From: [redacted]
To: Crown Casework
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Subject: Objection - PCU/RARE/C3105/3378843 - MOD Bicester (Site A), Launton Road, OX25 1AE
Date: 10 September 2026 13:24:20

[redacted]

Dear Crown Casework Team,

I live near the former Bicester Garrison, and I'm writing to formally object to the Home Office's Urgent Crown Development application for up to 1,256 bedspaces at MOD Bicester Site A (ref. PCU/RARE/C3105/3378843). I ask that the Secretary of State refuses it. I have read the application documents. They do not show that this site can safely or sustainably accommodate 1,256 people. On several key issues they contradict one another, and almost everything that matters has been left to "later design stages" or conditions.

1. The "urgency" was created by the applicant, and the public were the last to know. The proposal was first made public on 25 June 2026, and Cherwell District Council says it was told only hours beforehand. By then a great deal of work had already been done:

- a 2025 feasibility study;
- a National Grid development enquiry dated 21 November 2025;
- site visits on 25/26 February, 11 March and 26 March 2026;
- an unexploded ordnance assessment dated 31 March 2026;
- traffic counts from 14 April 2026 and an asbestos demolition survey in April 2026;
- ecology, flood risk and ground condition reports finalised in May 2026.

The Article 4 notice is dated 16 June 2026 and describes the application as already "submitted", before any public announcement. Even so, the government's factsheet of 30 June still said the site was only being "considered" and that feasibility work "could take several months".

The Statement of National Importance planned for "Urgent Crown approval by late August 2026". The Transport Assessment confirms "no pre-application scoping discussions have been held with the local planning and highway authorities". So the Home Office spent months preparing this in private, then gave the community ten days to respond. The urgent procedure is being used to avoid scrutiny, not because of any genuine urgency.

2. It isn't temporary. The application is presented as a temporary 10-year use, but the Home Office's own documents say otherwise:

- the site "will subsequently be expanded for use as a long-term asylum accommodation solution";
- "there are no definitive plans to decommission the Site";
- operation for "a minimum" of 10 years "with the potential for this to be extended";
- the Home Office rejected the temporary Class Q route because it would not give "certainty for permanent infrastructure solutions".

The ordnance assessment was commissioned for "3,510 service users" across 50.5 hectares. I ask that the Secretary of State establishes whether this application is simply the first phase of something far larger.

3. Sewage and our local brooks. Sewage is already discharged into our local brooks, and

this proposal will make that worse.

- The Drainage Design Statement admits "there are no apparent watercourses that seem suitable for discharge within the curtilage of the site". The Home Office's own correspondence says effluent would go "to a watercourse (exact watercourse unknown)".
- Mains connection is "preferred", but Thames Water capacity is unconfirmed. Phase 1 may rely on "a cesspool, with the waste being tankered away", which the documents admit "is not a viable option for the total number" of residents.
- No Environment Agency permit is in place, and the documents expect "protracted negotiations". I can find no arrangements for what happens if the treatment plant fails.
- Pollution control for run-off "does not include detailed water quality treatment design", yet firefighting chemicals are anticipated.
- The treatment works would sit around 100m from residents, falling to about 45m in later phases, against the documents' own "~250m" odour standard.

There is no guarantee that what reaches our brooks will only be treated foul sewage.

4. Local wildlife and protected sites. The site is 1.8km from Arncott Bridge Meadows SSSI and about 1km from the River Ray, in the Otmoor Lowlands.

- On 16 July 2026 the Home Office told Natural England "it is reasonable to assume that the site's surface water could enter the SSSI".
- On 23 July Natural England advised "the proposal could have potential significant effects on Arncott Bridge SSSI". It said a hydrological connection "cannot be ruled out" and that it "has not had sight of the drainage details themselves".
- The Habitats Regulations screening still claims "there is no hydrological pathway".

The ecology appraisal was "only a single visit", "just outside the optimal survey window", and "cannot ... be considered a comprehensive assessment". It recommends further surveys for dormouse, barn owl, breeding birds, great crested newts, reptiles, invertebrates and roosting bats, and none has been published. I can find no biodiversity net gain assessment. What considerations have actually been given to local species?

5. Contaminated land and unexploded ordnance. This was the UK's largest WWII bulk ordnance depot, and the land is contaminated. Yet:

- "No intrusive ground investigation has been undertaken... desk-based information only and remain unverified."
- The documents recommend sampling "the area where munitions were handled and stored" and testing shallow soil for asbestos.
- Asbestos has been confirmed in the buildings, and part of the wider site is excluded "due to health and safety concerns".
- The ordnance report is also a desk study only. It says munitions storage "cannot be discounted" and "further research is warranted", yet its only mitigation is training and an emergency plan.

How can anyone conclude it is safe to house people, some of them for years, on ground that nobody has actually tested?

6. Infrastructure the site simply doesn't have.

- The water network is of "limited capacity relative to any concentrated development".
- The electricity network's "condition, capacity and configuration ... are currently unknown" against a 2.16 MVA demand, so generators are proposed.
- I can find no response from any utility company.
- There is "no pedestrian infrastructure" on a fast, largely unlit rural road, yet the Transport Assessment claims the villages are within "reasonable walking distance".
- The key trip figures in the Transport Assessment are blank, and construction traffic is "not possible to estimate".
- Health provision is "subject to discussion", and the Equality Impact Assessment accepts the scheme "may place additional demands on the police".

Piddington has around 358 residents, and 1,256 people is nearly four times that. Two small villages cannot absorb that.

7. No details of materials or design. The application form gives no materials. The Fire Strategy is an early-stage document saying "more information is necessary". Detailed design is left to "discharge of conditions". The Landscape Statement assessed buildings "no greater than 6 metres", yet the Parameters Plan allows development "up to 12m high", with "double stacked accommodation" proposed. The visual assessment was based on half the height being applied for.

8. "Housing", but no new homes. The application claims no gain in residential units, yet it describes a "residential development" and "living accommodation" with "Residential Buildings". The EIA screening request calls it "typical of this scale of housing development". The form even references Use Class C2A, which covers secure residential institutions, for a scheme described as "non-detained". The applicant should say plainly what use this is and have it assessed on that basis.

9. Works already underway, and an EIA based on a different scheme. The form states work has not commenced, but a large amount of property and goods has already been removed from the site. The applicant's own documents say military equipment "is to be removed during summer 2026" and that the site "will be vacated during summer 2026". The EIA screening, which avoided a full Environmental Impact Assessment, told the Secretary of State there would be "no demolition of existing buildings", apart from five Nissen huts. The Planning Statement proposes demolishing 15,950 sqm of buildings plus "vegetation clearance". The screening decision was therefore made on a materially different scheme and should be revisited.

10. Loss of a defence site at a time of real threat. Parts of this site are still leased for defence storage and "in active use", according to the Transport Assessment. Not one document confirms that the MOD has no future need for it. The world is in an uncertain place, and our Armed Forces need to grow. At a time like this, it makes no sense to lock one of the few remaining large MOD sites in the region into a non-military use for a decade or more.

11. It has failed here before. A 2003 permission for a 750-person Home Office accommodation centre on this same site was "ultimately abandoned". This proposal is roughly 70% larger and rests on even less site-specific evidence.

For all these reasons, I urge the Secretary of State to refuse this application. At the very least, the EIA screening should be revisited and full environmental, drainage, ground contamination and ecological evidence published for proper public consultation. Please keep me informed of its progress and of any decision.

Yours faithfully,
David Ketley

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