From: [redacted]
To: Crown Casework
Subject: Formal objection – MOD Bicester Site A, Urgent Crown Development Application PCU/RARE/C3105/3378843
Date: 07 September 2026 21:58:13

[redacted]

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to formally object to the application for the temporary change of use and development of MOD Bicester Site A to accommodate up to 1,256 asylum service users.

My objection is not based on the nationality, immigration status or personal characteristics of the proposed residents. It concerns the **scale and location of the development, its accessibility, its effects on surrounding communities and public services, and whether the information and mitigation currently before the Secretary of State are sufficient to demonstrate that a development of this size can operate safely and sustainably for the period proposed.**

I recognise the national need identified by the Home Office to provide asylum accommodation and to reduce reliance on hotels. However, national need does not remove the requirement to demonstrate that this particular site, at this particular scale, is suitable.

1. The site is fundamentally poorly located for a residential population of this scale

The applicant's own Transport Assessment identifies serious limitations in the site's accessibility.

It confirms that there are no footways at the northern access, that existing footways around the southern access are only approximately one metre wide, that there are no formal dropped kerbs or crossing facilities, and that there are no existing public footpaths accessible directly from the site.

Most significantly, the Transport Assessment states that, although parts of Piddington, Arncott and Bicester fall within a nominal 2 km catchment, the absence of pedestrian infrastructure means service users should travel by Home Office minibuses instead. It separately confirms that, apart from nearby sports pitches, there are no facilities within a 2 km walking distance of the site.

The Transport Assessment itself concludes that:

"from the point of view of accessibility by sustainable travel modes the location of the site is not ideal".

This is not a minor weakness. The proposal would introduce a residential population of up to 1,256 people to a rural location where the applicant effectively accepts that ordinary walking access to services is unsuitable.

The August 2026 National Planning Policy Framework places clear emphasis through Policy TR4 on prioritising walking, wheeling and cycling, facilitating easy access to high-quality public transport and creating routes that are safe and inclusive for all users.

A development of this scale should not be considered sustainably located simply because the operator proposes to compensate for its isolation through a private minibus system. The effectiveness, capacity, destinations, frequency, hours of operation and long-term funding

of that system are therefore fundamental to the planning acceptability of the proposal, rather than incidental operational matters.

2. Too much essential mitigation is being deferred until after planning permission

The Planning Proposal Statement says that the site will be largely self-contained and therefore reduce reliance on local healthcare, services and infrastructure.

However, there is an important difference between providing *space* for healthcare and welfare services and demonstrating that those services will actually have the staffing, capacity and funding necessary to serve a population of more than 1,250 people.

The same issue exists in relation to security and operational management. The Planning Proposal Statement states that the full Operational Management Plan will only be prepared once the service provider is appointed.

These matters are being relied upon as mitigation for some of the principal impacts of the development, yet important details will apparently be decided after permission has been granted.

Given the scale of the proposal, I do not believe the decision should rely on general assurances that the site will be "self-contained" or "managed" where the mechanisms required to achieve that outcome have not yet been fully demonstrated.

Before permission is granted there should be detailed and enforceable information covering, at a minimum:

- on-site healthcare capacity and staffing;
- arrangements for secondary and emergency healthcare;
- the anticipated additional demand on local NHS services;
- security staffing and incident-management arrangements;
- expected policing requirements;
- the destinations, frequency and capacity of off-site transport;
- management of residents leaving the site independently;
- arrangements for dealing with antisocial behaviour and serious incidents;
- mechanisms for reporting and resolving impacts on neighbouring communities; and
- the funding and responsibility for all mitigation over the lifetime of the development.

The applicant itself identifies access to healthcare, crime and fear of crime and community cohesion as material planning considerations. It is therefore important that those impacts are demonstrated rather than assumed away by reference to an operational plan that does not yet exist.

3. The applicant's reliance on RAF Wethersfield as its principal comparator requires much greater scrutiny

The Transport Assessment explicitly identifies RAF Wethersfield as being very similar in nature and scale to the proposed Bicester development and uses operational data from Wethersfield to model the Bicester proposal.

This makes the actual experience of Wethersfield highly relevant.

Wethersfield relies on shuttle buses taking residents to Braintree, Chelmsford and Colchester. The Bicester Transport Assessment itself records that Wethersfield operates

shuttle services to these places three times each day.

Since then, Essex County Council has announced Operation Vanguard, introducing council-funded security personnel into those three town and city centres specifically in response to community concerns associated with the daily bussing of Wethersfield residents. The council has also sought additional resources from the Home Office to mitigate impacts on surrounding communities.

I do not suggest that this demonstrates that Wethersfield has caused a general increase in crime; publicly available evidence does not currently establish that.

It does, however, demonstrate something directly relevant to this application: **a supposedly self-contained rural centre can create significant off-site operational and community impacts precisely because residents need to be transported elsewhere.**

It is therefore insufficient to use Wethersfield merely as a source of traffic-generation assumptions. The Secretary of State should require an assessment of the wider lessons from that site, including actual off-site journeys, policing demand, antisocial-behaviour management, healthcare demand and the effects on the towns receiving residents.

That evidence should then inform the Bicester transport and operational plans before permission is granted.

4. The proposed duration and scale mean this should not be treated as a short-term emergency use

The proposal is described as temporary, but permission is sought for ten years.

More importantly, the applicant's Transport Assessment states that the facilities are being designed to operate for longer in case use beyond ten years is required.

A development accommodating up to 1,256 people for a decade, with the physical infrastructure required to operate beyond that period, would have a substantial and long-lived effect on its surroundings.

The word “temporary” should therefore not be allowed to reduce the level of scrutiny normally expected of a residential/institutional development of this scale.

At the very least, any permission should contain enforceable phased occupancy limits and review points. Progression to each higher occupancy level should depend on demonstrated performance against agreed measures covering transport, healthcare, policing, security, environmental impacts and complaints from neighbouring communities.

Permission for 1,256 residents should not effectively be granted on day one on the assumption that any problems discovered later can then be managed operationally.

5. Public safety and community impacts require evidence from the relevant agencies before determination

The current National Planning Policy Framework expressly requires development proposals to anticipate and address public-safety risks. Policy P5 also emphasises the importance of up-to-date information from police and other relevant agencies where major developments may create public-safety and security considerations.

The planning decision should therefore be informed by substantive assessments from Thames Valley Police, local NHS bodies, Oxfordshire County Council and other relevant

service providers rather than relying principally on the applicant's own assessment that impacts can be managed.

This is particularly important given the unusual history of consultation around the proposal. The Home Office first raised potential use of MOD Bicester with the Ministry of Defence in November 2025, but Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council were not informed until 25 June 2026, immediately before the proposal became public. Thames Valley Police was first engaged on 18 June. Local NHS engagement was still being progressed subsequently.

The August 2026 NPPF now states through Policy DM1 that major development proposals should be informed by early engagement with neighbours, local communities, the planning authority, statutory consultees and infrastructure providers so that key planning issues can be identified and resolved before submission.

Given both the size of this development and the limited early local engagement, the consultation process now taking place should not substitute for the detailed pre-application resolution of infrastructure and operational issues envisaged by national policy.

Conclusion

I recognise the national pressures facing the asylum accommodation system. My objection is not an argument that accommodation should not be provided, and it is certainly not an attempt to characterise the potential residents. Rather it is that the applicant has not yet demonstrated that MOD Bicester Site A is an appropriate location for a facility of this scale and duration or that its material impacts have been adequately assessed and mitigated.

In particular, the proposal depends heavily upon three assumptions:

1. that the centre can function predominantly as a self-contained facility;
2. that Home Office-provided transport can overcome the acknowledged unsustainable location of the site; and
3. that healthcare, security, policing and community impacts can subsequently be adequately managed through operational arrangements.

Those assumptions are central to the planning case and should be evidenced before permission is granted rather than resolved afterwards.

I therefore ask the Secretary of State not to grant planning permission on the basis of the application as currently submitted.

If the application is not refused, I request that determination be deferred until comprehensive information has been provided by the applicant and relevant statutory bodies addressing the issues above.

Should permission ultimately be granted, I ask that it includes stringent and enforceable conditions including phased occupancy, independent monitoring, published review points, binding transport arrangements, adequate on-site healthcare provision and mechanisms allowing occupancy to be restricted where agreed mitigation proves ineffective.

Yours faithfully,

[redacted]

