

Local Services Programme Condition 26 Engagement Report

Wethersfield

December 2024

Revision History

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The reviewer signoff shall signify the recommendations for acceptance of this document.

Reviewed By	Role/Grade	Date
██████████	Site Operator	14 January 2025

This Condition 26 Engagement Report has been developed in line with Condition 26(5) of The Town and Country Planning (Former RAF Airfield Wethersfield) (Accommodation for Asylum-Seekers etc.) Special Development Order 2024.

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1. Introduction

This report accompanies the Local Services Programme Wethersfield (December 2024) which is being submitted by the Secretary of State for the Home Department “the Home Secretary” to the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

The purpose of this document is to provide a report which is required by Condition 26(5) of The Town and Country Planning (Former RAF Airfield Wethersfield) (Accommodation for Asylum-Seekers etc.) Special Development Order 2024¹ (SDO), specifically addressing engagement with local service providers².

The Local Services Programme Wethersfield (December 2024) and Wethersfield Phasing Scheme (December 2024) are to be read in conjunction with this report.

1.1. Definitions and Scope

The SDO provides the necessary definitions to identify the relevant providers of local services who form the focus of this report.

These are found under Condition 26(1):-

Local services programme

26.–(1) *In this paragraph—*

“local service impact” means any material adverse impact that the accommodation of service users on the Order land may be expected to have on relevant local services;

“local service provider” means a person or body that is—

- (a) represented on the Multi-Agency Forum, and*
- (b) responsible for the provision of a relevant local service;*

“relevant local service” means any service that is provided locally, on a statutory basis and at public expense, to persons living in the vicinity of the Order land, and on which the accommodation of service users on the Order land may reasonably be expected to have a material adverse effect, including—

- (a) health care, including acute care, other in-patient hospital care, physiotherapy, diagnostics, and ambulance transport;*
- (b) policing, including policing on and in the immediate vicinity of the Order land;*
- (c) social care for children;*
- (d) public health services and control of the spread of infectious diseases.*

¹ [The Town and Country Planning \(Former RAF Airfield Wethersfield\) \(Accommodation for Asylum-Seekers etc.\) Special Development Order 2024 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#).

² These are local service providers who provide relevant local services. A “relevant local service” is defined in Condition 26(1) and is taken to mean any service that is provided locally, on a statutory basis and at public expense, to persons living in the vicinity of the Order land, and on which the accommodation of service users on the Order land may reasonably be expected to have a material adverse effect.

Definitions:

- A **local service provider** is one which is represented on the Multi-Agency Forum (MAF) and is responsible for the provision of a relevant local service.
- **Relevant local services** are those which, through the accommodation of service users (SUs) on the Order land, may reasonably be expected to have a material adverse effect.
- As stated in the Local Services Programme, and for the purposes of this report, the Home Office considers **material adverse effect or impact** to be one where the accommodation of asylum seekers at the site might cause a significant reduction in access to, or greater demand upon, relevant local services.

The SDO provides a non-exhaustive list of four relevant local services which are considered in the Local Services Programme and this report:

- health care including acute care, other in-patient hospital care, physiotherapy, diagnostics, and ambulance transport;
- policing, including policing on and in the immediate vicinity of the Order land;
- social care for children; and
- public health services and control of the spread of infectious diseases.

As part of the engagement with local service providers, the Home Office has also considered the site impact on other relevant local services, including the provision of:

- waste management;
- highways and transportation; and
- recreational facilities and library services.

The Home Office considers that there could be a material adverse impact on these local services due to the accommodation of SUs at Wethersfield if appropriate mitigations were not implemented.

1.2. Structure of the Report

Condition 26(5) of the SDO provides the following:-

Local services programme

26.–(5) When submitting a local services programme for approval, the Home Secretary must also send to the Secretary of State a report that summarises–

- (a) the views of local service providers regarding
 - (i) local service impacts*
 - (ii) the effectiveness of any arrangements already made by the Home Secretary to avoid or mitigate local service impacts;**
- (b) the steps taken by the Home Secretary to engage with local service providers, including–
 - (i) the information provided by the Home Secretary to local service providers about the authorised development and when it was provided to them;*
 - (ii) the period in which they were able to make representations about local service impacts to the Home Secretary, being not less than 14 calendar days and beginning with the date on which they were invited to make such representations;*
 - (iii) the outcome of such engagement.**

This Condition 26 Engagement Report outlines the steps taken by the Home Office to engage with local service providers of relevant local services. The report contains ten sections and two annexes, which address the requirements of the SDO in the following ways:

- **Section 2 – Engagement with Local Service Providers**
This section summarises the steps taken to engage with statutory providers of relevant local services, in accordance with **Condition 26(5)(b)** of the SDO. Further details have been provided on current engagement, specifically when information was provided to local service providers and the period in which providers were able to provide their response (as required by **Condition 26(5)(b)(i) and (ii)**).
- **Sections 3 to 9 – Local Services**
These sections consider each of the relevant local services, as addressed in the Local Services Programme. Further detail is included on specific engagement that was undertaken with these respective local service providers in addition to detail of the current engagement. Responses received as part of the current engagement on local service impacts and the effectiveness of mitigations currently in place have been summarised in these sections (in accordance with **Condition 26(5)(a)(i) and (ii)**). Finally, the outcome of the current engagement is included (as required by **Condition 26(5)(b)(iii)**).

Annexes

- **Annex A – Home Office Letter to Relevant Local Service Providers Letter dated 18 October 2024**

The letter sets out the timeframe given to local service providers to make representations and when they were invited to do so.

- **Annex B – Local Services Impact Summary Wethersfield (September 2024)**

The Local Services Impact Summary meets the requirements of Condition 26(5) of the SDO which requires that this report includes information provided by the Home Secretary to local service providers about the authorised development.

2. Engagement with Local Service Providers

Collaboration with key stakeholders has been a priority for the Home Office since identifying Wethersfield as a location for asylum accommodation. It is through this engagement that the Home Office has sought to successfully mitigate and reduce any adverse impact experienced by the local community, while securing the operational longevity of the site.

Engagement previously undertaken by the Home Office has been comprehensively addressed in the Wethersfield Planning Proposal Engagement Report (January 2024) which was submitted to MHCLG with the planning proposal statement. Aspects of this report are summarised below.

2.1. Initial Engagement (Class Q Planning)

Engagement with local service providers pre-dates the granting of planning permission under the SDO. Following scoping discussions, in early 2023 the Home Office pursued engagement with local stakeholders including: Fire, Police, the NHS and local authorities on the Class Q proposals to provide temporary asylum accommodation at the Wethersfield Site. These proposals were pursuant to Schedule 2, Part 19, Class Q of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015. Following the initial engagement on the Class Q proposals there was significant further engagement which remains ongoing through Multi-Agency Forums (MAFs).

In March 2023, planning was granted for the use of the site at Wethersfield for non-detained asylum accommodation under emergency “Class Q” powers, for a limited period of 12 months. The Local Authority, Police and health providers were engaged with, as part of this process to support the establishment of the site.

This engagement formed the mechanism through which discussions have progressed on a continuous basis, following the decision in October 2023 to seek planning permission for a further period via an SDO. These discussions have included local service providers and, from the outset of the decision to use the site, local stakeholders were able to raise concerns, identify impacts, and suggest mitigations.

The MAFs, which commenced under Class Q, continue to be a key feature of the engagement and have provided a structured framework for discussions. Home Office representatives attend all of these meetings. The Wethersfield MAF initially convened weekly and now convenes fortnightly. There are also three MAF sub-groups, which convene fortnightly and focus on the following areas:

- Communications and Engagement;
- Health and Social Care³; and
- Operations.

With agreement from participants, the Policing and Community Safety Sub-Group which convened fortnightly has been dissolved and merged with the fortnightly Site Operations Meeting (which form part of the MAF Operations Sub-Group). This

³ Formerly titled the Health and Children’s Services Sub-Group.

ensures effective collaboration is maintained as policing and community safety is included as a regular agenda item at these meetings.

Those in attendance at the MAF and associated sub-groups are listed in Table 2.1. below.

Table 2.1: Wethersfield Multi-Agency Forum and Associated Sub-Groups

Group	Attendees
Wethersfield Multi-Agency Forum	Home Office, Braintree District Council, Essex County Council, Integrated Care Board, NHS England, UK Health Security Agency, Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), Strategic Migration Partnership, Essex Fire, Essex Police, ██████████ (██████ ██████████)
Communications and Engagement Sub-Group	Home Office, Braintree District Council, Essex Fire, Essex Police, Essex County Council, East of England Local Government Association, NHS, Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group, UK Health Security Agency, Parliamentary Representative, Strategic Migration Partnership
Health and Social Care Sub-Group	Home Office, Essex Police, Essex County Council, East of England Local Government Association, NHS, Department for Health and Social Care, Braintree District Council, ██████████ UK Health Security Agency, Integrated Care Board, Strategic Migration Partnership
Operations Sub-Group	Home Office, UK Health Security Agency, East of England Local Government Association, Essex Police, Essex Fire, NHS, Essex County Council, Essex Highways, Braintree District Council, Strategic Migration Partnership, ██████████ (██████ ██████████)

These groups provide a forum through which any impact or concern regarding local services and phasing can be raised. Further details of the MAF and associated sub-groups are within Section 2 of the Local Services Programme.

Alongside formal Multi-Agency Forums, a range of other meetings have taken place at different working levels to discuss the site with local authorities, Police and health partners.

2.2. Engagement for use of Wethersfield beyond Class Q

In October 2023, the decision was made to seek planning under a Special Development Order for Wethersfield, for a period of three years, plus six months' decommissioning. It was therefore a priority of the Home Office to ensure any impact to local services for this longer period was assessed, considered and appropriately mitigated.

Engagement was initially pursued through multiple channels which included:

- **Digital Newsletters**
Bespoke information leaflets were published on the gov.uk website in December 2023 explaining that the Home Office intended to seek a further period of planning permission via an SDO.
- **Briefings**
The Home Office conducted specific briefings by both written correspondence and oral communication on 27 October 2023. Stakeholders engaged at this time included: Braintree District Council, Essex County Council, Essex Police and Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board.
- **Technical Stakeholder Engagement (January 2024)**
The Home Office engaged with technical stakeholders through a formal letter which was sent on 18 January 2024. This included a summary of the proposals and a site plan. Recipients of this letter included: Braintree District Council, DHSC, Essex County Council, National Highways, NHS England and Essex Police.
- **Continuation of the Multi-Agency Forums (MAFs)**
Having begun MAFs in April 2023, the Home Office will continue to undertake regular engagement with key stakeholders via the MAF and associated sub-groups (as set out above) throughout the operational lifetime of the site.

2.3. Condition 26 Engagement Exercise

Notwithstanding the continuous engagement, the Home Office requested the views of local service providers allowing them a period of not less than 14 calendar days to respond. To prepare this report, local service providers were invited to make representations on local service impacts, the effectiveness of any arrangements already made by the Home Office and associated mitigations as a consequence of the operation of the site.

Information provided, when it was provided and the period for responses

The Home Office sent letters to the statutory providers of relevant local services on Friday 18 October 2024, providing a deadline of Monday 04 November 2024 for responses. This timeline is in accordance with Condition 26 which stipulates a minimum of 14 calendar days for local service providers to make their representations. A copy of the letter that was sent is at Annex A. A copy of the Local Services Impact Summary which was sent with the letter is at Annex B.

The organisations and persons contacted as part of this engagement were as follows:

- Essex County Council
- Braintree District Council
- NHS England – Migrant Health Commissioning
- NHS Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Partnership
- Mid and South Essex Clinical Commissioning Group
- East of England Ambulance Service
- UK Health Security Agency

- Department of Health and Social Care
- Anglian Water Services
- Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex
- Essex Police
- Essex Fire Service
- Crown Premises Fire Safety Inspectorate
- National Highways
- East of England Strategic Migration Partnership (contacted for information purposes, although not a statutory provider)

The Home Office received five responses from the following service providers, which are summarised in this report:

- East of England Ambulance Service
- Essex County Council – Adult Social Care
- East of England Strategic Migration Partnership
- Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex
- National Highways

The other organisations contacted as part of this engagement did not provide a response.

Condition 26 Engagement Outcomes

The Home Office has set out below a summary of the responses received from each local service provider along with aspects of our continuous engagement with local service providers.

3. Health Care

The Home Office has worked extensively with local and national health partners including those represented on the MAF and associated sub-groups, to develop the healthcare provision which is currently being delivered on site. The Health and Social Care Sub-Group of the MAF which commenced on 05 May 2023, was specifically established to consider ways in which the Home Office can minimise impact on local health services and facilitate healthcare on site. Elements of Home Office engagement with health stakeholders are highlighted below.

3.1. Previous Engagement Summary

Initial Official Engagement – March 2023

In March 2023, the Home Office commenced formal engagement with health partners on the proposals for the Wethersfield Site.

Essential Health Partners who formed part of this engagement were:

- Mid & South Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB)
- East of England Public Health
- Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)
- NHS England (NHSE)
- UK Health Security Agency (UK HSA)
- Integrated Care Board
- Strategic Migration Partnership

The specific briefings notifying about the SDO in October 2023 included Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board.

The Health and Social Care MAF Sub-Group – from May 2023

The Health and Social Care Sub-group convenes fortnightly. This forum provides an opportunity to maintain effective lines of communication between local stakeholders including Essex County Council, NHS, DHSC, ICB and Strategic Migration Partnership, the Home Office and on-site service providers. It has enabled the Home Office to discuss live issues, particularly around the maintenance of health service and site safety.

Operational Health Review – November 2023

The initial Operational Health Review held in November/December 2023 with DHSC, NHS England, and the Integrated Care Board, captured and shared operational lessons learnt and best practice with the group covering the current health provision, engagement, funding, and data sharing. These learnings were also shared with the broader Strategic Health Oversight Group (SHOG). The Health Reviews will be

important throughout the operation of the site for assessing the effectiveness of the current arrangements.

Technical Stakeholder Engagement – January 2024

On 18 January 2024, the Home Office communicated with technical stakeholders concerning the SDO which included health partners: DHSC, East of England Ambulance services Trust, Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group, NHS England, NHS Mid and South Essex England Integrated Care Partnership and UK Health Security Agency.

In response, in a letter dated 29 January 2024, the Mid and South Essex NHS Alliance raised that they might have capacity concerns if the Home Office were to reach the prospective maximum 1,700 SUs permitted to be accommodated at the site:

- *‘The health centre currently operating on site is busy, with little capacity to provide additional services for an increase in population. Growth from around 500 residents at present to up to 1,700 residents as proposed will require an increase in suitable space to enable adequate primary healthcare services to be provided. If requested, the ICB can provide advice on the amount and type of space required.’*

The Home Office, responded in a letter dated 08 March 2024:

- *‘The onsite medical centre is set up and scaled to provide medical screening on arrival and routine primary care in line with the funding provided. The medical screening capacity is a key factor in the site intake volumes which, as a result, is limited to 30 per day and 90 per week⁴. This is currently assessed as the maximum practical volume. In the majority of cases to date, isolation beds have been utilised where infectious diseases are identified during initial medical screening. The intake numbers have also been calibrated to ensure sufficient isolation beds are available, should they be required. In the event of a need to increase capacity building 1027 could be re-purposed to provide additional isolation beds.*
- *However, the medical provision, including the rooms used, is subject to routine review in line with site capacity increase and there is flexibility. For example, should further medical rooms be required, six modular buildings are currently held in reserve. The Home Office will continue to engage with the ICB on the suitability and capacity of medical facilities.*
- *The Home Office have committed to carry out an annual review on the use of health services and bring together partners (DHSC, NHS England, UKHSA, and Integrated Care Boards) to take stock on funding arrangements and healthcare provisions that will be required for future years during the site’s operational period.’*

The services, as described within the Local Services Impact Summary, have been agreed with health partners (DHSC, NHS England, UKHSA and the ICB). The HO response dated 08 March 2024 details the further mitigations that were proposed when site capacity was for 1,700 SUs. Since the letter of 08 March 2024, the

⁴ Note that following further conversations based on operational experience, the inflow number of SUs to be accommodated on the site will be up to 60 per week (and a maximum of 30 per day).

decision has been made to limit the regular occupancy of the site to a maximum of 800 SUs during its lifetime. However, if additional surge capacity is needed to manage higher than forecast demand, a decision may be taken to utilise an additional 445 bed spaces for short and defined periods of time. This would bring total bed spaces to 1,245. If this were the case, there will be a detailed schedule of activity to return the site to a maximum population of 800 as soon as possible. In light of the reduced capacity (800 regular occupancy and 1,245 surge), the mitigations noted in the HO response of 08 March 2024 (including the use of building 1027 and additional six modular units) are no longer required to be implemented.

Further details are contained within Section 3.3 of the Local Services Impact Summary (annexed to the LSP).

Wethersfield Health Needs Assessment – April 2024

In April 2024, Essex County Council published the 'Wethersfield Health Needs Assessment'⁵ which was sent to the ICB. The report made the following recommendations:

- Physical Health: Intensify focus on infectious disease management and dental care by improving diagnostic services and establishing onsite facilities.
- Mental Health: Focusing on the importance of mental health especially for users with complex trauma. Enhance identification and support for complex trauma cases through rigorous screening and referral to specialised services.
- Emotional and Social Well-being: Facilitate community integration via events and collaboration with local services. Address essential living needs and legal understanding through improved informational support and essential service provision.
- Multi-Agency Collaboration: Strengthen stakeholder partnerships through the establishment of regular communication channels and information-sharing agreements. This will also involve adjustments to site facilities and public reassurance efforts to improve community perceptions.

In response, the ICB has addressed these points and has taken the following steps:

- Physical Health:
There are no dental care facilities on-site. Access to dental care is available off-site via existing pathways in line with the general population.
In regard to infectious disease management, the ICB have confirmed that the IPC have been to site several times since the 'Wethersfield Health Needs Assessment' report and have supported the writing and implementation of the amended and revised [REDACTED] documentation. This revised plan, which can be found at Annex Z of the full OMP⁶, went live in May 2024 and had input from ECC, UKHSA, PHE and the ICB.
Additional processes for the management of infectious diseases on site have been implemented since the 'Wethersfield Health Needs Assessment' report and include:
 - the installation of dedicated laundry equipment for the washing of items from the isolation block; and
 - the completion of iHASCO training for all on-site cleaners which includes a module titled 'Infection Control and Prevention in Care'.

⁵ Public Health Team Essex County Council, 'Wethersfield Health Needs Assessment' (April 2024).

⁶ Annex Z of the Full OMP – [REDACTED] ([REDACTED] Wethersfield Asylum Accommodation Infectious Disease Prevention Control (IPC) Management Plan.

- Mental Health: The Global Mental Health Assessment Tool is currently being utilised on site.
- Emotional and Social Wellbeing: Work is progressing on establishing an on-site provision with [REDACTED]
- Multi-Agency Collaboration: Work is continuing on furthering collaboration and multiple activities are being worked through.

Regular ongoing engagement

The Home Office continues to undertake regular engagement with health stakeholders to both support progress in delivery on-site at Wethersfield and in addressing any concerns or issues. All health care stakeholders are represented on the Wethersfield MAF or Health and Social Care Sub-Group, where all professionals who may have a role in supporting asylum seekers at large accommodation sites meet to plan and review delivery.

3.2. Condition 26 Engagement Outcome

In response to the letter (Annex A), the Home received two responses concerning health care which are summarised below.

East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust

The East of England Ambulance Service (EEAST) responded in a letter received on 04 November 2024.

Overall, the EEAST considers that the mitigations detailed in the Local Services Impact Summary significantly reduce the demand on emergency ambulance services during the hours the medical centre is in operation. The response further states that the EEAST has created a Standard Operating Procedure for asylum accommodation at Wethersfield and to date, the measures in place have proven effective.

The EEAST have raised two further points which are replicated below:

- Potential increase in the level of need during hours the Medical Centre is not in operation... and whether further mitigations are required.
- Impact of travel times to the site in the event of a major incident. Further discussion on processes to ensure safe evacuation of service users and staff and on-site medical care whilst awaiting emergency ambulance services.

Home Office position: The Home Office notes the points raised and will continue to engage with EEAST and address these points in a written response. We note here that during the hours when the Medical Centre is not open, the provision of medical care is in line with that available to the general public, including the availability of out-of-hours medical advice via NHS 111.

The EEAST has noted that the local road network may impact its ability to access the site in the event of a major incident requiring significant emergency ambulance support during usual rush hour traffic.

In addressing this point, the Home Office notes that the site was previously used as a military base which included service family accommodation, where ambulance services may have been needed in the case of a major event.

The accommodation provider has taken significant steps to ensure SUs remain safe during a major on-site incident. In the event of a major incident requiring the response of emergency services, the accommodation provider has in place procedures, which ensure the effective management and safe evacuation of the site if required. These can be found annexed to the full site Operational Management Plan (OMP) and include:

- **Annex A – 999 Emergency Actions**
This document notes the systems and processes in place for various on-site incidents which ensure emergency services are contacted with accurate information, including any changes to normal routes of access to the site in light of the incident.
- **Annex I [REDACTED] Business Continuity Plan**
The Business Continuity Plan includes detail of ten emergency scenarios, site-specific emergency assembly points and actions to be taken in emergency scenarios which support critical activities.
- **Annex N Emergency Evacuation Plan**
This document contains details of the processes in place to ensure the safety of employees and service users and to achieve the resumption of operations and services in the event of an emergency affecting normal operational activities. It details the responsibilities of the Emergency Control Officer, on-site fire marshals and first aiders in an emergency event.

As noted, the accommodation provider has in place procedures to ensure, in the event of a major incident, interim support is available on site which serves to mitigate any delay faced by the ambulance service. The Home Office also notes that the on-site medical centre is open from 10:00 to 18:00, and although does not replace emergency services, would provide medical assistance which covers a proportion of the rush hour period.

Essex County Council Adult Social Care Services

Essex County Council Adult Social Care Services (ASC) responded in an email received on 04 November 2024. In their response, they referred to Essex County Council's duties under the Care Act 2014 which concern their statutory duty to assess the needs of any adult or carer who appears to require care and support.

- ASC noted an increase in adult social care referrals requiring assessments/enquiries as a consequence of the operation of the site which has resulted in additional financial impact to the service.

Home Office position: The Home Office as part of the funding package for local authorities provides a one-off payment of £3,500 per occupied bedspace. The Home Office makes payment to the Local Authority through the provision of a grant as detailed at Section 2 of the Local Services Impact Summary (annexed to the LSP).

Local Authority grants are provided to Braintree District Council and may be drawn down upon by the County Council for the funding of statutory obligations, including Adult Social Care. Grant funding for Braintree District

Council to support the site has been agreed by the Home Office and payments will be made through quarterly grant provisions in arrears of £3,500 per occupied bedspace.

The Home Office will issue a fresh Funding Instruction each financial year for which funding is approved. For the 2023/24 financial year, the Home Office initially contacted partners on 13 October 2023, with amendment versions issued on 25 October 2023, following consultations. For the 2024/25 financial year, the Home Office issued a new funding instruction on 25 May 2024.

This mechanism ensures that local authorities are able to determine how best to utilise this funding to address impacts of the site, including on local services. The Local Authority will need to demonstrate (for monitoring and scheme evaluation purposes) that they have fulfilled the funding instructions in supporting the use of the site by the Home Office. The Funding Instruction covers the funding of statutory obligations of the Local Authority and anything otherwise agreed with the Home Office. This Local Authority Grant Funding is separate and in addition to the funding arranged for police and health services at Wethersfield.

The ability of Essex County Council to draw down on funding from BDC for these services has been discussed between the HO and BDC as part of a routine check-in on 28 November 2024. Braintree District Council has confirmed that it is in touch with the relevant teams to support this. The HO will be writing to Essex County Council to confirm those arrangements.

4. Police and Fire Services

The safety and security of the site, the asylum seekers and local communities are of the utmost importance to the Home Office.

4.1. Previous Engagement Summary

Engagement with the local police force can be summarised as covering two areas: operational activity and funding.

Operational Engagement

Engagement on the operational function is maintained through the MAF and relevant subgroups, which includes the Communication and Engagement Sub-Group, Operations Sub-Group and the Health and Social Care Sub-Group, which provide further engagement opportunities.⁷

Police and Community Safety MAF Sub-Group and Site Operations Meetings

With agreement from participants, the Policing and Community Safety Sub-Group which convened fortnightly has been dissolved and merged with the fortnightly Site Operations Meeting (which form part of the MAF Operations Sub-Group). This ensures effective collaboration is maintained as policing and community safety is included as a regular agenda item at these meetings. These meetings provide an opportunity to maintain effective lines of communication between local stakeholders including Essex Police, Essex Fire Service, the Home Office and on-site service providers. It has enabled the Home Office to discuss live issues, particularly around the maintenance of site safety and public order.

Funding Engagement

The Home Office has introduced a policy of financial support in recognition that the site at Wethersfield may have a material adverse impact on Essex Police. The 'Large Sites for Asylum Accommodation: support for police forces policy'⁸, provides a mechanism through which the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) or Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) can apply for financial grants. This serves to cover costs associated with the security and policing of the Wethersfield site.

The Police, Fire and Crime Commission for Essex submits bids to the Home Office through this mechanism which set out their forecasted costs based on their anticipated requirements for that period. Further details are contained within section 4.2.1. of the Local Services Impact Summary.

Challenge Panel – February 2024

Essex Police provided a year end forecast for financial year 2023/24. Within the grant policy, there is provision for bids and expenditure to be reviewed by the Home Office and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS). A panel was convened on 13 February 2024, with representatives of the Home Office Large Sites Police grant team, members of the Home Office Police

⁷ The Communication and Engagement Sub-Group is attended by Essex Police. The Health and Social Care Sub-Group is attended by both Essex Police and Essex Fire Service.

⁸ [Large sites for asylum accommodation: support for police forces - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/large-sites-for-asylum-accommodation-support-for-police-forces)

Funding team and HMICFRS. The information provided by Essex Police, as part of the panel, supported the policy. Having invited bids for the 2024/25 financial year, Essex Police submitted a bid in line with the policy which was discussed at a panel on 6 November 2024 with Essex Police. A recommendation will be made to ministers who will ultimately agree on the funding.

4.2. Condition 26 Engagement Outcome

The letter (Annex A) sent by the Home Office received a response from the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex, which is summarised below.

Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex responded in a letter dated 04 November 2024. It highlights the development and experiences on the site to date, along with the impact and effect of mitigations in place.

The Commissioner acknowledges that through the MAFs and other mechanisms, strong and consistent community engagement has been achieved. Consultations are being undertaken to understand possible tension and ensure that the Police and partners are able to act quickly to mitigate any risks.

Outlined below is a summary of the response and the mitigations in place:

- It remains the judgement of Essex Police that in light of incidents and events on site to-date, the current level of staffing is correct and acknowledges the mitigation provided by the provision of grant funding.
- Following the multi-agency table-top exercise in February 2024, the Commissioner was satisfied that the comments from the subsequent debrief have successfully been fed back into the relevant plans.
- The force has previously expressed concerns about the level of crime prevention and Prevent activity being undertaken on the site but is aware that the site management is taking steps to increase this.
- The requirement to allocate [REDACTED] police officers to the Wethersfield area may have been considered to have an adverse impact on the Police Force as although the funding is in place for an additional [REDACTED] officers, the temporary nature of this, means that they are unable to hire additional officers, consequently requiring a redistribution of the officers.

Home Office position: Police numbers are an operational matter for the police who will ensure their service is appropriately resourced. Currently [REDACTED] police officers are attached to the site in full-time roles to respond to matters that arise from the operation of the site as asylum accommodation, within the site and surrounding community. The Police Service retains the ability to call on additional resource and allocate that resource as needed. Currently these officers serve the wider Three Fields Ward area which remains at their discretion in line with their operational independence. It is also at the Force's discretion to bid for additional resource, in line with the policy, should they wish to (they may, for example, review their resourcing need as site numbers increase).

Any awards made through the grant mechanism are subject to annual review. The Police Force are to ensure appropriate governance to track and monitor costs directly associated with the site at Wethersfield. It remains open to the Police Force to revise bids to reflect actual costs incurred, which the Home Office will engage with at least annually.

The Home Office does not expect to set a minimum cost threshold to qualify for grant funding, as exists for Special Grants. The department will consider all reasonable estimated costs, itemised and evidenced, which ensures appropriate and effective mitigation of impact.

Further details of the funding principles and policy as a whole can be found in the full guidance for the police large site policy⁹.

- Concerns were raised regarding the location of service users on site at any given time.

Home Office position: The nature of a non-detained asylum site and the need to respect the individual human rights of each asylum seeker prevents the Home Office from enforcing measures that require service users to inform on their location. However, there is provision in place for service users to sign in and out, which is encouraged but is not mandatory. The Home Office is currently considering the option of installing a tap-in tap-out system at the Wethersfield Site.

- The Essex Police have stipulated that they may face some challenges with an increase of service users on site as cases of TB are still expected and if a service user were to refuse to isolate it would be the responsibility of the police force to detain and return the individual.

Home Office position: The Home Office will continue to review through the MAF (and associated sub-groups) any increases or issues that arise as a result of this, however, to date there has only been one occasion throughout the operation of the site where a service user has refused to isolate. If this were to become a more prevalent issue further discussions can be had.

⁹ (n 8)

5. Social Care for Children

The safeguarding and wellbeing of children is of the utmost importance to the Home Office, in light of its duty under section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009. The Allocation of Asylum Accommodation policy provides that asylum seekers under the age of 18 are not accommodated within the large sites programme.

5.1. Previous Engagement Summary

Engagement on the operational function is maintained through the MAF and relevant subgroups, which includes the Health and Social Care Sub-Group. Consideration of the implications and possible effects of large site accommodation on local services concerning minors are continually reviewed and engagement sought. However, due to the exclusion of this group from accommodation at large sites, this is not something which is currently having a large impact on local services. That said, where age disputed cases are processed and successfully deemed, these are referred to local services.

5.2. Condition 26 Engagement Outcome

The letter (Annex A) sent by the Home Office received a response from the Strategic Migration Partnership, which is summarised below and although engagement was made with other representatives no further responses were received.

Strategic Migration Partnership

The Strategic Migration Partnership (SMP) were contacted for information purposes and provided a response on 04 November 2024 regarding the statutory responsibilities of Essex County Council in relation to the social care of children.

Outlined below is a summary of the response and the mitigations in place:

- Age assessment referrals received from the Site may impact Essex County Council's ability to accept age assessment referrals from the National Transfer Scheme. In November 2023, there was an increase in the number of age assessment referrals from the Site which resulted in additional demand on Children's Services.

Home Office position: The Home Office has previously addressed these concerns. The allocation of asylum accommodation policy for the Wethersfield Site was introduced in July 2023 and stipulates that any service users with an active age dispute claim are not accommodated at Wethersfield. In light of the concerns raised in November 2023, the Home Office implemented a new stage to the mitigation strategy in January 2024 which further reduced referrals from the site. This new stage ensured that any SUs who had previously raised an age dispute claim (including those who had subsequently been assessed by the Home Office as being over the age of 18) were not accommodated as part of the programme at Wethersfield.

Home Office locally managed records in relation to age disputes at Wethersfield commence from September 2023. █████ were initially leading

upon the referrals into Essex County Council, but this was taken over by the Home Office Oversight and Assurance Team in September 2023 and the figures provided are from that date.

Table 5.2. Number of Age Dispute Cases (arising from the Wethersfield Site)

Month	Sep 23	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan 24 ¹⁰	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Number of Age Dispute Cases ¹¹	2	0	9	8	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0

Table 5.2 shows that since the implementation of the revised mitigation strategy in January 2024, there has been a notable and continued decline in the number of age dispute referrals to Essex County Council. Numbers for age dispute referrals from the site are currently consistently low, stable and are not considered to pose a material impact on Essex County Council but we continue to be alive to the risks.

- Funding arrangements that are in place between the Home Office and local authorities for the provision of statutory services are paid to Braintree District Council rather than directly to Essex County Council.

Home Office position: The Home Office as part of the funding package for local authorities provides a one-off payment of £3,500 per occupied bedspace. The Home Office makes payment to the Local Authority through the provision of a grant as detailed at Section 2 of the Local Services Impact Summary (annexed to the LSP).

Local Authority grants are provided to the District Council and may be drawn down upon by the County Council for the funding of statutory obligations.

The Home Office will issue a fresh funding instruction each financial year for which funding is approved. This mechanism ensures that local authorities are able to determine how best to utilise this funding to address impacts of the site, including on local services. The Local Authority will need to demonstrate (for monitoring and scheme evaluation purposes) that they have fulfilled the funding instructions in supporting the use of the site by the Home Office. The Funding Instruction covers the funding of statutory obligations of the Local Authority and anything otherwise agreed with the Home Office. This Local Authority Grant Funding is separate and in addition to the funding arranged for Financial Year 2023-24 for police and health services at Wethersfield.

The ability of Essex County Council to draw down on funding from BDC for these services has been discussed between the HO and BDC as part of a routine check-in on 28 November 2024. The HO will be writing to Essex County Council to confirm those arrangements.

¹⁰ Introduction of the additional stage to the age dispute mitigation strategy.

¹¹ These are the number of age dispute cases referred to Essex County Council from the Wethersfield Site. These figures are consistent with the Condition 22 Report, which requires the average and maximum number of resident service users meeting each unsuitability criterion (including the number of SUs determined as below the age of 18). The age dispute cases for the period of April 2024 to October 2024 were all assessed as being over the age of 18 and therefore did not meet an unsuitability criterion.

- The inflow of new arrivals to the Site could be staggered over a few weeks to mitigate for potential increases in referrals to Children's Services.

Home Office position: The Home Office can confirm that the inflow number of service users to be accommodated on the site will be staggered and will be a maximum of 60 SUs per week (and a maximum of 30 SUs per day). The Home Office will monitor the onboarding of SUs through weekly inflow impact review meetings. These offer a forum through which the onboarding of SUs is monitored and any impact to on-site provision assessed. The decision to onboard additional service users will only be taken following an agreed outcome of the weekly impact review meetings as part of the governance processes for the site. This will ensure the provision of services and facilities for all those accommodated as part of the programme at Wethersfield. The MAFs will continue to provide a mechanism through which local service providers can discuss any impact to local services and inform the Home Office of any concerns.

6. Public Health

The provision of public health services and control of infectious diseases is noted as a relevant local service in the SDO and includes the management of communicable diseases, public health and sanitation.

6.1. Previous Engagement Summary

Engagement on public health is maintained through the MAF and relevant subgroups, which includes the Health and Social Sub-Group. Consideration of the implications and possible effects of a large site accommodation on local services concerning public health considerations are continually reviewed and engagement sought. Policy is continuously updated in line with all recommendations by NHS England and the WHO. Special consideration has been given to any rise in infectious diseases, and protocols are in place to manage any new and/or emerging outbreaks.

Measures have been taken to ensure that food hygiene standards and the testing of the potable water supply are maintained to the highest standards and comply with all regulatory requirements. Routine engagement with water authorities and any other regulatory bodies is maintained and informed of any development which affect the service and supply.

6.2. Condition 26 Engagement Outcome

The Home Office received no formal response to the letter at Annex A regarding public health. The Home Office will continue to discuss the impact and mitigations through continuing engagement mechanisms (MAFs and associated sub-groups) throughout the operational lifetime of the site.

7. Waste Management

Although not specified as a relevant local service within the SDO, the management of waste is a local service which has been considered in light of any material adverse impact to local services.

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 places a duty on a Local Authority to arrange for the collection of household waste and, if requested, of commercial and industrial waste. In respect of this, the statutory duty rests with Essex County Council.

7.1. Previous Engagement Summary

Ongoing engagement is maintained with Essex County Council and the necessary steps and procedures have been carried out to ensure the safe and secure disposal of site waste. Protocols for any medical or hazardous waste are in place in accordance with the most up to date regulatory requirements. Where possible, sustainable practices are encouraged.

7.2. Condition 26 Engagement Outcome

The Home Office received no formal response to the letter at Annex A regarding waste management. The Home Office will continue to discuss impact and mitigations through continuing engagement mechanisms (MAFs and associated sub-groups) throughout the operational lifetime of the site.

8. Highway Safety and Transport

The responsibility for highway safety is shared between National Highways (for motorways and major A roads) and the local highway authority, Essex County Council.

8.1. Previous Engagement Summary

Ongoing engagement is maintained with highway safety and transport stakeholders, which includes the local highways authority, and the necessary steps and procedures have been carried out to ensure there is an active traffic management system in place. Protocols for safe entrance and exit from site on to public highways has been secured in cooperation with the necessary bodies.

8.2. Condition 26 Engagement Outcome

The Home Office received a response from the National Highways to the letter at Annex A which is summarised below. No further responses were received on this matter.

National Highways

National Highways in a letter dated 29 October 2024 offered no objection to the discharge of Condition 26 and stated:

- The site has been in operation for some months and has not resulted in any detrimental impact upon the SRN [Strategic Road Network] and therefore we have no objection to the discharge of the condition.
- The Climate Change Committee's 2022 Report to Parliament notes that for the UK to achieve net zero carbon status by 2050, action is needed to support a modal shift away from car travel. The NPPF supports this position, advising that appropriate opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport should be taken up.

Home Office position: The Home Office notes the points raised on supporting a modal shift away from car travel and we actively encourage staff to engage in alternative means of transport including car sharing and walking, cycling and public transport across our estate where these options are achievable.

The provision of transportation for service users to and from site is via a free shuttlebus service. Services are provided to three locations, Braintree, Colchester and Chelmsford, at least three times a day.

The Wethersfield Travel Plan (September 2024) sets out the key principles and travel plan strategy for staff and visitors to and from the Site which includes a range of measures to minimise the use of the private car as a mode of travel. Section 4.9 of the Travel Plan outlines the ways in which car sharing is promoted to site staff including through correspondence and written notices, supporting uptake. Printed notices are provided in shared working areas and communal spaces including canteens. The notices include details of the car sharing database.

9. Recreational Facilities & Library Services

The provision of recreational facilities and library services are the statutory responsibility of Essex County Council.

9.1. Previous Engagement Summary

Ongoing engagement is maintained with Essex County Council and the necessary steps and procedures have been carried out to mitigate any impact on recreational facilities and/or library services. Within the operational area of the Site, the Home Office has created and provided recreational areas and facilities for the use of service users and have not been made aware of any impact to these local services.

9.1. Condition 26 Engagement Outcome

The Home Office received no formal response to the letter at Annex A regarding recreational facilities and library services. The Home Office will continue to discuss impact and mitigations through continuing engagement mechanisms (MAFs and associated sub-groups) throughout the operational lifetime of the site.

10. Summary

The Condition 26 Engagement Report, in conjunction with the Local Services Programme Wethersfield (December 2024) serves to discharge and satisfy Condition 26 of the SDO.

Within this report the Home Office has actively met the stipulated requirements under Condition 26(5)(a) and (b) by engaging all statutory local service providers (as defined by the Order) allowing them a period of not less than 14 calendar days to make representations in response. The Home Office has included and set out the summary of the responses, mitigations and outcomes within this report.

The Home Office has also set out a summary of previous engagement with each local service provider and made clear our commitment to continuous engagement for the period for which the site is operational. It will further engage as required during the decommissioning period (the full period of the SDO).

Consideration of all impacts, actual or foreseeable, have been set out within not only this report but also the Local Services Programme which is written in line with and in accordance with the arrangements set out within the phasing scheme.

Where service providers have not offered a response as part of this engagement, the Home Office will continue to provide open avenues of communication, be it directly with the Home Office or as part of the MAF and associated sub-groups.

Concerns raised through this engagement have been addressed and mitigated where possible. In the alternative, continuous engagement will be maintained to ensure we are able to provide the most comprehensive and collaborative environment for local service providers to work in conjunction with the Home Office and other government departments, to deliver on our obligations to provide accommodation to asylum seekers under the Refugee Convention 1951.

Annex A: Home Office Letter to Relevant Local Service Providers sent 18 October 2024.

[Recipient's Name & Address]

[Date]

Dear [Local Service Provider]

Re: Special Development Order Wethersfield - Local Services Programme

I am writing to you concerning the requirement of [Condition 26 of The Town and Country Planning \(Former RAF Airfield Wethersfield\) \(Accommodation for Asylum-Seekers etc.\) Special Development Order 2024](#) for a Local Services Programme for the Wethersfield Site (Site).

To support discharging this condition, the Home Office is requesting your views on any local services impact the development (authorised by the Special Development Order (SDO)) may have had on the local service you represent, in addition to seeking feedback on the mitigations currently in place.

"Local service impact" is defined by the SDO as "any material adverse impact that the accommodation of service users on the Order land may be expected to have on relevant local services".

The SDO granted temporary planning permission for development at the former RAF Airfield Wethersfield relating to the provision of accommodation for up to 1,700 single adult male asylum-seekers between the ages of 18 to 65, and associated development and services as specified in the Order. The permission is granted for a period of three years, with up to six months' decommissioning, which expires on 10 October 2027. The first asylum seekers were moved to the site in July 2023.

In March 2024, the Home Office decided to limit the regular occupancy of the site to a maximum of 800 service users during its lifetime, with an additional surge capacity of 445 bed spaces to be used for short and defined periods of time if needed.

Through Multi-Agency Forums and an extensive programme of wider engagement since the spring of 2023 we have discussed, and continue to discuss, the potential impacts of the Site on local services with relevant stakeholders and proposed and worked through necessary mitigation measures.

Please find attached the Local Services Impact Summary which includes details of:

- the relevant local services and their statutory base;
- the potential impacts of the accommodation at the Site; and
- details of the mitigation measures in place.

In accordance with Condition 26 of the SDO, you are invited to make representations on the local services for which you hold a statutory responsibility, by responding to the questions below:

1. What is your view on the local service impact(s)?
2. How effective are the arrangements already made by the Home Office to avoid or mitigate any local service impact?

The SDO provides a period of no less than 14 calendar days from receipt of this letter for you to make representations. I would therefore be grateful if a response could be provided to Wethersfield-CommunicationAndEngagement@homeoffice.gov.uk by Monday 04 November 2024.

Your views will be summarised in a report to be submitted with the Local Services Programme to the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, in line with the stipulations of Condition 26. We may follow up with further correspondence.



Home Office

Attached

Local Services Impact Summary: Wethersfield Site (September 2024)

Annex B: Local Services Impact Summary Wethersfield (September 2024)

Local Services Impact Summary
Wethersfield

September 2024

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1. Introduction

1. Condition 26 of The Town and Country Planning (Former RAF Airfield Wethersfield) (Accommodation for Asylum-Seekers etc.) Special Development Order 2024 (SDO) may be viewed in full via [this link](#).
2. As defined in the Order:

"local services impact" means any material adverse impact that the accommodation of service users on the Order land may be expected to have on relevant local services;

"local service provider" means a person or body that is—

- (a) represented on the Multi-Agency Forum, and*
- (b) responsible for the provision of a relevant local service;*

"relevant local service" means any service that is provided locally, on a statutory basis and at public expense, to persons living in the vicinity of the Order land, and on which the accommodation of service users on the Order land may reasonably be expected to have a material adverse effect, including—

- (a) health care, including acute care, other in-patient hospital care, physiotherapy, diagnostics, and ambulance transport;*
- (b) policing, including policing on and in the immediate vicinity of the Order land;*
- (c) social care for children;*
- (d) public health services and control of the spread of infectious diseases.*

3. This document sets out:
 - relevant local services as detailed in the SDO and their statutory base;
 - potential impacts on those services;
 - phasing considerations as a result of changes to the number of service users (SUs) accommodated on site; and
 - details of the mitigations in place.
4. It also considers the impact of the site on other relevant local services, including the provision of:
 - waste management;
 - highways and transportation;
 - recreational facilities and library services.
5. A high-level Plan-on-a-Page (POAP) is included at Annex A which details the time period over which local service arrangements are made.
6. In accordance with Condition 26 of the SDO, you are invited to make representations on the local services for which you hold a statutory responsibility, by responding to the questions below:
 - 1) What is your view on the local service impact(s)?
 - 2) How effective are the arrangements already made by the Home Office to avoid or mitigate any local service impact?

2. Health Care

Asylum seekers are eligible for free NHS health care in the same way as UK citizens and other permanent residents¹. The Home Office has worked with the NHS to support an on-site service through a provider, which remains the statutory responsibility of the NHS.

2.1. Relevant Local Service

The provision of health care is stipulated within the SDO as a relevant local service. Condition 26(1) of the SDO details the various aspects of the health care provision and includes:

- acute care;
- other in-patient hospital care;
- physiotherapy;
- diagnostics; and
- ambulance transport.

The provision of health care services has been achieved through significant engagement with the Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB), Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and NHS England. Organisations involved in the provision of health care are represented on the Wethersfield Multi-Agency Forum and relevant sub-groups.

2.2. Impacts and Mitigations

2.2.1. Demand on Local Health Services

The Home Office recognises that accommodating asylum seekers on site at Wethersfield may impact local health care provisions, due to an increase in demand. In order to effectively address or avoid any potential adverse impact, the Home Office has implemented several mitigations.

Suitability criteria

The Allocation of Asylum Accommodation policy suitability criteria operate to assess whether individual asylum seekers with complex health needs are suitable to be accommodated on this site.

Medical conditions which form part of this assessment include:

- active tuberculosis;
- infectious/active communicable diseases;
- serious mental health issues where there is a high risk of suicide, serious self-harm or risk to others;
- chronic disease; and
- HIV.

The Home Office has in place a process for re-accommodating SUs who are no longer suitable to be accommodated on-site which forms part of the Operational

¹ [NHS entitlements: migrant health visit - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-entitlements-migrant-health-visit)

Management Plan (OMP) for Wethersfield². Through the implementation of this process, any pressure on local health care provision will be reduced.

Health care provision at Wethersfield

To further mitigate impact on local health care services, the Home Office has implemented health care provision on-site, in accordance with Condition 24 of the SDO. The Home Office recognises the need to ensure this provision is adequate, encompassing its ability to treat a range of needs and conditions which could arise as part of accommodating SUs.

The provision on site includes a Medical Centre. In accordance with Condition 24, the Medical Centre is staffed by a medical team comprising:

- a health care assistant;
- a mental health nurse;
- a general nurse;
- an advanced nurse practitioner; and
- a general practitioner.

The provision of health care on site provides for both initial health screenings for new arrivals as well as all ongoing care to SUs accommodated as part of the programme at Wethersfield.

The commissioned on-site Medical Centre provides a comprehensive medical care facility that is open Monday to Friday, between the hours of 10:00 to 18:00. These times may be varied at the discretion of the Medical Centre Manager dependent on operational requirements.³

The services provided include:

- medical health screening of SUs when they first arrive at the authorised development;
- immunisation against diseases;
- a system that enables them to collect medicine that has been lawfully prescribed for them;
- a low-level trauma-informed mental health support service; and
- confidential health advice.⁴

Service users are informed of the on-site medical provision during their induction, as detailed in the OMP.

The Home Office has liaised with DHSC, NHSE and the local ICB to support health delivery onsite to minimise the impact on local healthcare services. Forming part of the on-site health provision is a vaccination schedule for individuals with uncertain or incomplete immunisation status, which is guided by the UK Health Security Agency. Under this schedule SUs are currently being offered, Tetanus, diphtheria and polio (Td/IPV), Meningococcal groups A, C, W and Y (MenACWY) and Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR). The vaccination provision is dependent on the age and history of

² Note that an Initial Operational Management Plan was published in line with Schedule 1, Part 2 of the SDO and references in this document are to that. The nature of contents is consistent with the Full OMP that is being prepared in line with Schedule 3, Part 3, Paragraphs 19-20.

³ [Special Development Order: Former RAF Airfield Wethersfield, Braintree, Essex, CM7 4AZ - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) – Schedule 1 Approved Documents, Part 2 Initial OMP – Wethersfield Site Operational Management Plan (Version 3.3) at para 32.

⁴ [The Town and Country Planning \(Former RAF Airfield Wethersfield\) \(Accommodation for Asylum-Seekers etc.\) Special Development Order 2024 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#) at Condition 24(4).

the SU. Seasonal vaccines such as influenza will also be available and will be offered.

Furthermore, supplementary medical care (including in-patient hospital care) is being delivered through provision off-site in local NHS services. As with the general population, access to secondary healthcare such as dentistry and ophthalmology is subject to NHS service availability. The ICB and healthcare providers supporting the site at Wethersfield have put in place the necessary pathways and will refer as required in line with clinical needs. Similarly, transport to off-site treatment is provided by the service provider and is demand-led. This has been specifically designed to provide the care asylum seekers are eligible for while reducing any impact on local services.

The Mid and South Essex Integrated Board in a letter of 05 April 2024 confirmed that the necessary Medical Centre provisions were in place at Wethersfield, in compliance with Condition 24 of the SDO.

In April 2024, Essex County Council published the 'Wethersfield Health Needs Assessment'⁵ which was sent to the ICB. The report made the following recommendations:

- Physical Health: Intensify focus on infectious disease management and dental care by improving diagnostic services and establishing onsite facilities.
- Mental Health: Focusing on the importance of mental health especially for users with complex trauma. Enhance identification and support for complex trauma cases through rigorous screening and referral to specialised services.
- Emotional and Social Well-being: Facilitate community integration via events and collaboration with local services. Address essential living needs and legal understanding through improved informational support and essential service provision.
- Multi-Agency Collaboration: Strengthen stakeholder partnerships through the establishment of regular communication channels and information-sharing agreements. This will also involve adjustments to site facilities and public reassurance efforts to improve community perceptions.

In response, the ICB has addressed these points and has taken the following steps:

- Physical Health: The recommendations are under consideration.
- Mental Health: The Global Mental Health Assessment Tool is currently being utilised on site.
- Emotional and Social Wellbeing: Work is progressing on establishing an on-site provision with Migrant Help.
- Multi-Agency Collaboration: Work is continuing on furthering collaboration and multiple activities are being worked through.

The funding of on-site medical provision

To further mitigate impact to local health care services, the Home Office has implemented an agreed health funding arrangement that covered initial costs against defined parameters. This funding is provided to the Department of Health and Social Care, on a per-bed tariff principle. The per-bed amount is agreed between Home Office, DHSC and NHSE and will be reviewed as to whether this is the best approach with NHSE and DHSC annually. The Home Office and DHSC have committed to carry out an annual review on the use of health services and bring together partners (DHSC, NHS England, UKHSA, and Integrated Care Boards) to take stock of funding

⁵ Public Health Team Essex County Council, 'Wethersfield Health Needs Assessment' (April 2024).

arrangements and healthcare provisions that will be required during the operational lifetime of the site at Wethersfield.

2.3. Phasing Considerations

The increase of accommodated SUs on site at Wethersfield will be planned in order to manage site stability and mitigate any adverse impact on local services.

As agreed with the ICB, the current staffing levels on-site are set for the provision of medical care. In light of the on-boarding of additional service users, additional staffing capacity can be resourced should demand on-site require it.

The mitigations currently in place, particularly the per-bed tariff, offer the flexibility and scalability to mitigate impact as SU numbers increase at Wethersfield. The Home Office will review the per-bed tariff with health partners as part of its annual review.

Following the letter sent on 18 January 2024 to technical stakeholders, the Home Office was informed by the Mid and South Essex NHS Alliance of capacity concerns in light of the prospective maximum 1,700 SUs permitted under the SDO for Wethersfield.

The Mid and South Essex NHS Alliance, in a letter dated 29 January 2024, raised the following concern -

'The health centre currently operating on site is busy, with little capacity to provide additional services for an increase in population. Growth from around 500 residents at present to up to 1,700 residents as proposed will require an increase in suitable space to enable adequate primary healthcare services to be provided. If requested, the ICB can provide advice on the amount and type of space required.'

The Home Office, responded in a letter dated 08 March 2024:

'The onsite medical centre is set up and scaled to provide medical screening on arrival and routine primary care in line with the funding provided. The medical screening capacity is a key factor in the site intake volumes which, as a result, is limited to 30 per day and 90 per week⁹. This is currently assessed as the maximum practical volume. In the majority of cases to date, isolation beds have been utilised where infectious diseases are identified during initial medical screening. The intake numbers have also been calibrated to ensure sufficient isolation beds are available, should they be required. In the event of a need to increase capacity building 1027 could be re-purposed to provide additional isolation beds.

However, the medical provision, including the rooms used, is subject to routine review in line with site capacity increase and there is flexibility. For example, should further medical rooms be required, six modular buildings are currently held in reserve. The Home Office will continue to engage with the ICB on the suitability and capacity of medical facilities.

The Home Office have committed to carry out an annual review on the use of health services and bring together partners (DHSC, NHS England, UKHSA, and Integrated Care Boards) to take stock on funding arrangements and healthcare

⁹ Note that following further conversations based on operational experience, the inflow number of SUs to be accommodated on the site is expected to be around 60 per week (two intakes of 30).

provisions that will be required for future years during the site's operational period.'

The services, as described within this document, have been agreed with Health partners (DHSC, NHS England, UKHSA and the ICB) and were based on a maximum site occupancy of 1,700 SUs. Since the letter of 08 March 2024, the decision has been made to limit the regular occupancy of the site to a maximum of 800 SUs⁷ during its lifetime. However, if additional surge capacity is needed to manage higher than forecast demand, a decision may be taken to utilise an additional 445 bed spaces for short and defined periods of time. This would bring total bed spaces to 1,245. If this were the case, there will be a detailed schedule of activity to return the site to a maximum population of 800 as soon as possible.

Intake decisions will be made by the Home Office following weekly Inflow Impact Review Meetings. These offer a forum through which the onboarding of SUs is monitored and any impact to on-site provision assessed. Representatives at this meeting include those from the Home Office, the site operator [REDACTED] and the on-site Medical Team [REDACTED].

The reduced regular occupancy capacity at Wethersfield and monitored inflow of SUs to the site, will mitigate any impact to health services due to the increase in SU numbers. In addition to monitoring the inflow of service users through the weekly Inflow Impact Review Meetings, the Home Office has in place a process in which impact to local services can be considered. The Multi-Agency Forums (MAFs), as defined by Condition 25 of the SDO, provide a mechanism through which local service providers can discuss any impact to local services. Through a process of inflow, pause and review, and in collaboration with stakeholders, impact on local services will be monitored.

2.4. Summary

The Local Services Impact Summary outlines the arrangements made by the Home Secretary in relation to the provision of health services for SUs at Wethersfield. These include the on-site health care facility. Moreover, the summary also details the arrangements made which are designed to avoid or mitigate impact, including the per-bed tariff for funding which is reviewed annually.

The time-period for these arrangements is represented on the High-Level Plan-on-a-Page, at Annex A. Health provisions are represented in blue and show the agreed stages of health funding, including the relevant milestones, which exist for the lifetime of the site. Engagement is also shown through the MAF and health subgroups which convene on a fortnightly basis.

⁷ [Wethersfield factsheet - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/wethersfield-factsheet)

3. Police and Fire Services

The safety and security of the site, the asylum seekers and local communities are of the utmost importance to the Home Office.

Essex Police and Essex Fire and Rescue Service have been longstanding stakeholders of the Home Office for this project and are represented on the Wethersfield Multi-Agency Forum. The Home Office has also engaged with the Crown Premises' Fire Safety Inspectorate (CPFSI), regarding the provision of accommodation on-site.

3.1. Relevant Local Service

Condition 26(1)(b) of the SDO specifies policing as a relevant local service, which includes policing on and in the immediate vicinity of the Order land. This is reflective of the core duty of the police service to protect the public by detecting and preventing crime⁸, in addition to maintaining public order.⁹ Police resource and utilisation remains an operational matter for the local police force.

Although not listed as a 'relevant local service' in the SDO, the Home Office has considered the potential impact of the site on the local fire and rescue service. This reflects their representation on the MAFs, through which impacts of the operation of the site is routinely discussed with them.

3.2. Impacts and Mitigations

The Home Office has engaged with Essex Police and Essex Fire and Rescue Service, considering among other things the geographical location and occupation of the site. In recognition of the potential effects of the site and its context, the Home Office has proactively implemented measures to reduce the impact to the local police force and fire service.

3.2.1. Additional Demand on the Police Service Resource

The Home Office recognises that additional pressure may be placed on the 'business-as-usual' resource of the local police force, particularly in terms of the preservation of public order and potential increases in crime¹⁰.

A self-sufficient site

In the first instance, the Home Office has endeavoured to make the site as self-sufficient as possible, to minimise the impact on local communities and services. This includes an on-site security provision.

As detailed in the Operational Management Plan for Wethersfield (OMP)¹¹:

- The Home Office has engaged a provider for the provision of on-site security presence¹², reducing the need for police patrols. All security

⁸ Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, s24.

⁹ Public Order Act 1986, s12 & s14.

¹⁰ [Large sites for asylum accommodation: support for police forces policy \(16 June 2023\)](#)

¹¹ Note that an Initial Operational Management Plan was published in line with Schedule 1, Part 2 of the SDO and references in this document are to that. The nature of contents is consistent with the Full OMP that is being prepared in line with Schedule 3, Part 3, Paragraphs 19-20.

¹² [Special Development Order: Former RAF Airfield Wethersfield, Braintree, Essex, CM7 4AZ - GOV.UK](#)

[\(www.gov.uk\)](#) – Schedule 1 Approved Documents, Part 2 Initial OMP – Wethersfield Site Operational Management Plan (Version 3.3) at para 36.1.

personnel are licensed by the Security Industry Association (SIA) and are vetted by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).¹³

- Wethersfield is a non-detained site, enabling SUs to leave at any time. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] to maintain site safety.

Financial support through grant provision

The Home Office has introduced a policy of financial support in recognition that the site at Wethersfield may have a material impact on Essex Police. Further mitigation has been offered through the provision of additional funding.

The 'Large Sites for Asylum Accommodation: support for police forces policy'¹⁵, provides a mechanism through which the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) or Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) can apply for financial grants. This serves to cover costs associated with the security and policing of the Wethersfield site.

The grant is intended to support additional costs that can reasonably be assessed to derive from the site in the region for which the force is responsible. Grants can be used to cover the cost of staff pay (including the payment of overtime), mutual aid, rest day working costs and the hire of premises, vehicles, or equipment¹⁶.

This policy was published on 16 June 2023, and the grant provision was backdated to the start of the 2023/24 Financial Year. The process for applying for this grant is similar to that for the Police Special Grant, with which forces will be familiar.

Applications for the grant are made according to published criteria, which has been prepared in conjunction with His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS). The Home Office reviews the bid, which is subject to Ministerial approval. HMICFRS can conduct an independent review of the application to assess the scale of operations, risks and threats, and whether the costs are reasonable and proportionate and demonstrate value for money principles. The Home Office works closely with HMICFRS on any reviews conducted.

The policy, which has been effective since 2023, has been extended into 2024/25, and further consideration will take place on an annual basis. As a result of this policy and the grant funding, there is an on-site dedicated community policing presence.

These mitigations support a reasonable, fair and flexible approach to effectively mitigate any impact incurred by the local police force owing to the operation of asylum accommodation at Wethersfield.

3.2.2. Additional Demand on the Fire and Rescue Resource

The Home Office, through the Multi-Agency Forums, has engaged with the Essex Fire and Rescue Service in regard to the operation of the site. As demonstrated in the Operational Management Plan (OMP) for Wethersfield, provisions have been made to ensure fire safety on-site.

The Crown Premises Fire Safety Inspectorate (CPFSI) enforces the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 in government buildings, Parliament and other

¹³ (n 12) at para 36.2.

¹⁴ (n 12) at para 40.

¹⁵ [Large sites for asylum accommodation: support for police forces - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/large-sites-for-asylum-accommodation-support-for-police-forces)

¹⁶ *ibid.*

Crown premises (excluding Ministry of Defence buildings who have their own Inspectorate).

The CPFSI carries out audit and assurance to ensure that premises are safe and compliant. The CPFSI carried out visits to Wethersfield in October 2023 and March 2024, and in response, an action plan put in place with suitable management structures to oversee it.

As part of the Fire Risk Management Plan¹⁷, the Home Office requires the on-site service provider to ensure that their fire risk management processes will include (but not necessarily be limited to):

- Fire safety systems and equipment to both detect fires but also to respond to fires.
- Specified staff on-site to act as Fire Marshalls in the event of a fire or evacuation, all of whom must be HASCO trained. Their training includes use of portable firefighting appliances.
- Individual Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs) have been completed for all accommodation and any buildings utilised across the site. Action plans resulting from FRAs are reviewed, actioned, and resolved appropriately.
- Fire drills are conducted at a minimum once every 6 months. The fire alarm test is completed weekly.
- Fire safety including evacuation procedures is covered as part of the site induction. Evacuation procedures for accommodation is displayed on the Fire exit doors in several languages.

There is a complete fire evacuation procedure for the site. Also, at Annex H of the OMP is the [REDACTED] Wethersfield Local Emergency Process Chart Fire Emergency Identified on Site¹⁸, which outlines the process in the eventuality that a fire is detected on-site.

In light of the mitigations taken, the Home Office does not consider the operation of the site at Wethersfield to pose a material adverse impact on the local Fire and Rescue Service.

3.3. Phasing Considerations

3.3.1. Security

In regard to phasing and the on-site security provision, the number of security officers will be determined by the number of SUs accommodated at the site. The site operator is contracted to provide services on behalf of the Home Office. The site operator has a responsibility to manage safety and security on the site and will determine at what occupancy level the number of security officers will need to increase.

3.3.2. Police Service

The grant provision offered through the 'Large Sites for Asylum Accommodation: support for police forces policy'¹⁹, ensures the necessary scope and flexibility to support Essex Police as needed, as SU numbers on the site increase.

¹⁷ (n 12) at para 48.

¹⁸ (n 12) at Annex H: [REDACTED] Wethersfield Local Emergency Process Chart.

¹⁹ [Large sites for asylum accommodation: support for police forces - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/large-sites-for-asylum-accommodation-support-for-police-forces).

Police numbers are an operational matter for the police who will ensure their service is appropriately resourced. Currently [REDACTED] police officers are assigned to the site in full-time roles. The Police Service retains the ability to call on additional resource as needed which remains at their discretion in line with their operational independence.

Any awards made through the grant mechanism are subject to annual review. The Police Force are to ensure appropriate governance to track and monitor costs directly associated with the site at Wethersfield. It remains open to the Police Force to revise bids to reflect actual costs incurred, which the Home Office will engage with at least annually.

The Home Office does not expect to set a minimum cost threshold to qualify for grant funding, as exists for Special Grants. The department will consider all reasonable estimated costs, itemised and evidenced, which ensures appropriate and effective mitigation of impact.

3.3.3. Fire and Rescue Service

The mitigations noted above will continue to apply in respect of any increase to SU numbers on site at Wethersfield.

3.4. Summary

The Local Services Impact Summary outlines the arrangements made by the Home Secretary in relation to policing for the site at Wethersfield, which includes a grant mechanism for the police. The summary also details the arrangements made which are designed to avoid or mitigate impact, including a [REDACTED] on-site security provision.

Further, in respect of the Fire and Rescue Service, the on-site processes and provision offer mitigation to any fire risk posed by the operation of the site.

The time-period for these arrangements is represented on the High-Level Plan-on-a-Page (POAP), at Annex A. Police services are represented in purple and show the agreed stages of police funding, including the relevant milestones, for the lifetime of the site. Engagement is also shown through the MAF and associated subgroups which convene on a fortnightly basis.

4. Social Care for Children

The safeguarding and wellbeing of children is of the utmost importance to the Home Office, in light of its duty under section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009²⁰. The Allocation of Asylum Accommodation policy provides that asylum seekers under the age of 18 are not accommodated on sites forming part of the 'pathfinder' (large sites) programme.

4.1. Relevant Local Service

Provided within in the SDO, as a relevant local service, is the provision of social care for children. This reflects the statutory duty imposed on the Local Authority to safeguard and promote the welfare of children under section 22(3) of the Children Act 1989²¹. It is for the Local Authority to consider whether it is necessary to conduct an age assessment in light of any age dispute arising from the site. Essex County Council is responsible for Children's Services and is represented on the Wethersfield Multi-Agency Forum.

4.2. Impacts and Mitigations

The Wethersfield site only accommodates single, adult male asylum seekers. As children are not accommodated on site, the local services impact for the provision of social care for children is considered to be minimal, and any material adverse impact avoided.

From July 2023, the Home Office introduced an age dispute mitigation strategy for the site at Wethersfield, which excluded any person from being routed to the site who had claimed to be a child since entry, regardless as to whether they have subsequently been age assessed as significantly over 18. A process has been implemented for those who, after being accommodated on site, claim to be under the age of 18. Where the Home Office or Local Authority challenges the claimed age of a service user (SU), an age assessment is likely to be completed.

Further, annexed to the Operational Management Plan²² is 'Annex Y: [REDACTED] Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Framework' – Safeguarding Statement²³. This document outlines the commitment by the contracted service provide, [REDACTED] when delivering services for 'at risk' SUs or SUs with specific needs.

Funding considerations for the Local Authority

In addition to the above mitigations, the Home Office also provides a one-off payment of £3,500 to the Local Authority for new and occupied dispersal beds²⁴. The Home Office makes payment to the Local Authority through the provision of a grant. Section 110 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999²⁵ is the statutory provision through which the Home Office makes payments to local authorities which accommodate asylum

²⁰ [Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#).

²¹ [Children Act 1989](#), Section 22(3).

²² Note that an Initial Operational Management Plan was published in line with Schedule 1, Part 2 of the SDO and references in this document are to that. The nature of contents is consistent with the Full OMP that is being prepared in line with Schedule 3, Part 3, Paragraphs 19-20.

²³ [Special Development Order: Former RAF Airfield Wethersfield, Braintree, Essex, CM7 4AZ - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) – Schedule 1 Approved Documents, OMP Annex Y CRH Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Framework Statement.

²⁴ [Wethersfield factsheet - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

²⁵ [Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#).

seekers as part of the pathfinder programme. Grant funding for Braintree District Council to support the site has been agreed by the Home Office and payments will be made through quarterly grant provisions in arrears of £3,500 per occupied bedspace.

The Home Office will issue a fresh funding instruction each financial year for which funding is approved. This mechanism ensures that local authorities are able to determine how best to utilise this funding to address impacts of the site, including on local services. The Local Authority will need to demonstrate (for monitoring and scheme evaluation purposes) that they have fulfilled the funding instructions in supporting the use of the site by the Home Office. The Funding Instruction covers the funding of statutory obligations of the Local Authority and anything otherwise agreed with the Home Office.

This Local Authority Grant Funding is separate and in addition to the funding arranged for Financial Year 2023-24 for police and health services at Wethersfield.

4.3. Phasing Considerations

As the site only serves to accommodate adult asylum seekers, and owing to the processes in place described above, any increase in capacity on site is not considered to have an adverse impact on the local services provision for the social care of children.

Furthermore, the funding considerations, as noted above, offer sufficient mitigation to any impact faced by the Local Authority.

4.4. Summary

The Local Services Impact Summary outlines the arrangements made by the Home Secretary in relation to the provision of social care for children, including provision for single adult males. These include the Allocation of Asylum Accommodation policy which specifies the site at Wethersfield as only currently accommodating single, adult males between the ages of 18 to 65.

The summary also details the arrangements made which are designed to avoid or mitigate impact, which includes the funding arrangements for the Local Authority.

The time-period for these arrangements is represented on the High-Level Plan-on-a-Page (POAP), at Annex A. The provision of social care for children falls under 'Other Local Services' and is represented in yellow on the plan. The POAP shows the stages of agreed funding for the Local Authority in addition to operational landmarks, such as the implementation of the Age Dispute Mitigation Strategy. These mitigations are shown for the lifetime of the site.

5. Public Health

5.1. Relevant Local Service

The provision of public health services and control of infectious diseases is noted as a relevant local service in the SDO, reflecting the general duty imposed on a local authority²⁶. This service includes the management of communicable diseases, public health and sanitation.

The local service providers for the site at Wethersfield, in respect of sanitation, are Essex County Council and Anglian Water. In regard to the transmission of infectious diseases, the Home Office has engaged with the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA).

5.2. Impacts and Mitigations

5.2.1. Public Health – Transmission of Infectious Diseases

The possible transmission of infectious diseases offers a potential impact on the provision of local services.

To mitigate any possible effect, the Home Office has implemented a management plan for infectious diseases which is included as part of the Operational Management Plan for Wethersfield (OMP)²⁷, (Annex D Wethersfield Infectious Diseases Management Plan²⁸). This comprehensive document has been developed in line with public health advice and guidance and includes details of how infectious diseases are managed on-site at Wethersfield.

The Operational Management Plan states:

- Not all SUs will have been medically health screened before arriving on-site and therefore will be screened on arrival. Any potential new arrivals who identify as having an infectious disease are not allowed entry to Wethersfield.²⁹
- In the case of an outbreak while in residence, provision on-site includes an isolation facility. The Wethersfield Infectious Diseases Management Plan Annex D contains procedures for management and containment of the most likely varieties of infectious diseases including tuberculosis (TB) and scabies.
- Signage providing reminders and UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) guidance on hand washing is displayed throughout the site.³⁰

On-site medical provision and vaccination schedule

On-site medical facilities are available to treat a range of needs and conditions which may arise as part of the accommodation programme, including appropriate processes and facilities to manage those who require medical isolation.

²⁶ [Public Health \(Control of Disease\) Act 1984 \(legislation.gov.uk\) at s1.](#)

²⁷ Note that an Initial Operational Management Plan was published in line with Schedule 1, Part 2 of the SDO and references in this document are to that. The nature of contents is consistent with the Full OMP that is being prepared in line with Schedule 3, Part 3, Paragraphs 19-20.

²⁸ [Special Development Order: Former RAF Airfield Wethersfield, Braintree, Essex, CM7 4AZ - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) – Schedule 1 Approved Documents, Part 2 Initial OMP – Wethersfield Site Operational Management Plan (Version 3.3), OMP: Annex D Wethersfield Infectious Diseases Management Plan.

²⁹ *ibid* at para 33.1.

³⁰ (n 28) at para 33.2.

The Home Office receives advice and guidance where needed from the UKHSA Health Protection Team on the management of individuals and contacts with suspected infectious diseases. The Home Office will continue to engage with regional and local health protection teams, local public health and environmental health and local infection prevention and control leads on obtaining site-specific advice, where needed.

Forming part of the on-site health provision is a vaccination schedule for individuals with uncertain or incomplete immunisation status, which is guided by the UK Health Security Agency. Under this schedule SUs are currently being offered, Tetanus, diphtheria and polio (Td/IPV), Meningococcal groups A, C, W and Y (MenACWY) and Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR). The vaccination provision is dependent on the age and history of the service user (SU). Seasonal vaccines such as influenza will also be available and will be offered.

On-site isolation facility

The facilities on-site also include the provision of isolation beds. Isolation beds have been allocated in a single block for single occupancy (if self-isolation is required) and are appropriately staffed. The number of isolation beds at Go-Live was 28, in line with Condition 24 of the SDO. The number of isolation beds specified by the SDO was based on a maximum site occupancy of 1,700 SUs. In March 2024, a decision was made to limit the regular occupancy of the site to a maximum of 800 SUs³¹ during its lifetime. However, if additional surge capacity is needed to deal with higher than forecast demand, a decision may be taken to utilise an additional 445 bed spaces for short and defined periods of time. This would bring total bed spaces to 1,245. If this were the case, there will be a detailed schedule of activity to return the site to a maximum population of 800 as soon as possible.

In December 2023, face-to-face training was provided by Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB) on Infection Prevention and Control processes and best practice. This was delivered to all the relevant staff.

On 15 December 2023, the ICB Infection Prevention and Control Team visited the Wethersfield site to confirm that robust processes for isolation were identified, implemented and adhered to within the site.

The recommendations from this visit included:

- Ensure all posters are secured to walls and doors with blue tack (or alternative product) not tape.
- Repair ceilings to affected showers in the isolation block.
- Explore the feasibility of using the laundry room in the isolation block rather than transporting infectious laundry to the main laundry area.
- If laundry in isolation block to be utilised a tumble drier will need to be purchased and installed.
- The main laundry area requires a hand hygiene sink in both porta cabins as per the previous report recommendation.
- Check orange lidded sharps bins are ordered from the waste company and are used for phlebotomy sharps (as per guidance).
- Ensure all hand hygiene sinks in the health Unit have an accessible supply of paper towels housed in a suitable wall mounted unit.

³¹ [Wethersfield: factsheet - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/factsheets/wethersfield-factsheet).

A follow-up visit was conducted by the ICB Infection and Prevention Control Team on 13 February 2024³². This visit entailed observations of the isolation block, health centre and main laundry facilities. The recommendations which were made as part of this visit have been implemented by the site project team.

5.2.2. Public Health – Sanitation

The accommodation of SUs on site may place additional demand on the on-site infrastructure for wastewater and sewerage.

The site was previously used as an RAF base and sustained a large population of approximately 1000 people with potable water supply, foul water drainage and surface water drainage facilities. These systems were checked prior to accommodating SUs on site.

Extant buildings will continue to be serviced by existing utilities, in addition to the installed modular accommodation. The modular accommodation required new foul draining facilities to be installed. This has been implemented with additional pipework to carry foul water from the ablation blocks to a 24-hour foul breakdown storage facility for pumped discharge. This has ensured peak flows are managed prior to discharging into the existing network. The storage facility comprises of three buried holding tanks with a combined capacity of 225,000 litres to regulate discharge flows from the installed modular buildings and associated facilities. The foul sewer discharges into the wastewater treatment works operated by Anglian Water and is located to the south-west of the village of Wethersfield.

This provision was made with the expectation of accommodating 610 SUs in the modular units. However, capacity for SUs in the modular units has been reduced to 460.

Furthermore, Home Office contractors are working through a programme of work to survey (and repair as required) the entire foul water run.

The drinking water supply is taken directly from the potable water supply provided by local utility supplier Anglian Water. As there was a period of inactivity on the site between transfer of ownership, a robust water testing, flushing and chlorination regime was implemented prior to opening and has been continued throughout the operation of the site. Redundant sections of pipework have been capped to reduce the risk from bacteriological growth such as legionella.

Water testing was initially undertaken on a weekly basis in line with current guidance, and based on the results this has been reduced to a fortnightly basis. A ground investigation has been ongoing to assess the risk to human health, and environmental receptors.

The Full Operational Management Plan covers the steps taken to reduce impact and implements specific arrangements relating to the other areas of concern raised by the Council in the response to the letter sent to technical stakeholders in January 2024.

The Home Office will as a matter of course be taking action to monitor the condition of facilities and services at the site and take action as required.

³² Mid and South Essex Health and Care Partnership, 'Quality Assurance Visit Report' (13 February 2024).

5.3. Phasing Considerations

5.3.1. Phasing Scheme – Isolation Provision

The Home Office will continue to work with the ICB, regarding the suitability and capability of on-site medical facilities, including the isolation provision. The number of isolation beds required at any time is driven by demand. The site has sufficient flexibility in the constructed capacity and the arrangement of the individual accommodation units to increase the number of isolation beds in the event that more than 28 isolation beds are required. The regular medical department reviews will ensure that the provision of isolation beds is monitored.

Furthermore, the monitored inflow of SUs to the site at Wethersfield offers scope to consider any impact on the isolation provision. Intake decisions will be made by the Home Office following weekly Inflow Impact Review Meetings. These offer a forum through which the onboarding of SUs is monitored and any impact to on-site provision assessed. Representatives at this meeting include Home Office colleagues, the site operator [REDACTED] and the on-site Medical Team [REDACTED].

The reduced regular occupancy capacity at Wethersfield and monitored inflow of SUs to the site, will mitigate any impact to health services due to any increase in SU numbers.

5.3.2. Phasing Scheme – Sanitation

The provision for sanitation on site was made in the expectation of accommodating 610 SUs in the modular units. As the capacity of SUs in the modular units has been reduced to 460, the current infrastructure for foul water exceeds the maximum expected demand.

The Home Office will as a matter of course be taking action to monitor the condition of facilities and services at the site and take action as required.

5.4. Summary

The Local Services Impact Summary outlines the arrangements made by the Home Secretary in relation to public health. The summary details the arrangements made by the Home Office which are designed to avoid impact, namely the provision of an on-site isolation facility and appropriate infrastructure for sewerage.

The time-period for these arrangements is represented on the High-Level Plan-on-a-Page (POAP), at Annex A. Infection control is represented in green on the POAP. The mitigations made in respect of infection control are shown for the lifetime of the site. Sanitation forms part of 'Other Local Services' and is represented in yellow on the plan. The mitigations made in respect of sanitation are shown for the lifetime of the site.

6. Waste Management

Although not specified as a relevant local service within the SDO, the management of waste is a local service which has been considered in light of any material adverse impact to local services.

6.1. Relevant Local Service

The Environmental Protection Act 1990³³ places a duty on a Local Authority to arrange for the collection of household waste and, if requested, of commercial and industrial waste. In respect of this, the statutory duty rests with Braintree District Council.

6.2. Impacts and Mitigations

The accommodation of service users (SUs) on site at Wethersfield would likely impact refuse collection services, if no adequate mitigation were implemented.

In order to address the potential impact, waste emanating from the operation of the Wethersfield site is managed by the Home Office in collaboration with a waste contractor.

The Operational Management Plan for Wethersfield (OMP)³⁴ sets out the provision on site for the management of general, medical and recyclable waste, providing:

- General waste when collected by the cleaners is deposited in main portable waste containers. Waste is separated into general waste and recyclable waste (paper/cardboard/plastic) using different coloured waste bins.³⁵
- Large industrial (1100L) storage bins are placed on site for general waste.³⁶
- Waste is collected at a frequency of [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- The clinical waste is emptied into the Clinical Waste locked bin outside. [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- Food waste is disposed of by kitchen staff in suitable containers and collected from site by the contractor.³⁸

In light of the mitigations taken, the Home Office does not consider the operation of the site at Wethersfield to pose a material adverse impact on the Local Authority in respect of waste management.

6.3. Phasing Considerations

As SU numbers increase on site there will be a corresponding increase in waste which will be managed. Further, the OMP provides the necessary flexibility to increase the frequency of waste collection:

- Waste is currently collected by a designated contractor at a frequency of up to [REDACTED]

³³ Environmental Protection Act 1990, at s45.

³⁴ Note that an Initial Operational Management Plan was published in line with Schedule 1, Part 2 of the SDO and references in this document are to that. The nature of contents is consistent with the Full OMP that is being prepared in line with Schedule 3, Part 3, Paragraphs 19-20.

³⁵ [Special Development Order: Former RAF Airfield Wethersfield, Braintree, Essex, CM7 4AZ - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/344442/Special_Development_Order_Former_RAF_Airfield_Wethersfield_Braintree_Essex_CM7_4AZ_-_GOV.UK.pdf) – Schedule 1 Approved Documents, Part 2 Initial OMP – Wethersfield Site Operational Management Plan (Version 3.3) at para 52.2/54.2/54.1.

³⁶ *Ibid* at para 54.4.

³⁷ (n 35) at para 54.6.

³⁸ (n 35) at para 54.5.

- The clinical waste is emptied into the clinical waste locked bin, [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] The process will be reviewed once capacity has ramped up and will potentially be increased to a [REDACTED].⁹

6.4. Summary

The Local Services Impact Summary outlines the arrangements made by the Home Secretary in relation to waste management. The summary details the arrangements made by the Home Office which are designed to avoid impact, namely the provision of a waste collection and disposal service by a chosen service provider.

The time-period for these arrangements is represented on the High-Level Plan-on-a-Page (POAP), at Annex A. Waste management forms part of Other Local Services and is represented in yellow on the plan. The mitigations made in respect of waste management are shown for the operational lifetime of the site.

⁹ (n 35) at para 54.6.

7. Highway Safety and Transport

7.1. Relevant Local Service

The Local Authority, Essex County Council, is under a duty to secure the provision of appropriate services to meet public transport requirements⁴⁰, which enable people to access services including education, health and leisure. Further, there is a duty on the highway authority, chiefly the Local Authority, to maintain highway safety.

Responsibility for highway safety is shared between National Highways (for motorways and major A roads) and the local highway authority, Essex County Council.

7.2. Impacts and Mitigations

The geographical location of the Wethersfield site poses specific issues around transportation given its limited connectivity with the local bus and rail networks. This is compounded by a lack of local walking and cycling routes, particularly for those accessing the site by foot or bicycle.

The Home Office has implemented several provisions to mitigate the impact on the local transport provision, prioritising the safety of those going to and from the site.

In the first instance, although Wethersfield is a non-detained accommodation site, provision has been made to ensure the site is as self-contained as possible. To this end, the provision on-site includes: healthcare, catering, communal spaces plus faith and worship facilities.

Health care is addressed at section two and recreational facilities at section eight of this document.

The catering facilities include the provision of three meals a day, which will be served on site in a dining area. SUs therefore do not need to travel off site for meals. The capacity of the dining area and the catering service from Go-Live will be for up to 400 service users in each sitting, with mealtimes staggered to accommodate all on site (noting that a decision has been made to cap regular occupancy at 800).

The faith and worship facilities on site include a dedicated multi-faith building that is available to SUs. The requirements placed upon the service provider operating the site ensure that religious material sufficient to meet the needs of the population, relating to the religion of asylum seekers, are available for personal use.

Together these provisions ensure that those accommodated on site have available to them the facilities they need.

Currently the number of service users (SUs) leaving the site by foot is low.

Established processes on site require new residents to undertake an induction briefing upon arrival⁴¹. This explains the risks of walking on rural roads. Briefings are also provided by staff on the main site entrance, with expectation that providing shuttle buses will reduce those accessing local urban centres on foot. If SUs wish to

⁴⁰ [Transport Act 1968 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#) and [Transport Act 1985 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#).

⁴¹ Note that an Initial Operational Management Plan was published in line with Schedule 1, Part 2 of the SDO and references in this document are to that. The nature of contents is consistent with the Full OMP that is being prepared in line with Schedule 3, Part 3, Paragraphs 19-20.

[Special Development Order: Former RAF Airfield Wethersfield, Braintree, Essex, CM7 4AZ - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) – Schedule 1 Approved Documents, Part 2 Initial OMP – Wethersfield Site Operational Management Plan (Version 3.3).

leave the site on foot, to ensure their safety, high visibility jackets and headtorches are provided and stored at the front gate. Use is at SU discretion.

In line with proposals formalised under Condition 24 of the SDO, there is free transportation to and from the site for SUs to local conurbations via daily shuttle bus services. The timetable for the service is available to view on the noticeboard in each accommodation block. Booking is not required; SUs are expected to present themselves at reception/drop-off point in town at the allocated time. The shuttle bus services run to Braintree, Colchester, and Chelmsford. There are three round trips to each of these locations a day (nine round trips, 27 in total). There are 15 x 16-seater vehicles used to provide the shuttle bus service.

Furthermore, specific reference is given to the provision of transport to medical appointments, as provided for under Condition 24(6)(b) of the SDO. Transport is arranged via the onsite nurse, or admin team, and the resident is informed of the booking.

In light of the mitigations made, the Home Office does not consider the operation of the site at Wethersfield to pose a material adverse impact on the local transportation provision or highways safety.

7.3. Phasing Considerations

Condition 24 of the SDO details the core facilities and services to be provided. This condition has set the requirements for the transportation of SUs including the capacity of the buses and the minimum number of services daily. The Order was designed with the maximum number of SUs set at 1,700. In March 2024, a decision was made to limit the regular occupancy of the site to a maximum of 800 SUs⁴² during its lifetime. However, if additional surge capacity is needed to deal with higher than forecast demand, a decision may be taken to utilise an additional 445 bed spaces for short and defined periods of time. This would bring total bed spaces to 1,245. If this were the case, there will be a detailed schedule of activity to return the site to a maximum population of 800 as soon as possible. Given the maximum capacity limit has been reduced to a regular occupancy of 800⁴³, phasing is not considered to pose a material impact to local services in this respect.

7.4. Summary

The Local Service Impact Summary addresses the requirements of Condition 26 of the SDO by outlining the arrangements made by the Home Secretary in relation to highway safety and transportation. The summary details the arrangements made by the Home Office which are designed to avoid impact, namely the provision of a shuttle-bus service.

The time-period for these arrangements is represented on the High-Level Plan-on-a-Page (POAP), at Annex A. Transportation forms part of 'Other Local Services' and is represented in yellow on the plan. The mitigations made in respect of transportation are shown for the lifetime of the site.

⁴² [Wethersfield: factsheet - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118111/Wethersfield_factsheet_-_GOV.UK_(www.gov.uk).pdf).

⁴³ *ibid.*

8. Recreational Facilities & Library Services

8.1. Relevant Local Service

The provision of recreational facilities⁴⁴ and library services⁴⁵ are local statutory services which may be impacted by the use of Wethersfield as an accommodation site for asylum seekers. They are not, however, considered to be 'relevant local services' under Condition 26 of the SDO, due to the lack of material adverse impact.

The local service provider, in respect of these services is Essex County Council, who is represented on the Wethersfield Multi-Agency Forum.

8.2. Impacts and Mitigations

The Home Office does not foresee the accommodation of service users (SUs) on site at Wethersfield as posing a material impact on local services in respect of community assets for recreation and library services. Any local services impact is considered to be minimal in light of the mitigations noted below.

A self-sufficient site

The aspiration for the Wethersfield site is for it to be as self-sufficient as possible. In practice, the Home Office has sought to provide SUs with on-site recreational facilities including the provision of reading material and areas for physical recreation.

The Operational Management Plan for Wethersfield (OMP)⁴⁶ provides detail of the on-site resource for leisure and includes:

- Indoor fitness areas include marked hard surface areas for volleyball, basketball, and football. The sports equipment is stored in the gym facility and can be signed out by the SU when required.⁴⁷
- Outdoor areas include two full-size football pitches, an astroturf cricket wicket and a baseball field. These are located within a larger grassed area which can be utilised for other sports and cardio activities.⁴⁸
- Indoor recreational facilities include several recreational rooms containing a variety of recreation activities such as pool tables, table tennis tables and TVs.⁴⁹
- 4G routers have been placed in all areas at Wethersfield. Starlink has also been installed in both Welfare Centres, alongside all communal spaces.⁵⁰
- Provision of literature and printed reading materials on-site.

In respect of the recreational provision on-site, the Home Office continues to engage with local service providers through the Health & Safety Sub-Group.

⁴⁴ [Local Government \(Miscellaneous Provisions\) Act 1976 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#), at s19(1) – duty is expressed as a discretionary, rather than mandatory duty on the Local Authority, to provide 'such recreational facilities as it thinks fit'

⁴⁵ [Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#), s7(1), there is a duty on a Library Authority, namely the Local Authority, 'to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons'.

⁴⁶ Note that an Initial Operational Management Plan was published in line with Schedule 1, Part 2 of the SDO and references in this document are to that. The nature of contents is consistent with the Full OMP that is being prepared in line with Schedule 3, Part 3, Paragraphs 19-20.

⁴⁷ [Special Development Order: Former RAF Airfield Wethersfield, Braintree, Essex, CM7 4AZ - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) – Schedule 1 Approved Documents, Part 2 Initial OMP – Wethersfield Site Operational Management Plan (Version 3.3) at para 16.3.

⁴⁸ *ibid* at para 16.4.

⁴⁹ (n 47) at para 16.5.

⁵⁰ (n 47) para 16.1.

Current on-site activities include:

- English classes;
- food preparation courses;
- gardening club; and
- football and cricket tournaments at weekends.

The first ESOL classes took place at Wethersfield on 01 May 2024 following initial assessments for c.50 residents and have continued since then in line with demand.

Previous activities held on-site include:

- karaoke nights;
- art classes;
- sports competitions and
- weight-lifting classes.

Maths classes are being delivered to SUs by the Colchester Institute as part of the Multiply Initiative. Furthermore, psychological first aid classes are in the process of being organised.

SUs are informed of these provisions during their on-site induction and are shown these areas as part of their familiarisation tours.⁵¹

8.3. Phasing Considerations

The on-site provision for recreational facilities has been designed in light of the original user capacity of 1,700 SUs. Given the maximum capacity limit has been reduced⁵², any phasing increase is not considered to pose a material adverse impact on local services.

Regular recreation facilities reviews are programmed to ensure that sufficient recreation space and facilities are available to meet the requirements of the number of SUs accommodated on site at any point. The Home Office has identified areas on site which could be developed as recreational spaces, should an increase in recreational space be required. The reviews will also provide the opportunity to engage with the SUs regarding requests for specific recreational facilities e.g., equipment.

Funding considerations for the Local Authority

Grant funding for Braintree District Council to support the site has been agreed. The mechanism through which the Home Office makes payment to the Local Authority is via a grant. The Home Office has specific legislation that covers payments to local authorities for those who are, or have been, asylum seekers. This is made under section 110 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999⁵³.

Payments will be made through quarterly grant payments in arrears of £3,500 per occupied bedspace. The Home Office will issue a fresh funding instruction each financial year for which funding is approved. Importantly, local authorities will be free to determine how best to utilise this grant payment, albeit they will need to demonstrate (for monitoring and scheme evaluation purposes) that they have fulfilled the funding instructions in supporting the use of the site by the Home Office. The

⁵¹ (n 47) para 16.8.

⁵² [Wethersfield: factsheet - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/100000/Wethersfield_factsheet_-_GOV.UK_(www.gov.uk).pdf).

⁵³ [Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1999/33/section/110).

Funding Instruction covers the funding of the statutory obligations of the Local Authority and anything otherwise agreed with the Home Office.

8.4. Summary

The Local Services Impact Summary outlines the arrangements made by the Home Secretary in relation to recreational facilities and provision of library services. The summary details the arrangements made by the Home Office which are designed to avoid impact, namely the on-site facilities for those accommodated at Wethersfield.

The time-period for these arrangements is represented on the High-Level Plan-on-a-Page (POAP), at Annex A. Recreational facilities forms part of Other Local Services and is represented in yellow on the plan. The mitigations made in respect of recreational facilities are shown for the operational lifetime of the site.

Annex A: Local Services Programme (LSP): High-Level Plan on a Page (POAP) – Wethersfield Site (Pathfinder)

The High-Level Plan on a Page outlines the past, current and future engagement with local service providers in light of the Local Services Programme. The method of engagement includes both strategic forums, such as the MAFs, but also specific engagement pieces which have been undertaken to address identified local services.

The document outlines the various impacted services, including health, infection control and police. It also specifies the various steps taken by the Home Office to avoid or mitigate those impacts, including the stages of agreed funding.

The plan may be subject to change over time.

The diamond-shaped milestones indicate points at which services or decisions were or will be, either agreed or commenced, and the bars demonstrate the continuation of these services for the duration of the programme at the Wethersfield site.

The plan should be read in conjunction with the impact summary report which provides a more detailed view, particularly on the impact and associated mitigations, in relation to the identified relevant local services.

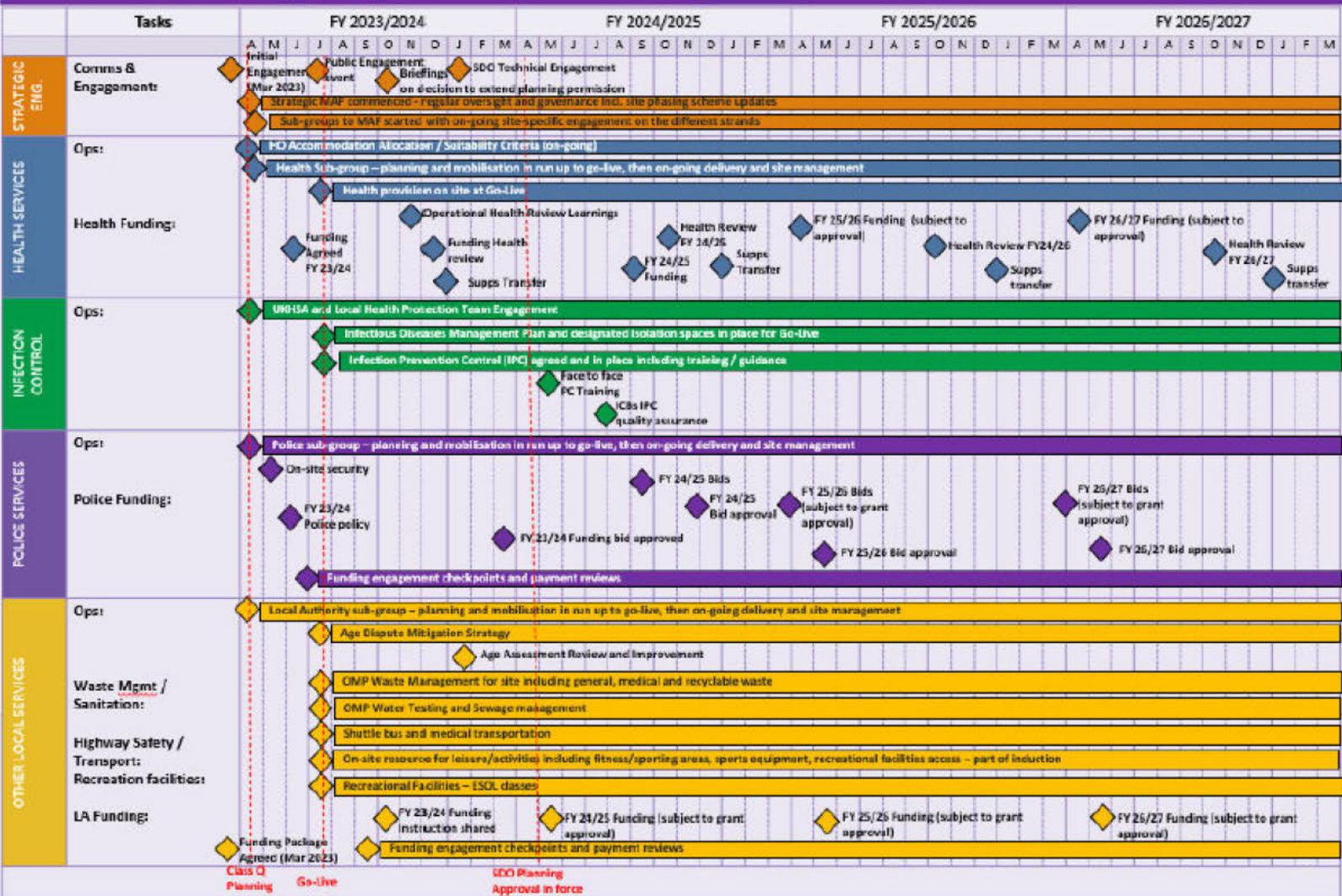
Overall, the plan illustrates the steps implemented (or to be implemented) by the Home Office, as part of the Local Services Programme for the lifetime of the site, noting operational use will cease in April 2027 and decommissioning will continue until October 2027. In outlining the time-period of these arrangements, this POAP addresses Condition 26(1) of the SDO.

Local Services Programme (LSP): High-level Programme POAP – Wethersfield Site (Pathfinder)



Bar = continual duration of site

Note: LSP report supplements and provides details on the mitigations



Class Q Planning Go-Live

SDC Planning Approval in force