

Local Services Programme Wethersfield

December 2024

Revision History

Version	Author & Job Title	Date of Change	Paragraph No.	Purpose/Change
1.0	Asylum Accommodation Programme (Non-Detained).	14 January 2025	All	Submission Version

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

Reviewed By	Role/Grade	Date
[REDACTED]	Site Operator	14 January 2025

This Local Services Programme Wethersfield (November 2024) has been developed in line with Condition 26 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 programme is being submitted by the Secretary of State for the Home Department “the Home Secretary” for approval by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

The Town and Country Planning (Former RAF Airfield Wethersfield) (Accommodation for Asylum-Seekers etc.) Special Development Order 2024¹ (SDO) specifies a Local Services Programme (LSP). The submission of the LSP is a condition of the SDO and must be complied with to continue to accommodate service users (SUs) beyond March 2025 or to increase the number of SUs accommodated on site above the 580 cap.

This document forms the LSP as defined by Condition 26(1) of the SDO, which states the following:

Local services programme

26.–(1)

“local services programme” means a programme that sets out arrangements made by the Home Secretary—

- (a) in connection with relevant local services;*
- (b) that are designed to avoid or mitigate local service impacts,*

and stating the period of time that those arrangements cover;

In accordance with Condition 26, the LSP (which includes the Local Services Impact Summary: Wethersfield (December 2024) at Annex A) sets out the arrangements made by the Home Secretary in connection with relevant local services, that are designed to avoid or mitigate local service impact. Included as an annex to the Local Services Impact Summary is the Local Services Programme High-Level Plan-on-a-Page (POAP), which outlines the period of time for these arrangements. Together these documents form the LSP.

Condition 26 further provides for a report that summarises the views of local service providers and the steps taken by the Home Secretary to engage with those providers². Condition 26(5) is addressed separately in the Condition 26 Engagement Report Wethersfield (December 2024). The Engagement Report is to be read in conjunction with this document and will be submitted to the SSHCLG with the LSP for approval.

1.1. Context

RAF Wethersfield was identified as part of the ‘pathfinder’ programme for large sites and vessels to house asylum seekers, to support fulfilment of the Home Secretary’s legal obligations³.

Planning permission to utilise the site at Wethersfield as asylum accommodation was initially secured under Class Q emergency Crown Development planning provisions.

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

² *ibid* at Condition 26(5).

³ [Wethersfield: factsheet - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

The Home Office was permitted to use the site for non-detained asylum accommodation for a period of 12 months, until April 2024. The Home Office extended planning permission for the temporary use of the site as asylum accommodation for a further three years by way of an SDO, with an additional period of up to six months for decommissioning.

The site at Wethersfield began accommodating asylum seekers from 12 July 2023⁴, and provides non-detained accommodation for single adult male asylum seekers aged 18 to 65, who would otherwise be destitute.

1.2. Definitions and Scope

The SDO provides the necessary definitions to identify the ‘relevant local services’ that form the subject of the LSP. These are found under Condition 26(1):-

“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.*

As defined above, relevant local services are those which, through the accommodation of SUs on the Order land, may reasonably be expected to have a material adverse effect. For the purposes of this exercise and consideration of the mitigations, 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 specifies a non-exhaustive list of four local services which are considered in this programme:

- 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:

⁴ (n 3).

- 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 owing to the accommodation of SUs at Wethersfield if appropriate mitigations were not implemented.

1.3. Structure of the Programme

The LSP comprises of this document and the annexed Local Services Impact Summary. Together these address the requirements of Condition 26 in the following ways:

- **Local Services – Impacts and Mitigations**
The Local Services Impact Summary contains sections which address each relevant local service (in line with the definition provided by the SDO), noting the arrangements made by the Home Secretary in connection with those services and the steps taken to avoid or mitigate impact. There is also additional comment on the phasing of each local service and how arrangements made may be adjusted, in light of changes to SU numbers.
- **Time Period for Mitigations**
Condition 26(1) of the SDO, in the definition of Local Services Programme, requires detail of the time-period for local service arrangements and mitigations. The High-Level Plan-on-a-Page (POAP) (located at Annex A of the Local Services Impact Summary) provides detail in this regard and illustrates significant engagement between the Home Office and local service providers at various levels. The POAP provides a timeline of when services were made available to SUs and when mitigations were taken to avoid or minimise the impact on local services for the operational lifetime of the Wethersfield Site.
- **Phasing Considerations**
Condition 26(1) of the SDO stipulates that a Local Services Programme must take account of, and describe, arrangements that are consistent with the phasing scheme under Condition 21. The Wethersfield Phasing Scheme (December 2024) is a separate document which addresses Condition 21. Aspects of that document are mirrored in the LSP. Section 2 of this document provides detail of the relationship between the phasing scheme and LSP, in addition to comment on surge capacity. Additional reference has been made to phasing in each of the local services detailed in the Local Services Impact Summary.

2. Phasing Considerations

The SDO grants permission (subject to the satisfactory discharge of conditions) for up to 1,700 SUs to be accommodated on site⁵, supported with services and facilities, from 11 April 2024⁶. This projected number of SUs formed the basis for which the LSP was designed. Under Condition 26(2), the LSP must have regard to the phasing scheme.

Local services programme

26.–(2)

“A local services programme must take account of, and describe the arrangements that are consistent with, the phasing scheme approved under condition 21 (phasing scheme).”

The arrangements outlined in this document are consistent with the phasing scheme, as detailed in Condition 21 of the SDO, as produced below.

Phasing scheme

21.–

(1) “No more than 580 service users may be accommodated on the Order land until a phasing scheme has been submitted by the Home Secretary and approved by the Secretary of State, that sets out—

(a) the phases in which the facilities and services that are to be made available to service users under this Schedule will be delivered;

(b) how any arrangements that are required to be made in relation to such facilities or services under any approved document will be adjusted,

so as to ensure that the provision made for the needs of resident service users at any given time is such that relevant duties are complied with in carrying out relevant functions, taking account in particular of any material actual or anticipated changes in the number or proportion of resident service users that meet an unsuitability criterion.

(2) Where a scheme approved under sub-paragraph (1) indicates that particular steps are to be taken before the number or proportion of resident service users that meet an unsuitability criterion increases to or by a certain amount, the Home Secretary must, before that increase occurs, provide to the Secretary of State written confirmation that those steps have been taken.”

⁵ (n 1) at Condition 23(2).

⁶ (n 1) at Article 3(1).

2.1. Phasing Scheme

The phasing scheme under Condition 21 of the SDO limits the number of SUs that can be accommodated on site to 580 until the necessary conditions have been discharged. There is a comprehensive phasing scheme that addresses Condition 21 which reflects elements of the LSP.

As required by Condition 21(1)(a) of the SDO, phasing considerations in relation to the stages in which facilities and services are to be made available to SUs, have been addressed in the High-Level Plan-on-a-Page (POAP), annexed to the Local Services Impact Summary. These have been shown for the operational duration of the site.

Condition 21(1)(b) notes that phasing must also consider potential adjustments to the arrangements in place. Specific detail has been provided under each of the relevant local services sections within the Local Services Impact Summary at Annex A.

Phasing impact will be assessed throughout the operation of the site through the monitoring of service user inflow and through inflow impact review meetings. This will enable the Home Office to review any effect of onboarding SUs, ensuring the site remains stable while safeguarding the needs of those being accommodated.

2.1.1. Inflow of Service Users

The considered, phased and measured onboarding of SUs will reduce any impact on local services, while allowing the Home Office to review the effectiveness of any actions taken to mitigate that impact.

The site at Wethersfield went live in July 2023, at which point intake was set at 150 SUs per week. Through a process of inflow, pause and review, and in collaboration with stakeholders, it was then decided that inflow would be set at 30 SUs per day and a maximum inflow of 90 SUs per week.

Following further conversations based on operational experience and as detailed in the Phasing Scheme, the inflow number of SUs to be accommodated on the site is a maximum of 60 per week (and a maximum of 30 per day). This will ensure the adequate provision of services can be maintained and reduce any impact on site stability.

Weekly Inflow Impact Review Meetings

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. Attendance at these meetings includes, members of the Home Office, representatives from [REDACTED] [REDACTED] (the contracted accommodation service provider) and the on-site Medical Team ([REDACTED]).

The details of these meetings and a list of agenda items, including the parameters by which impact to services are assessed, have been noted at paragraph 3.14 of the Phasing Scheme and for ease of reference, have been replicated below. To note: the questions provided are illustrative of conversations and may vary; nor are they exhaustive of the extent of discussions during these meetings but provide a framework to support those discussions.

Agenda Item	Framework Questions
1. Security Provision and number of incidents recorded on site (██████)	<p><u>Security Provision</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> With regards to any incidents that have occurred since the last intake and thinking about the resources required, are there any concerns with the proposed intake for the next week?
2. Discretionary Activities (██████)	<p><u>Activities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> With regards to the available number of slots for the recreational activities currently organised on site, is there any concern with the proposed intake for the next week?
3. Transport Capacity (██████)	<p><u>Shuttlebus Service</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bearing in mind the number of seats available on the shuttle buses and experience over the number of journeys required to meet demand, is there any concern with the proposed intake for the next week?
4. Medical Centre Provision (██████████ ICB) and Isolation Facility (██████)	<p><u>Screening of New Service Users</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> With regards to appointment capacity and resources to undertake the Full Health Assessments, are there any concerns with the proposed intake for the next week? Have any medical incidents occurred on site since the last meeting that need consideration for intake? <p><u>Infectious Disease Management</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there any infectious diseases currently being treated on-site that need consideration for intake? <p><u>Isolation Facility</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How many beds are currently occupied, and what is the current available capacity? Is the current capacity sufficient for prospective SU numbers?
5. Dining Hall Provision (██████)	<p><u>Mealtimes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bearing in mind the maximum capacity of the dining facility (665) and the current mealtimes, is there any concern with the proposed intake for next week?
6. Daily Site Stability Assessment	<p><u>Service Delivery Team</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> From a Service Delivery perspective, are there any concerns that would impact new arrivals coming on to site? (Considerations include: Home Office assurance procedures, safeguarding processes)
8. AOB	<p><u>Appointments and Client Advisers</u></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With regards to the resource available to complete ASF1s and Drop-In Question & Answer sessions, are there any concerns with the proposed intake for the next week?
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The questions posed frame discussions around current operational issues and act as a “health check” for the on-site facilities and services. As a result of these meetings, the level of services provided on site are reviewed on a weekly basis. Meetings and decisions are recorded in the Go/No-go tracker. This enables the on-site team to operationally manage intake, making informed decisions around the onboarding of new SUs which can be reduced or paused should the site be at risk of being unable to adequately support the onboarding of new SUs. Moreover, by addressing the on-site demand in this way, the Home Office and commercial partners are able to make real-time adjustments to ensure the needs of those accommodated continue to be met. If it is noted at the impact review meeting that adjustments need to be made then intake will be paused and an additional impact review meeting will be arranged allowing time for the required adjustments to be explored, implemented and tested. Further details of the impact review meetings can be found in Section 3 of the Phasing Scheme.

2.1.2. Reviewing Local Services Impact

In addition to monitoring the inflow of SUs, the Home Office has in place a process in which impact to local services can be ascertained. The Multi-Agency Forums (MAFs), as required by Condition 25 of the SDO, provide a mechanism through which local service providers can discuss any impact to local services. The MAFs, which commenced under Class Q, continue to be a key feature of stakeholder engagement and have provided a structured and routine forum 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 Care⁷; and
- Operations.

With agreements 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.

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

⁷ Formerly titled the Health and Children’s Services Sub-Group.

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, 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.

The High-Level Plan-on-a-Page (POAP), which can be found at Annex A of the Local Services Impact Summary, outlines the past, current and future engagement with local service providers as part of the LSP.

The diamond-shaped milestones indicate points at which services or decisions were either agreed or commenced, and the bars demonstrate the continuation of these services for the duration of the LSP at the Wethersfield Site. The methods of engagement include strategic forums, such as the MAFs, and specific engagement pieces which have been undertaken to address identified local services.

The steps and stages outlined in this plan highlight engagement which enables both local service providers and the Home Office to reflect on the impact and mitigations made, providing both with the opportunity to evaluate the provisions in place. This will invariably apply to any change in SU numbers on-site at Wethersfield.

The POAP may be subject to change over time.

2.2. Surge Capacity

After the decision to seek a further period of planning permission via an SDO, a decision was made in March 2024 to reduce the regular occupancy at the site to a

maximum of 800 SUs⁸ during its lifetime. However, if additional surge capacity is needed to deal with higher than forecast demand, a ministerial 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.

Wethersfield contingency bedspaces are not suitable to support a rapid emergency response (e.g. in the event of a fire in a hotel requiring rapid decant to alternative accommodation) as the service provider and on-site teams require 15-working-days' notice. Furthermore, the daily inflow limit is set at 30 SUs per day, with an expected intake of up to 60 per week.

As contingency bed spaces do not support rapid and repeated stand-up and stand-down, contingency capacity (for use in surge events) is held for stand-by use where forecasts show that the Home Office will receive a surge in new arrivals, placing significant strain on the wider accommodation estate.

The Home Office has a detailed schedule of activity in place for contingency bedspaces, concerning both intake and plan to return the site to a maximum population of 800 as soon as possible.

Where surge is forecast, a decision to mobilise contingency capacity is taken following a 'health check' of the facilities and services on site to inform decision making on whether the Wethersfield Site can support the departmental response to the specific surge. Utilisation of contingency capacity will only continue until alternative accommodation capacity is built or available in the wider estate.

As well as the process referred to above, the decision to use contingency capacity is taken depending on two other factors:

1. Intake forecasting indicates a potential risk of derogation of statutory duty by the Home Office.
2. Alternative contingency accommodation is not available.

The Home Office will ensure the service provider is aware of plans to mobilise contingency bedspaces three weeks before any intended uplift in SUs begins. This 15-working days' notice period will be used to monitor service provider mobilisation progress and regularly and robustly test site configuration, infrastructure, utilities and services. The decision to flow SUs into contingency beds will be made in line with the process outlined above.

The provisions for those accommodated on site were created with 1,700 SUs in mind. Given the subsequent reduced limit, any anticipated impact to local services will be lessened in light of the lower regular occupancy numbers of 800. Furthermore, the site at Wethersfield has been specifically designed to be self-sufficient, with security, catering, health and recreational provisions included as part of the design of the site. Therefore, from utilising surge capacity, any impact on the provision of local services is deemed to be limited.

As above, engagement with local stakeholders through the Multi-Agency Forums, will also provide local partners with an opportunity to raise concerns in relation to changes in SU numbers at Wethersfield.

⁸ (n 3).

3. Summary

The LSP in the Local Services Impact Summary at Annex A outlines the arrangements made by the Home Secretary in connection with relevant local services and the steps taken which are designed to avoid or mitigate local service impacts.

The LSP has addressed the local services identified in Condition 26 of the SDO, in addition to three further relevant local services, as outlined in Section 1.2. of this document.

In accordance with Condition 26, this document outlines the period of time for these arrangements, as demonstrated by the Local Services Programme High-Level Plan-on-a-Page (POAP), at Annex A of the Local Services Impact Summary.

As required by Condition 26(2), consideration has also been given to any proposed increase in site capacity. To this end, the LSP takes account of, and describes arrangements that are consistent with, the Phasing Scheme, as approved under Condition 21. Further, consideration has been given to the proposed use of surge capacity on site at Wethersfield.

Annex A: Local Services Impact Summary: Wethersfield (December 2024)

Local Services Impact Summary

Wethersfield

December 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, local service providers were invited to make representations on the local services **for which they 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. Local Authority Statutory Responsibilities

Funding principles

The Home Office provided a payment of £3,500 to the Local Authority for new and occupied dispersal beds¹. This figure for the Full Dispersal Grant arrangement was considered an incentive payment and followed an assessment by the Asylum Transformation Team to ascertain whether the Full Dispersal Model put any new burden on local authorities. It was not found to be a new burden, but as local authorities did not provide a consistent or complete set of impacts the £3,500 was arrived at for new and occupied dispersal beds. Existing and occupied beds were recognised through a one-off annual payment of £750. The arrangement associated with the Wethersfield Site was set out to align to the Full Dispersal Grant, mirroring the amount paid to local authorities for all new and occupied dispersal bedspaces, albeit the large sites (including Wethersfield) include more on-site services than Full Dispersal, which reduce the impact on statutory partners.

The Home Office makes payment to the Local Authority through the provision of a grant. Section 110 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999² is the statutory provision through which the Home Office makes payments to local authorities which accommodate asylum 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 are made through quarterly grant provisions in arrears of £3,500 per occupied bedspace. Making payments quarterly in arrears is also in line with how arrangements for the Full Dispersal Grant have been made.

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 statutory 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.

In all relevant cases described in this Local Services Programme where the Recipient has a statutory responsibility for a service, they may draw down upon the funding to mitigate the costs to local services of the Wethersfield Site. The funding instructions support the arrangements to be made between the Recipient of the grant (Braintree District Council) and the Delivery Partner that may provide relevant services (Essex County Council). The funding instructions have been shared with both Braintree District Council and Essex County Council.

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.

¹ [Wethersfield: factsheet - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/68444/Wethersfield_factsheet.pdf)

² [Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1999/33/section/110).

3. Health Care

Asylum seekers are eligible for free NHS health care in the same way as UK citizens and other permanent residents³. 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.

3.1. 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.

3.2. Impacts and Mitigations

3.2.1. 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

³ [NHS entitlements: migrant health guide - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-entitlements-migrant-health-guide).

Management Plan (OMP) for Wethersfield⁴. 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.⁵

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.⁶

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

⁴ 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.

⁵ [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/100000/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 32.

⁶ [The Town and Country Planning \(Former RAF Airfield Wethersfield\) \(Accommodation for Asylum-Seekers etc.\) Special Development Order 2024 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2024/0000/1/2024000010000001.pdf) 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'⁷ 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 OMP⁸, 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'.

⁷ Public Health Team Essex County Council, 'Wethersfield Health Needs Assessment' (April 2024).

⁸ 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.

The Home Office contacted health partners as part of the engagement for the Condition 26 Engagement Report. In regard to the on-site medical centre the Home Office has since received a written response from the ICB which has confirmed current and prospective staffing levels for the site (detailed at paragraph 4.3 of the Phasing Scheme). The Home Office has had, continues to have and will maintain engagement with health partners as part of the MAFs and weekly impact review meetings for the site.

Ambulance Transport

The provision of ambulance transport is cited in Condition 26 as part of the provision for health. Paragraph 3.2. of the Condition 26 Engagement Report provides detail of the response received from the East of England Ambulance Service (EEAST) and the Home Office position which is replicated below:

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 during rush hour. 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**
The Emergency Evacuation Plan 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.

Adult Social Care

Although not stipulated in the Order, Essex County Council have raised adult social care as an impact the site's operation has had on their duties under the Care Act 2014. Both content of the engagement and the Home Office position can be found at Section 3.2 of the Condition 26 Engagement Report.

As noted in the report, the ability of Essex County Council to draw down on funding from BDC for these services was discussed between the Home Office 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.

Further details of the financial arrangements for local authorities are in Section 2 above. The grant is considered a mitigation against local authority costs for Adult Social Care.

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.

Initially this funding was provided to the Department of Health and Social Care, on a per-bed tariff principle. The per-bed amount was agreed between Home Office, DHSC and NHSE and was reviewed as to whether this is the best approach with NHSE and DHSC annually. Discussions between departments resulted in £1,378,750 and £1,985,069 in FY23/24 and FY24/25.

Funding principles

The Home Office and DHSC have committed to carry out an annual review on the use of health services and bring together partners to take stock of funding arrangements and healthcare provisions that will be required during the operational lifetime of the site at Wethersfield.

A health review took place with NHSE and DHSC representatives on 17 September 2024, which is indicated on the POAP. Following this meeting it was agreed that costs for Wethersfield for financial year 2024/25 would be based on actuals and projected spend in the remainder of this financial year, rather than a per bedspace tariff, reflecting economies of scale and fluctuations in total numbers of SUs accommodated across the 'pathfinder' sites.

The costs cover the fixed costs for the primary care service, TB nurse and variable costs such as prescribing, pathology/radiology and dental. These costs are paid by supplementary transfer by the Home Office to DHSC.

3.3. 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. This will be achieved through the governance processes (namely the weekly impact review meetings) and noted in the Phasing Scheme which oversee and ensure the stability of on-site services.

As agreed with the ICB, the current staffing levels on-site are set for the provision of medical care. This has been confirmed in the most recent correspondence from the ICB. In light of the on-boarding of additional service users, additional appointment capacity could be resourced should demand on-site require it. As noted in the Phasing Scheme at paragraph 3.13, changes to the provision of medical centre facilities and services would be identified through the weekly impact review meetings.

The mitigations currently in place, particularly the funding arrangements for the provision of health care, offer the flexibility and scalability to mitigate impact as SU numbers increase at Wethersfield. The Home Office will review the funding arrangements 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 provisions that will be required for future years during the site's operational period.'

The Home Office 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 decision has been made to limit the regular occupancy of the site to a maximum of 800 SUs¹⁰ 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. The Phasing Scheme at paragraph 3.1. notes the revised occupancy capacity.

Furthermore, considering operational experience to date, the Home Office has revised the rate of intake to the Wethersfield Site. The response of 08 March 2024 notes a weekly intake of 30 SUs per day and up to 90 SUs per week. As noted in Section 2.2 of the LSP, the future rate of inflow to the site will not exceed 30 SUs per day and 60 SUs per week.

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 contracted accommodation service provider (████████████████████ – ██████) and the on-site Medical Team (██████████). Further detail of the Impact Review Meetings is at Section 2.1.1. of the LSP and at paragraph 3.13 of the Phasing Scheme.

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

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).

¹⁰ [Wethersfield: factsheet - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118444/Wethersfield_factsheet.pdf).

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.

The Home Office, as part of our continuing engagement with health partners has received confirmation that the current staffing provision of the medical centre at Wethersfield is sufficient for both 800 SUs and 1,245 SUs, detail of which can be found at paragraph 4.3 of the Phasing Scheme.

3.4. 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 funding arrangements which are 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.

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.

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.

4.1. 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 crime¹¹, in addition to maintaining public order.¹² 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.

4.2. 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.

4.2.1. 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 crime¹³.

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.

¹¹ Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, s24.

¹² Public Order Act 1986, s12 & s14.

¹³ [Large sites for asylum accommodation: support for police forces policy \(16 June 2023\)](#)

As detailed in the Operational Management Plan for Wethersfield (OMP)¹⁴:

- The Home Office has engaged a provider for the provision of a [REDACTED] security presence¹⁵, reducing the need for police patrols. All security personnel are licensed by the Security Industry Association (SIA) and are vetted by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).¹⁶
- Wethersfield is a non-detained site, enabling SUs to leave at any time. [REDACTED]
[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'¹⁸, 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.

Funding Principles

The policy recognises that there may be new demands on police capability and capacity deriving from the impact of proposals to situate new large sites or vessels ('pathfinders') – such as Wethersfield – to accommodate asylum-seekers in a force's area and that funding may be required to cover this additionality. These considerations and the principles that guide funding grants for the current financial year are outlined below.

Principles

- Requests should be for **additional operational costs that can reasonably be said to derive from the proposed siting of the large site or vessel ('pathfinder') to accommodate asylum-seekers.**
- They should **not be for ongoing costs or additional establishment and infrastructure.**
- The Home Office will also consider:
 - proportionality
 - affordability for the Asylum Accommodation Programme
 - financial sustainability and existing capacity and capability of the police force

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ [Special Development Order: Former RAF Airfield Wethersfield, Braintree, Essex, CM7 4AZ - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk) – Schedule 1 Approved Documents, Part 2 Initial OMP – Wethersfield Site Operational Management Plan (Version 3.3) at para 36.1.

¹⁶ (n 15) at para 36.2.

¹⁷ (n 15) at para 40.

¹⁸ [Large sites for asylum accommodation: support for police forces - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

Further details of the funding principles and policy as a whole can be found in the full guidance for the police large site policy¹⁹.

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 equipment²⁰.

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.

Financial grants for 2024/25 were reviewed at a panel convened on 06 November 2024 and are currently pending ministerial approval which was delayed owing to matters such as the general election. The funding agreement is made on an annual basis in line with normal government procedure.

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.

4.2.2. 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 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 Plan²¹, 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):

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ (n 18)

²¹ (n 15) at para 48.

- 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 Site²², 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.

4.3. Phasing Considerations

4.3.1. Security

The number of security officers is determined by the operational site provider, details of which are included at paragraph 4.21 of the Phasing Scheme. The site operator is contracted to provide services on behalf of the Home Office and has a responsibility to manage safety and security on the site. Further details can be found at paragraphs 4.18 to 4.23 of the Phasing Scheme.

4.3.2. Police Service

The grant provision offered through the 'Large Sites for Asylum Accommodation: support for police forces policy'²³, ensures the necessary scope and flexibility to support Essex Police as needed, as SU numbers on the site increase.

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

²² (n 15) at Annex H: Clearsprings Group Wethersfield Local Emergency Process Chart.

²³ [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).

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.

4.3.3. Fire and Rescue Service

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

4.4. 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.

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 2009²⁴. 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.

5.1. 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 1989²⁵. 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.

5.2. 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 Plan²⁶ is 'Annex Y: ██████████ ██████████ – 'Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Framework' – Safeguarding Statement'²⁷. This document outlines the commitment by the contracted service provide, ██████████ (██████████) when delivering services for 'at risk' SUs or SUs with specific needs.

The Strategic Migration Partnership (SMP) were contacted for information purposes as part of the Condition 26 Engagement Report and provided a response on 04 November 2024 regarding the statutory responsibilities of Essex County Council in relation to the social care of children. Section 5.2 of the Engagement Report notes the points raised by the SMP in relation to age dispute assessments, in addition to the Home Office position informed by its operational experience of the site. This is replicated below:

²⁴ [Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#).

²⁵ [Children Act 1989](#), Section 22(3).

²⁶ 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.

²⁷ [Special Development Order: Former RAF Airfield Wethersfield, Braintree, Essex, CM7 4AZ - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) – Schedule 1 Approved Documents, OMP Annex Y ██████████ Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Framework Statement.

- 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 ²⁸	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Number of Age Dispute Cases ²⁹	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 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 beds³⁰. Details of this arrangement are in Section 2 above. The grant is considered a mitigation against local authority costs for social care for children.

5.3. 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

²⁸ Introduction of the additional stage to the age dispute mitigation strategy.

²⁹ 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.

³⁰ [Wethersfield: factsheet - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115444/Wethersfield_factsheet.pdf)

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.

5.4. 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.

6. Public Health

6.1. 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 authority³¹. 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).

6.2. Impacts and Mitigations

6.2.1. 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 initial Operational Management Plan for Wethersfield (OMP)³², (Annex D Wethersfield Infectious Diseases Management Plan³³). 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.³⁴
- 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.³⁵

As noted at Section 3.2.1. above, Annex D of the initial OMP has been revised in collaboration with health partners resulting in Annex Z of the full OMP³⁶.

³¹ [Public Health \(Control of Disease\) Act 1984 \(legislation.gov.uk\) at s1.](#)

³² 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.

³³ [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.

³⁴ *ibid* at para 33.1.

³⁵ (n 33) at para 33.2.

³⁶ Annex Z of the Full OMP – [REDACTED] ([REDACTED] Wethersfield Asylum Accommodation Infectious Disease Prevention Control (IPC) Management Plan.

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.

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 28 isolation bedspaces. 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. Further detail of recent operational data can be found in the Phasing Scheme at paragraph 4.8.

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.

A follow-up visit was conducted by the ICB Infection and Prevention Control Team on 13 February 2024³⁷. This visit entailed observations of the isolation block, health

³⁷ Mid and South Essex Health and Care Partnership, 'Quality Assurance Visit Report' (13 February 2024).

centre and main laundry facilities. The recommendations which were made as part of this visit have been implemented by the site project team.

6.2.2. 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 ablution 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.

6.3. Phasing Considerations

6.3.1. Phasing Scheme – Isolation Provision

As noted in the Phasing Scheme, the number of isolation bedspaces is set at 28. Recent operational data from Wethersfield, detailed at paragraph 4.8 of the Phasing Scheme shows that there has been a low utilisation rate of isolation bedspaces. Drawing on this operational experience, the Home Office does not anticipate a need to go beyond the 28 isolation bedspaces which are deemed sufficient for the projected increase in SU numbers on site. Further detail of the isolation bedspaces is included at paragraphs 4.8 to 4.12 and Section 5 of the Phasing Scheme.

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 contracted accommodation service provider (██████) and the on-site Medical Team (██████████). In the event that isolation bedspaces were nearing capacity a decision would be taken at the intake review meetings to reduce or pause the inflow of additional SUs to the Wethersfield Site.

6.3.2. 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.

6.4. 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.

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.

7.1. Relevant Local Service

The Environmental Protection Act 1990³⁸ 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.

7.2. 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)³⁹ 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.⁴⁰
- Large industrial (1100L) storage bins are placed on site for general waste.⁴¹
- Waste is collected at a frequency of up to [REDACTED]
- The clinical waste is emptied into the Clinical Waste locked bin outside. The bin is then emptied on a [REDACTED] basis.⁴²
- Food waste is disposed of by kitchen staff in suitable containers and collected from site by the contractor.⁴³

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.

7.3. 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:

³⁸ Environmental Protection Act 1990, at s45.

³⁹ 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.

⁴⁰ [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/362441/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.

⁴¹ *ibid* at para 54.4.

⁴² (n 42) at para 54.6.

⁴³ (n 42) at para 54.5.

- Waste is currently collected by a designated contractor at a frequency of up to [REDACTED]
- The clinical waste is emptied into the clinical waste locked bin, which is emptied [REDACTED]. The process will be reviewed once capacity has ramped up and will potentially be increased to a [REDACTED].⁴⁴

7.4. 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.

⁴⁴ (n 42) at para 54.6.

8. Highway Safety and Transport

8.1. Relevant Local Service

The Local Authority, Essex County Council, is under a duty to secure the provision of appropriate services to meet public transport requirements⁴⁵, 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.

8.2. 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 three and recreational facilities at section nine 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 is currently for up to 665 people at any one time. The dining area is able to accommodate service users on a rotating basis with the possibility of extending mealtimes to accommodate all on site (noting that a decision has been made to cap regular occupancy at 800 and up to 1,245 in the event of surge).

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 leaving the site by foot is low.

Established processes on site require new residents to undertake an induction briefing upon arrival⁴⁶. This explains the risks of walking on rural roads. Briefings are also provided by staff on the main site entrance, with expectation that providing

⁴⁵ [Transport Act 1968 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#) and [Transport Act 1985 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#).

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.

[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).

shuttle buses will reduce those accessing local urban centres on foot. If SUs wish to 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.

8.3. 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.

As noted above, a free shuttle bus is provided from the site to Braintree, Colchester and Chelmsford. Buses will depart from and arrive at each destination at least three times each day. There are a minimum of three round trips to each of these locations a day (nine round trips, 27 in total). There have been and will continue to be occasions where additional trips above the minimum 27 are needed and the HO expects this to happen more often as the number of SUs on site increases. The shuttlebus service is driven by demand and buses will continue to take SUs to these locations until all those wishing to travel have travelled. There is currently a fleet of 15 shuttlebuses which service these routes and have the capacity to make multiple trips daily.

The use of and demand for the shuttlebus service is recorded by the designated provider who maintains records of the number of people travelling and the number of journeys undertaken. The transportation of SUs forms a regular discussion point at the weekly impact review meetings which includes a review of current data and trends (noted at paragraph 3.14 of the Phasing Scheme). Currently, the data shows that there is a consistent level of demand for the shuttlebus service. For the week commencing 11 November 2024 there was an average of 125 SUs transported to the three locations: Braintree, Colchester and Chelmsford.

This level of transport provision is currently in place at Wethersfield and will be maintained throughout the duration of the Order. Weekly impact review meetings discuss the transport provision at Wethersfield and determine whether the current provision is appropriate for the number of SUs accommodated on the Order land. It is through the weekly impact review meetings that conversations are had with [REDACTED] on capacity and demand. [REDACTED] will then discuss any increases needed with their supplier. The metrics of this forms part of the contractual agreement between [REDACTED] and their suppliers.

8.4. 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.

9. Recreational Facilities & Library Services

9.1. Relevant Local Service

The provision of recreational facilities⁴⁷ and library services⁴⁸ 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.

9.2. 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)⁴⁹ 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.⁵⁰
- 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.⁵¹
- Indoor recreational facilities include several recreational rooms containing a variety of recreation activities such as pool tables, table tennis tables and TVs.⁵²
- 4G routers have been placed in all areas at Wethersfield. Starlink has also been installed in both Welfare Centres, alongside all communal spaces.⁵³
- 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.

⁴⁷ [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'

⁴⁸ [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'.

⁴⁹ 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.

⁵⁰ [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.

⁵¹ *ibid* at para 16.4.

⁵² (n 50) at para 16.5.

⁵³ (n 50) 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.⁵⁴

9.3. 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 reduced⁵⁵, 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 1999⁵⁶. Details of this arrangement are in section 2 above.

9.4. 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

⁵⁴ (n 50) para 16.8.

⁵⁵ [Wethersfield: factsheet - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/100000/Wethersfield_factsheet.pdf).

⁵⁶ [Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1999/33/section/110).

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.

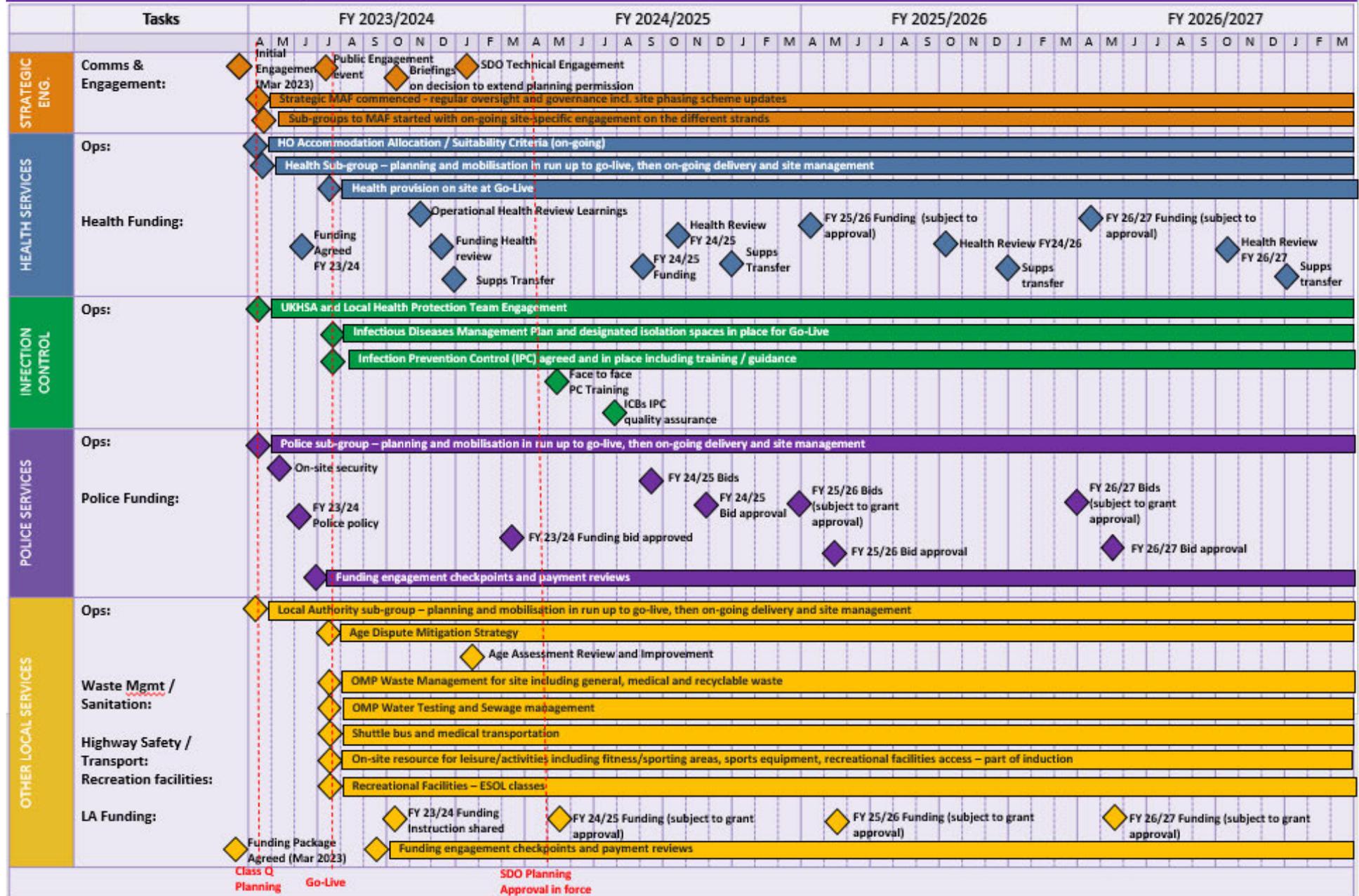
Overall, the plan illustrates the steps implemented (or to be implemented) by the Home Office, as part of the Local Services Programme for the lifetime of the site, noting operational use will cease in April 2027 and decommissioning will continue until October 2027. In outlining the time-period of these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

SDO Planning Approval in force