BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL

[redacted]

Council Offices,
The Garth,
Launton Road,
Bicester
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Email:
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Dear Home Secretary,

Request for an immediate extension of the representation period — Urgent Crown Development application for MOD Bicester Site A

I write on behalf of Bicester Town Council in respect of the Home Office's Urgent Crown Development application for the proposed use of MOD Bicester Site A as large-scale, non-detained asylum accommodation for up to 1,256 single adult males, for a temporary period of up to ten years.

The application was validated on 2nd September 2026 (MHCLG reference PCU/RARE/C3105/3378843; Cherwell District Council reference 26/01833/CROWN). The public representation period opened today, 7th September 2026, and is due to close at midnight on 17th September 2026 — a period of only ten days.

The Council formally requests that this period be extended without delay, and in any event to no less than 30 days from the date on which the full application and supporting documents were first published.

Why ten days is inadequate

This is a nationally strategic and highly complex proposal. The published material comprises a substantial suite of plans, planning statements and technical assessments covering, among other matters, transport, utilities, flooding and drainage, ecology, heritage, land condition, noise, air quality, and equalities. Those documents cannot reasonably be read, tested, and responded to by a town council, neighbouring parish councils, statutory partners, or residents within ten days.

A ten-day window does not align with even the minimum periods that ordinarily apply under planning law. Under the standard Crown Development procedure, representations are invited for not less than 21 days, or 30 days where the application is Environmental Impact Assessment development. For EIA development under the Urgent Crown Development procedure itself, publicity must allow a period of not less than 30 days. Whatever screening conclusion has been reached in this case, the volume and complexity of the material, and the scale of the proposed use, demand at least that longer period.

The Council's position and previous correspondence

This request is made without prejudice to the detailed representations the Council intends to submit on the merits of the application. Those representations will address, among other matters, site suitability, infrastructure and service capacity, access and transport, community safety, environmental impacts, and the adequacy of engagement with Bicester and the neighbouring villages of Piddington, Upper Arncott and Ambrosden.

The Council has already written to you on 14th July 27th July and 3rd August 2026 setting out its holding position and a substantial list of questions. A reply (MIN 1541463) was received only on 24th

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August. That exchange underlines how much remains unresolved. Compressing public and local-authority scrutiny of the formal application into ten days would compound the earlier failure to engage properly with the communities most affected.
The proposal is of major significance to the residents of Bicester and the surrounding villages. Meaningful consultation is not a courtesy; it is essential if any eventual decision is to command public confidence and withstand scrutiny.

What the Council asks you to do

The Council therefore asks that you, working with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government as the determining authority:

1. Extend the representation period for application PCU/RARE/C3105/3378843 immediately, and in any event to no less than 30 days from first publication of the complete application documents.
2. Confirm that extension in writing to this Council, to Cherwell District Council, to Oxfordshire County Council, and by public notice, before 10 September 2026.
3. Undertake not to determine the application until the extended period has closed and representations received within it have been considered.
4. Meet representatives of Bicester Town Council, Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council before any decision is taken.

Yours Sincerely

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Mayor Of Bicester