Aston Down airfield

Site briefing for visiting power pilots

At a glance

- *GPS position N51deg42.358 W002deg07.916 (WGS84)*
- *Airfield local frequency 118.665 (not always manned)*
- *Call sign **'Aston Down'***
- *Contact numbers 01285 702100/ 01285 702101*
- *email -*

  office@cotswoldgliding.co.uk

  cfi@cotswoldgliding.co.uk

  chairman@cotswoldgliding.co.uk
- *Airfield elevation 600'amsl*
- *Hard runways 21/03 27/09*
- ***Prior arrangement only***

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Aston Down from the NNE showing main runway 21 with the launch line set up for winching from the tarmac and gliders landing on the grass either side. Fixed wing arrivals land on the grass, helicopters on the disused runway stub on the right.

1. Aston Down airfield

The airfield is the home of the Cotswold Gliding Club, is non-licensed and does not offer an AFIS. Power operations on the site are restricted by our planning consent to those with a gliding related purpose, so power arrivals must be by prior arrangement only. Landing fees will be charged, details are available from the club office. Contact can be made with the club by phone or by email (see 'At a glance' above).

We operate routinely at weekends and on Wednesdays throughout the year and seven days a week from March to the end of September. However, the airfield should always be considered active. The airfield operating frequency is 118.665, but the radio is not continuously manned. In addition, gliders use 129.980 and 130.105 for cross country flying and heavy radio traffic on these frequencies usually means a significant amount of soaring is taking place. The area around Stroud, Dursley and Cirencester is marked on the ICAO chart as having intense glider activity, and there is GA traffic into and out of Staverton and Kemble including aerobatic flights and some fast jet activity.

The Cotswold Gliding Club teaches ab-initio glider pilots and runs check flights for its members around Aston Down. You should expect to encounter relatively inexperienced pilots in the vicinity, and may also come across gliders performing spin and other manoeuvres involving sudden height loss as part of routine pilot training.

Gliding launch operations are always carried out in line with the two runways at Aston Down, so expect crosswind conditions at any of the launch points. Pilots should try to avoid overflying nearby villages and farms at low level for noise abatement reasons.

2. All aircraft visiting Aston Down.

The airfield does not offer an AFIS. The air to ground frequency is 118.665 The radio is not always manned. Whether you receive a reply or not you must call downwind for the benefit of gliders flying locally if you intend to land. All aircraft movements are at the pilot's discretion.

If you are unable to receive information from the ground you will have to make an assessment from the air of the way that the airfield is being operated. When winching is taking place (the default mode for Aston Down) you will see the winch at the upwind end of the operational runway, and the control vehicle parked near to the downwind end. There may be gliders parked or waiting for launch nearby. A glider at the front of the launch line that is ready to launch will have its wings held horizontal and you should anticipate that it will shortly roll forward and rotate up into a fast 45deg climb in line with the operational runway to between 1000' and 2500', reaching this height on the cable in about 30-45 seconds. The cable descending after the glider has released will carry a small drogue, but note that after release the cable may drift downwind before being fully retrieved to the winch. Aircraft which land long in a sector 300m- 500m deep subtended by the winch and extending to about 45deg wide on the downwind side of the operational runway run the risk of having a falling cable land on or near them. Clearance height above the active runway is 4100'AMSL.

3. Fixed wing aircraft – Only associated with gliding!

If you think that you may have problems landing on grass of sometimes variable length, evenness or sogginess, go to Kemble!

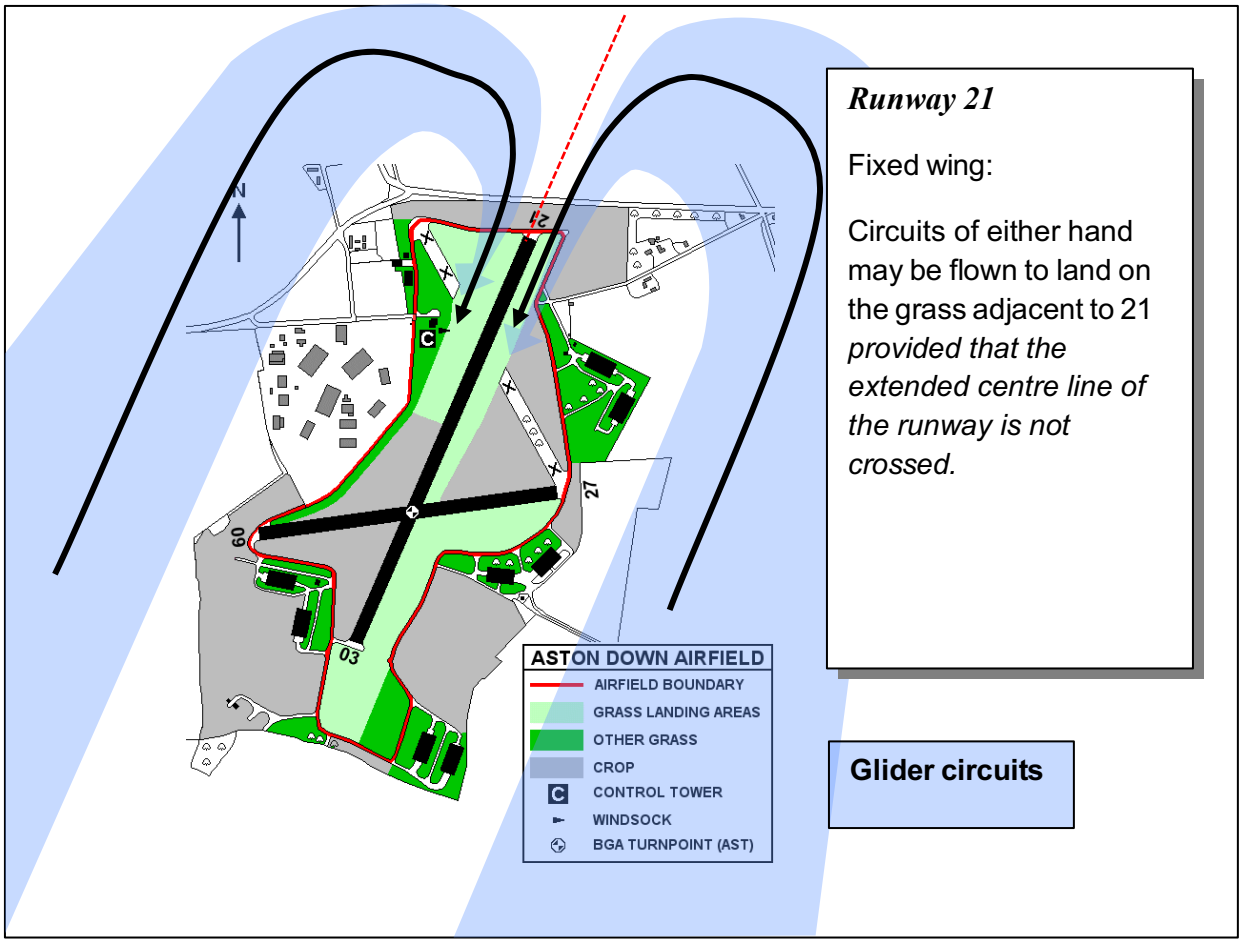
3.1 Fixed wing: arrivals

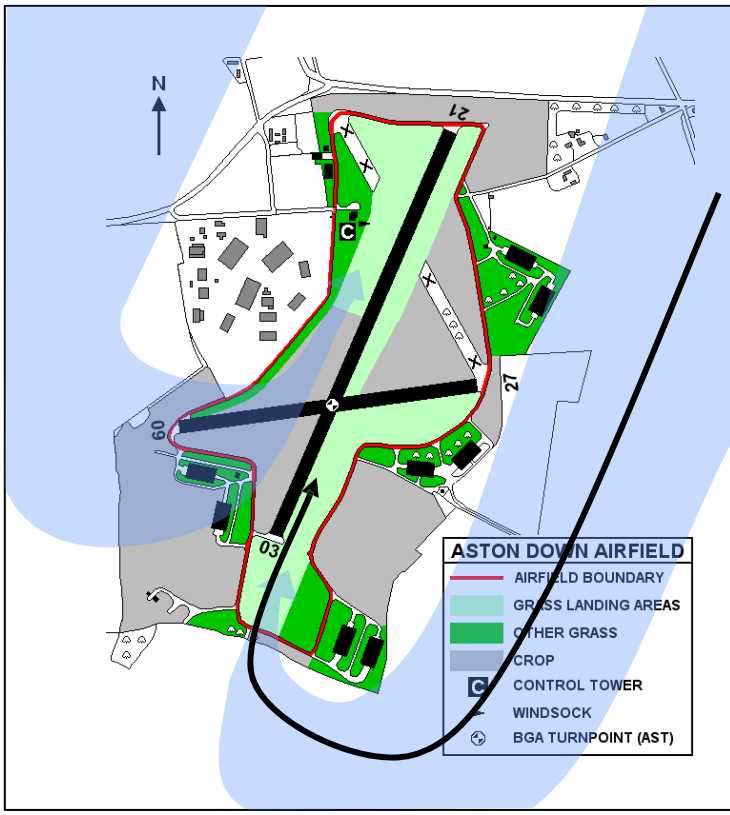
- **Do not join overhead**. **Cables may be carried to 3000' AAL. Clearance 4100'AMSL**
- **Call downwind**
- **The final approach should not be long and flat.**
- **You should not cross the glider circuit. A long approach from outside the glider circuit is particularly dangerous. Land on the grass areas to the side of the active runway.**
- **Do not use the hard runways for landing without receiving clear information from the launch point radio at the time of arrival.**

At Aston Down the hard runways are nearly always in use for winch launching and the gliders and tugs land on the adjacent grass areas.

The optimum arrival procedure is to fly a circuit which roughly matches the glider circuit in terms of height and distance from the airfield, and to land well into the field (but not excessively long), and not to be tempted to cut corners or come in unpredictably. Do not make your circuit *outside* the glider circuit or eventually you will have to cross it.

It is characteristic of gliders to arrive fairly steeply on approach; you will be far more visible against the sky both for ground crew out on the landing area and from gliders on circuit if you fly the same sort of circuit and approach. Note that there are public rights of way, roads, and the airfield perimeter track across all the approaches and these must be adequately cleared.





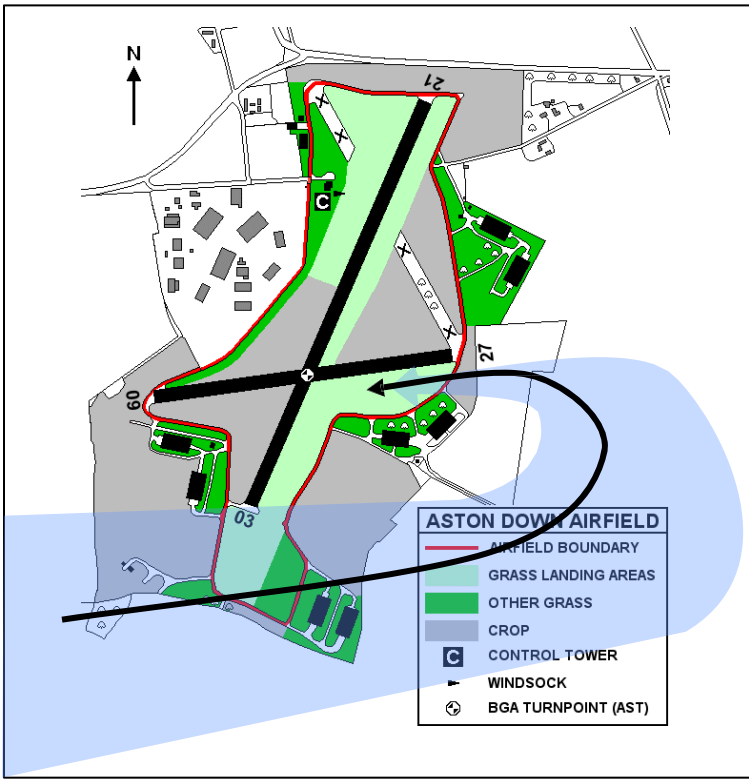
Runway 03

Fixed wing:

Make a RH circuit to land on the grass alongside 03.

Keep a good lookout for gliders which may have chosen to make a circuit in the opposite direction because they have got too low or who are returning to the trailers.

Glider circuits



Runway 27

Fixed wing:

Make a LH circuit and land on the grass alongside the runway.

Keep a good lookout for gliders which may have chosen to make a circuit in the opposite direction because they have got too low.

Glider circuits

If the active runway is 09, there is no grass to land on adjacent to the runway; you are advised *not to land* without clear information from the launch point.

3.2 Fixed wing: parking

- **After landing backtrack to the launch line on the grass if it is clear to do so and park where directed. If unsure, stay where you are until a club vehicle comes out to direct you.**
- **<u>Under no circumstances</u> taxi over the winch cables which are drawn out down the upwind side of the runway and are invisible when lying in the grass. You must backtrack on the grass to a point behind the launch line before turning on to the tarmac to be sure of avoiding cables. The junction between tarmac and grass has some drainage grids and rough patches.**
- **Look out for gliders on approach throughout.**

3.3 Fixed wing: departures

- **Do not take off while a winch launch, cable retrieve or aerotow is in progress.**
- **Do not turn over the active runway. Clear the circuit before turning en route.**

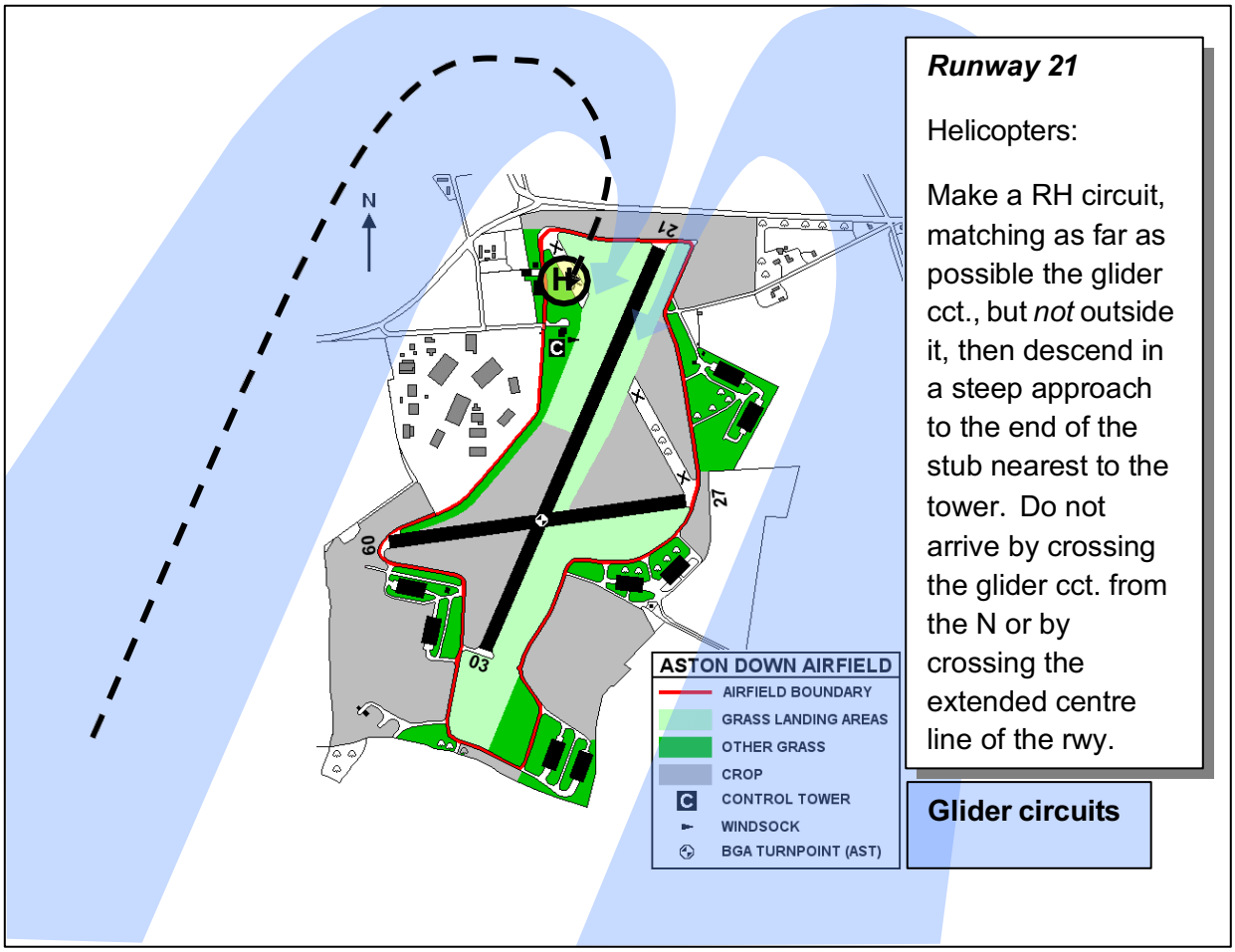
Pilots wishing to depart should seek information by radio or directly from the launch line personnel before moving, then depart according to information received, at their discretion, climbing out from or parallel to the active runway to above glider circuit height before turning away.

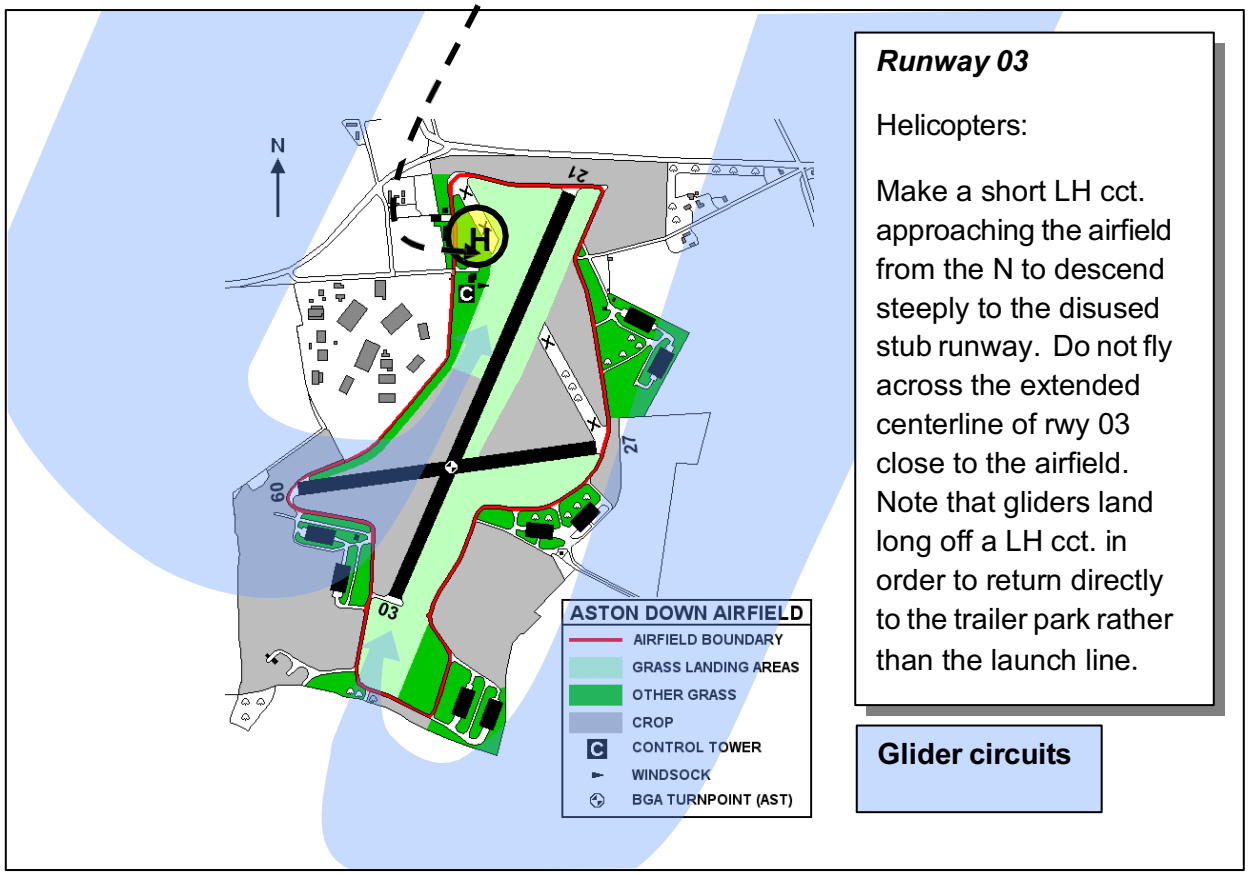
Departures from the hard runway may be possible provided clear information is received from the launch point.

4. Helicopters

- **If making a circuit match the glider circuit. Call downwind (or imminent arrival if arriving off a short or truncated cct.).**
- **Helicopters should land on the disused runway stub near to the hangars and tower**.
- **Turbulence from rotors can turn a glider over or blow an unsecured canopy off. Do not hug the ground, make a steep descent to touch down and if necessary adjust the choice of landing area appropriately.**
- **The area between the hangar and runway 21 is used by club members to access the main runway, so be sure that it is clear of vehicles and pedestrians before descending**.

4.1 Helicopters: arrivals





If the active runway is 27 or 09, then approach from the northern side of the airfield keeping clear of the glider circuit to descend steeply on to the end of the disused stub of runway at your discretion.

4.2 Helicopters: parking

- **Helicopters should remain at the landing area on the end of the disused runway near the hangars and tower.**

Gliders do not use this disused runway, and it is sufficiently far from the winch operation to be clear of falling cables. Vehicles attending the helicopter must remain on the tarmac, and visitors, passengers and crew should be discouraged from crossing grass areas on foot unless in the company of a club member or someone who knows the gliding operation well.

4.3 Helicopters: departures

- **Do not take off while a winch launch or aerotow is in progress.**
- **Do not turn over the active runway. Clear the circuit before turning en route.**

Helicopters intending to depart should seek information from the launch point and when it is safe to do so climb away parallel to the operational runway at the pilot's discretion. Rather than staying close to the ground the initial climb should be steep; the aim is to reduce turbulence near to parked vehicles and gliders on the ground then to climb above the glider circuit and well clear of the winch operation before turning en route.