Application reference:PCU/RARE/C3105/3378843

To: Crown Development Casework Unit – crowncasework@communities.gov.uk

From: Andrew Coleman
[redacted]

Objection sent on 9 September 2026

Please confirm that you have received this objection and keep me informed of the next steps

I am writing to object to the proposal to create an Asylum Seeker Centre at MOD Bicester Site A. I have read through the documents with the planning application and am shocked by the lack of detail, the amount of missing evidence and reports from consultees, the amount of contradiction between 'facts' presented in different files, and the amount of redaction. However, as I know that Piddington Parish Council will be submitting a detailed objection I will not repeat their findings here.

I have lived in [redacted] since 1982, almost 44 years, so I was here when the previous (2002/03) proposal for an Asylum Centre (Planning Application - 02/01044/GD) was rejected by a Planning Inspector, whose decision was subsequently overruled by Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott. Some of my objections relate back to that plan, and some to the later plan for a Removal Centre on the same site that was approved but never built (Planning Application - 08/02511/F).

Pedestrian safety

I have strong concerns about pedestrian safety on the B4011. I have walked along the stretch of road past the proposed site as far as the top of the hill known as Piddington pitches and can confirm that it is extremely hazardous. There are no footpaths other than a short one near the prison. Elsewhere it is very difficult to avoid traffic - where there are verges, they are very uneven and almost impossible to walk on whether wet and slippery in winter or baked hard and overgrown in summer. In places there are no verges owing to thick bushes. The traffic along this road is very fast moving, with both speed and number of vehicles having increased over the years. The Transport Assessment reports the 85th percentile speeds on the B1104 (I assume it means B4011) beside the site as between 48.9 and 53.6 mph, which I think means that 15% of vehicles are driven above that speed. The Planning Inspector for the 2002/03 plan wrote:

'I believe that 750 asylum seekers, of mixed races and backgrounds, accommodated together, … would be very keen to explore their new local surroundings. The Centre,

however well designed, would have an enclosed, formal, controlled character. Even with purposeful activity provided on-site, and with the opportunity to leave the site to visit nearby towns on the proposed minibus, there would still be a very natural desire for asylum seekers to go for walks, visit nearby villages and attractive countryside, such as Muswell Hill.'

I would add that, given how these men have arrived at the UK, they are clearly brave, adventurous and not averse to risk, and as the centre is much larger and deliberately more spartan than the previous proposal with little purposeful activity provided on-site, the desire to get out and explore would be even greater Not only would the roads be unfamiliar to service users, they would most likely have come from countries such as Sudan, Eritrea, Afghanistan and others that drive on the right side of the road, which would lead many to look in the wrong direction for approaching traffic. The fact that there is a 90-day turnover of service users means that there would be a continual influx of people unfamiliar with the dangers.

Recent pedestrian and other accident figures for the road are not very helpful since we would be comparing an area where there is currently very little pedestrian activity (because hardly anyone lives on that road) with a potential population of more than 1250.

Fear of crime and disorder

Although the Secretary of State dismissed the fear of crime and disorder as being sufficient to act against the 2002 plan, his agent did say:

"The Secretary of State agrees that fear of crime can be a material planning consideration and local residents have genuine concerns about the potential for an increase in crime and disorder."

In his report, the Planning Inspector wrote

"Local people are clearly very fearful that the proposed development would lead to an increase in crime and disorder in the locality. That fear is not founded on any scientific evidence that asylum seekers are disproportionately inclined to commit crime or acts of disorder. Nonetheless, that fear would, I recognise, exist and it would cause stress and anxiety for local people."

There is even more fear from local people in this case, but it has nothing to do with asylum seekers being more likely to commit crimes – there may well be no evidence for this. However, there is evidence that the majority of crimes and antisocial behaviour are committed by young men. The individuals who are service users here will have virtually no money, have no meaningful occupation or other purposeful activity, and will be living with 1200 other young men in a camp designed to have only basic facilities. This is in a place where there are at present no people. Of course there will be the potential for

increased crime in the area accompanied by a realistic increase of stress and anxiety, much more so than in the previous application.

Staffing levels

According to the planning application for a Removal Centre (2008/09), the planned centre was expected to have 528 full-time equivalent staff for a population of 800 single male inhabitants. The current application form has number of employees redacted, although elsewhere, in the Drainage Design Statement, a staffing level of 130 staff is mentioned for 1256 service users. The same number is implied in the Transport Assessment, which recommends 7 cycle spaces at the rate of one per 20 staff (which corresponds to between 120 and 140 staff). It is very concerning for the safety of both the local community and the service users that there is such a vast reduction in staff proposed for a much larger population of service users – both schemes are classified as 'Secure Residential Units' so are clearly similar in nature.

National importance, urgency and community tensions

One of the reasons given for urgency (in the Statement of National Importance) is that the use of hotel accommodation is being phased out, the reason being given as:

"the prolonged use of hotels has placed a strain on local communities, becoming a flashpoint for community tensions, leading to an increase in protests and violence."

First, it is a political decision to phase out hotels rather than a case of an urgent national emergency. Second, the use of large accommodation centres is also a cause of protests and community tension. As the Home Office says in its Equality Impact Assessment:

"The Home Office recognises the decision to consider Bicester for asylum accommodation could lead to protests, and that these may continue through the life of the site. There is potential for protests externally from four keygroups:
1. Local residents and politicians who object to the usage of the site for accommodation of asylum seekers.
2. Pro-immigration groups who have concerns about the perceived conditions on the site, or that the site is being operated as a detention centre.
3. Anti-immigration groups objecting to the housing of asylum seekers or their arrival in the UK.
4. Individuals/groups who may view/use the site as a focal point for demonstrations/protests in support/against events occurring outside the UK and/or in relation to UK Foreign Policy"

The Statement of National Importance also gives another reason for phasing out hotel use:

"It is also understood that hotels represent a 'pull' factor for asylum seekers to come to the UK even after passing through other safe countries: intelligence suggests that the prospect of a paid-for hotel bed is used to lure asylum seekers into small boats[11]."

There is no evidence given for this claim (the footnote just refers to another Home Office document that makes the same unsubstantiated claim). However, even if it is true, the people smugglers will surely just change the lure to being a bed and three meals a day in holiday camp style accommodation (the description that has already been used by councillors in Essex talking to the media).

Nettlefire

Many of the reports and assessments accompanying this application are from an organisation called Nettlefire, who are apparently experts in fire risk, air quality, drainage design, geo-environmental and geotechnical assessment, and utilities and infrastructure. For a normal planning application, I would expect such reports to be commissioned from independent experts in their field, but Nettlefire doesn't appear to exist outside the Home Office's current application, which makes me think the Home Office is doing its own reports. This introduces a strong suspicion that the Home Office is manipulating the system to get the results it wants – it is marking its own homework.