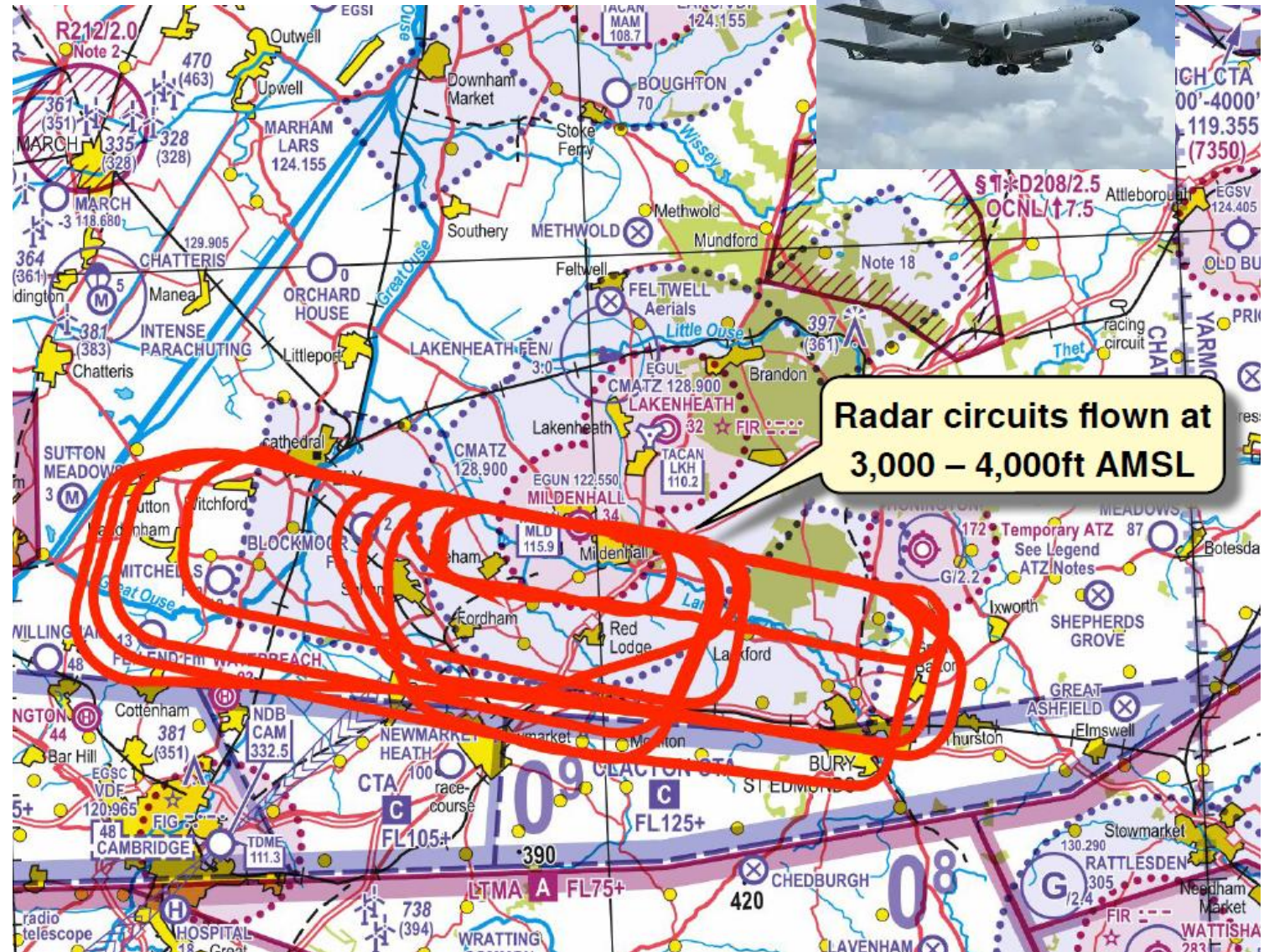


Illustration – not for navigation

Mildenhall - holds



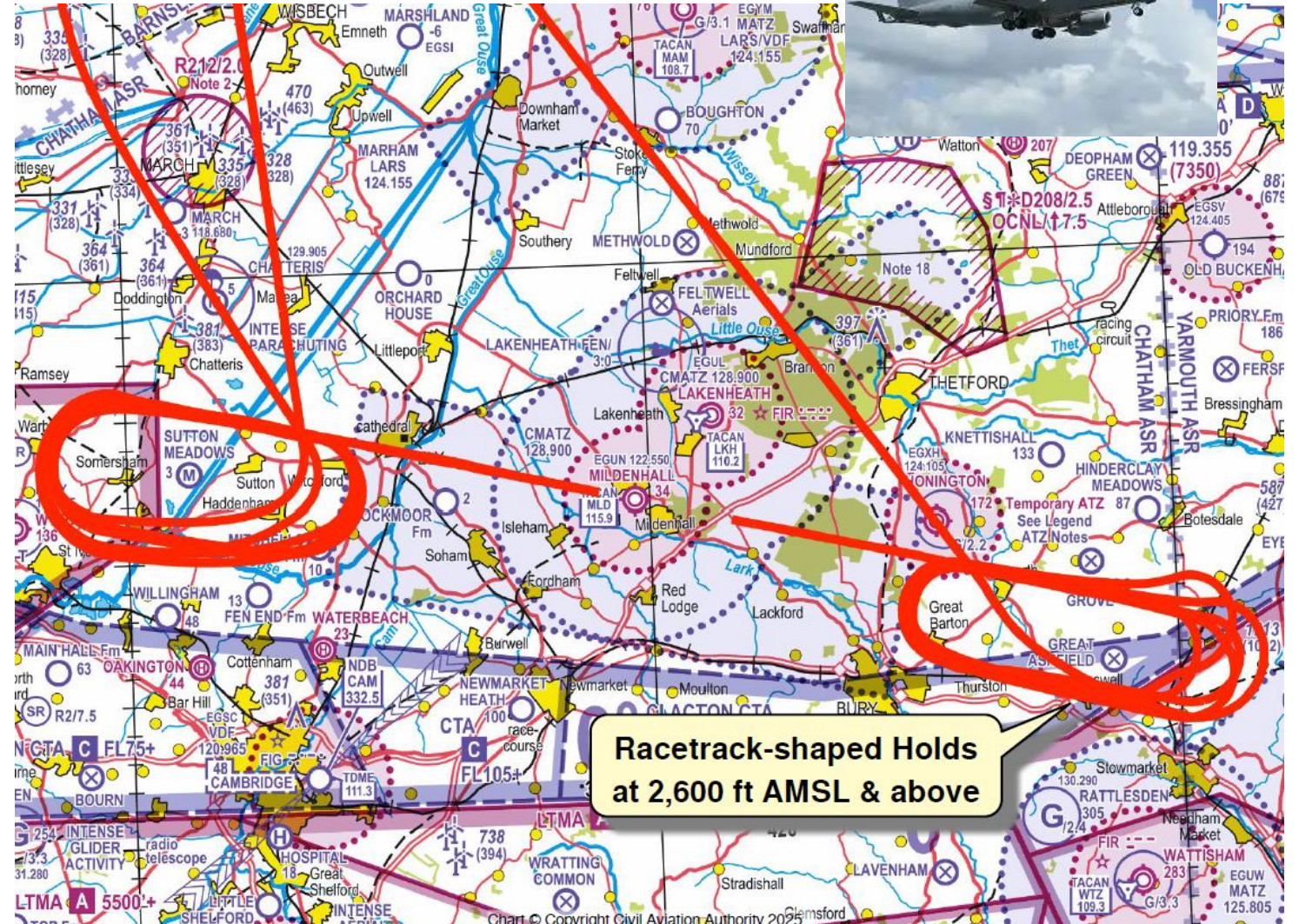
Airline sized
aircraft



Holds are
routinely used



The holds are
outside the
CMATZ



Mildenhall

- other



C130 and CV22
transiting to/from
training



Routinely leave/
join the CMATZ to
the east



Operating at
2000' outside the
CMATZ.



Lakenheath - arrivals



Multiple aircraft
joining mostly
from the north



Random entries into the circuit



Descents and circuits outside the CMATZ.

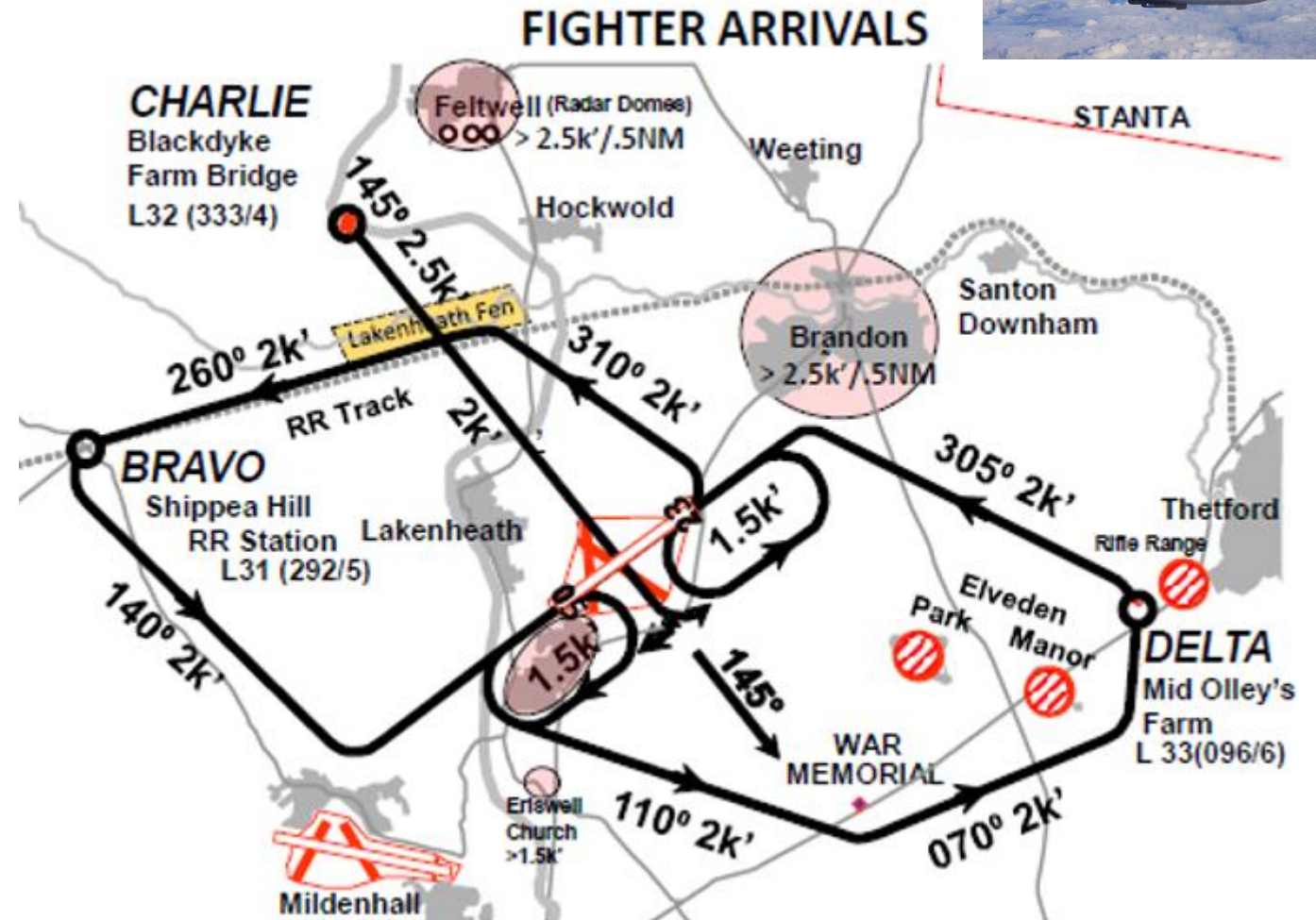


Illustration – not for navigation

Lakenheath - glide circuits!



F35 practice
engine failure –
at anytime



Overhead from
10,000' to
surface



One 360 degree
turn to final
approach



Illustration – not for navigation

RAPCON

- overview

Radar Approach Control

Serves both airfields

Radar and radio (UHF and VHF)

No ADS-B capability

Monitors FLARM *where possible*
(non-assured)



RAPCON

- detail

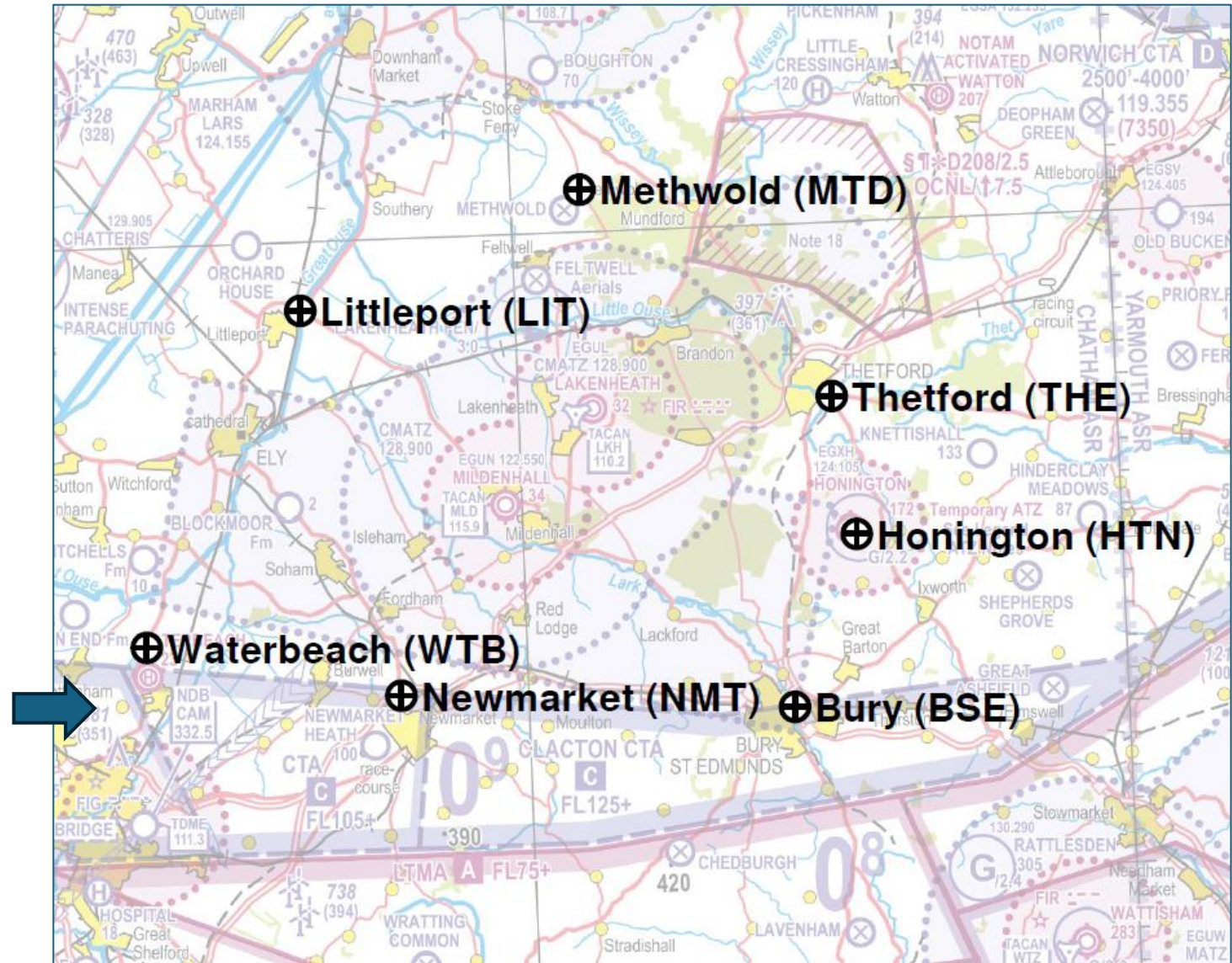
Cannot reliably detect gliders on radar – unless using a transponder

Keen to communicate – even with pilots who are nervous of using the radio!

Will vector around a glider **where known** (i.e. glider with transponder and/or radio)

Will recognise the BGA TPs in the image (right) for position reports

Where possible monitor FLARM traffic (non-assured)



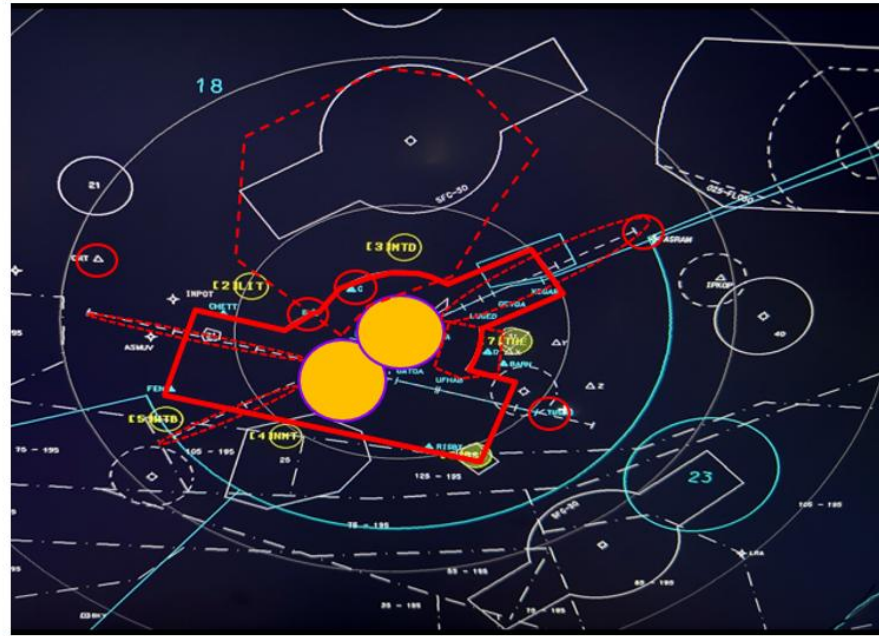
RAPCON recognised BGA TPs

- their perspective



British Gliding Association Turn Points

- WTB – Waterbeach
- NMT – Newmarket
- BSE – Bury St. Edmunds
- HTN – RAF Honington
- THE – Thetford
- MTD – Methwold
- LIT – Littleport



How you can help to maintain safe shared airspace

Plan ahead & manage the risk by remaining clear of known airspace hazards. The extended approaches to both airfields are probably the greatest hazard.

If you do not make contact by radio close to the CMATZ, you will become a hazard - **so please stay clear.**

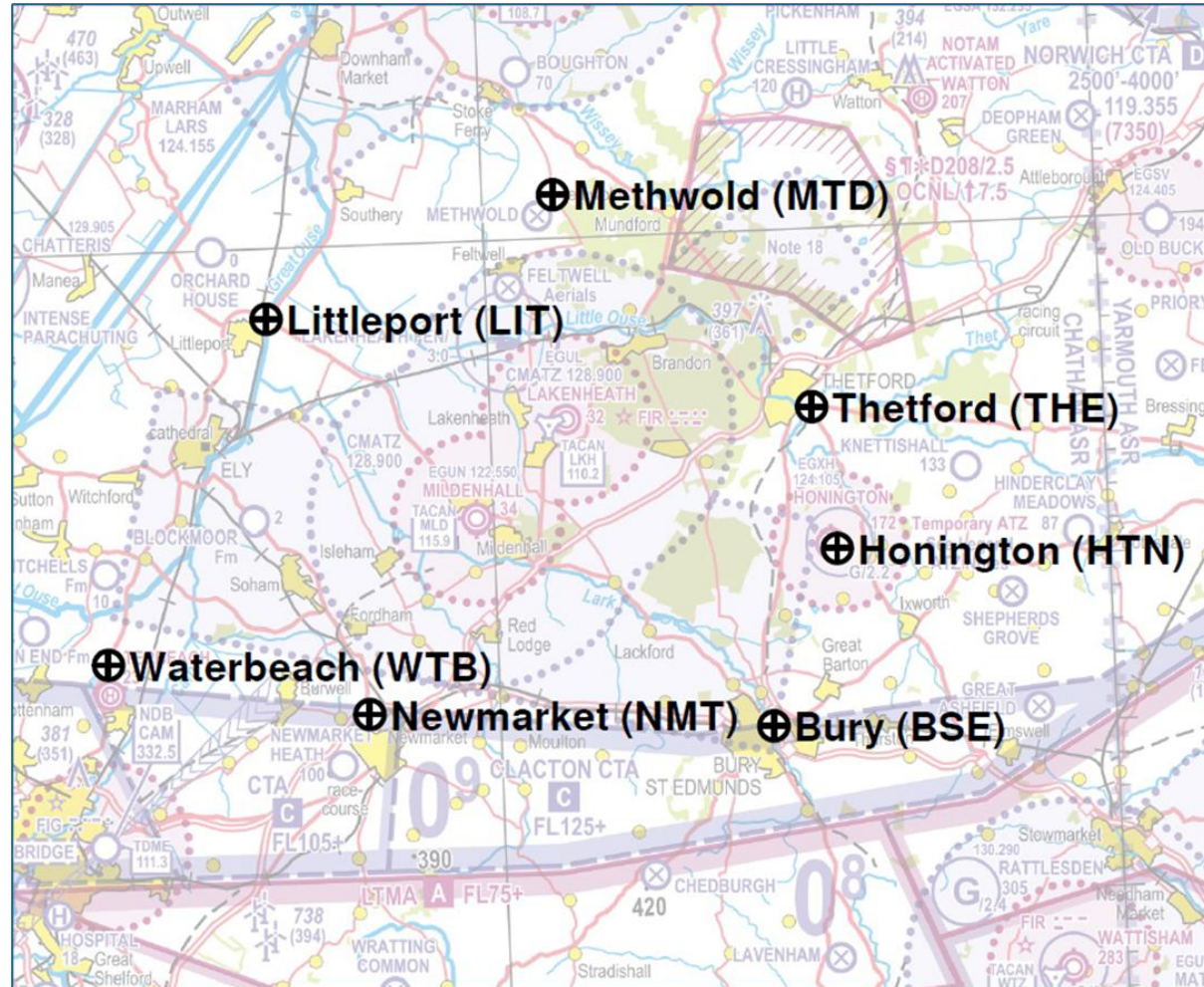
If you *need* to fly close to the CMATZ, please:

- ensure your transponder is operating (if equipped)
- call Lakenheath Radar on 128.900
- use the known reporting points (next two slides) – do not use other landmarks as they may not be known

Do not assume a quiet frequency means no traffic. Your radio will not be receiving the military UHF radio traffic.



Reporting points (known by RAPCON)



Suggested RT procedure

(CAP413 compliant)



**Lakenheath Radar, Glider
G-CHSK, request Basic
Service**



**Glider G-CHSK, Lakenheath
Radar, pass your message**



**Glider G-CHSK, from
Gransden Lodge to
Gransden Lodge, 1NM East
of Newmarket, altitude 3500
feet QNH 1017, tracking to
Bury St Edmunds**



**Glider SK, Roger, Are you
transponder-equipped?**



Negative, Glider SK



**Glider SK, Basic Service,
Report Bury St Edmunds**



**Basic Service, Wilco, Glider
SK**

Derived from CAP 413 Radiotelephony Manual Section 3.31

Please speak slowly and clearly.
You will need to listen carefully.

More information

[Airprox report 2025056 - JS1 / KC135](#)

[Military Aeronautical Information Publication \(AIP\)](#)

[BGA maintaining safe airspace guidance](#)