FORMAL OBJECTION – MOD BICESTER SITE A

Application Reference: PCU/RARE/C3105/3378843
Name: Katy Harlington
[redacted]
Date: 13th September 2026

Dear Crown Development Casework Unit,

I am writing [redacted] to object to the proposed development at MOD Bicester Site A.

I [redacted] use the surrounding roads regularly and know the local area. I have also spent a considerable amount of time reading through the documents submitted with this application.

The more I have read, the more concerned I have become.

My concern is not about the principle of providing alternative accommodation for people currently living in asylum hotels. I understand the pressure on Government to find suitable alternatives. My concern is much simpler: **is this particular site actually ready and suitable to safely accommodate up to 1,256 people?**

Having read the Utilities and Infrastructure Assessment, Drainage Design Statement, Travel Plan, Air Quality Screening Technical Note, Habitats Regulations Assessment, ecological correspondence and Noise Impact Assessment, I do not believe that question has yet been satisfactorily answered.

There seem to be too many fundamental matters where the applicant's own documents say further surveys, modelling, investigation or agreement are still required.

Drainage and sewage

This is probably one of my biggest concerns.

The Drainage Design Statement describes the drainage proposals as being at concept stage and says further work is required to confirm their technical feasibility.

Further CCTV surveys, topographical work, ground investigations, utility surveys and confirmation of suitable outfalls and receiving watercourses are still required.

For a development intended to accommodate 1,256 people, I find it difficult to understand why these fundamental questions are still unanswered at the point at which planning permission is being considered.

The position regarding sewage concerns me even more.

The applicant's own documents state that the viability of the current foul-water proposals has not yet been determined. Capacity at the nearest wastewater treatment works has not been confirmed and tankering is not considered viable for the full population.

The alternative appears to be an on-site wastewater treatment works, but again there is no confirmed final discharge location, there appear to be no suitable watercourses for discharge within the site itself, and third-party land may potentially be required.

Before 1,256 people are allowed to live on this site, surely we should know where their sewage is going to go and have confidence that the solution is actually achievable?

Flooding and surface water

Those of us who live locally are naturally concerned about flooding and drainage.

What concerns me is that the applicant's own investigations have identified localised flooding and ponding, including during dry conditions, blocked drainage infrastructure and areas where flooding is already reported.

At the same time, the final surface-water outfalls and downstream receiving systems have still not been confirmed.

The proposed calculations therefore appear to assume that a suitable outfall will ultimately be found.

That seems the wrong way around to me.

Surely the applicant should demonstrate that the water has somewhere suitable and safe to go before planning permission is granted, rather than obtaining permission first and finding the solution afterwards?

Wildlife and Arncott Bridge Meadows SSSI

The ecological implications particularly worry me because we live in a rural area and the effects of this development will not necessarily stop at the site boundary.

The later correspondence regarding Arncott Bridge Meadows SSSI is particularly concerning.

Natural England specifically asked whether runoff from the development could affect the SSSI through changes to its hydrology, erosion, water depths or longer periods of flooding.

The applicant's response appears to accept that it cannot currently confirm the hydrological connection, but considers there is a strong likelihood of one and that it is reasonable to assume surface water from the development could enter the SSSI.

Yet the actual impact is apparently going to be established through detailed hydraulic modelling at a later stage, once the drainage strategy has been finalised.

I find this difficult to understand.

If there is a strong likelihood that water from this development could reach a protected SSSI, shouldn't we understand what effect that water could have on the SSSI before deciding whether the development is acceptable?

There is also the possibility of an on-site wastewater treatment works discharging treated effluent into a watercourse which has not yet even been identified.

Before permission is granted, I would like reassurance from both the Council and Natural England that the final drainage and wastewater arrangements will not damage the SSSI, local watercourses, habitats or wildlife.

Transport and our local roads

As someone who uses these roads, the transport proposals also concern me.

The applicant's own Travel Plan acknowledges that the site is not ideally located for sustainable travel and that pedestrian infrastructure around parts of the site is inadequate.

What particularly concerns me is that the Travel Plan mainly considers staff and visitors rather than the 1,256 people who will be living there.

The proposals appear to rely heavily on shuttle buses and minibuses, but I cannot see sufficient certainty about how frequently these will operate, their capacity, hours of operation or how the service will work over the lifetime of the development.

There will also be staff vehicles, visitors, coaches, deliveries, refuse vehicles, HGVs and potentially wastewater tankers.

These are rural roads used every day by the people who live here.

I would therefore like to see a much clearer picture of the total additional traffic generated by this development, rather than individual elements being considered separately.

Air quality

The Air Quality Screening Technical Note concludes that detailed operational modelling is unnecessary because predicted traffic is expected to remain below the relevant thresholds.

That conclusion may be perfectly reasonable if all the traffic has been included.

But given the uncertainty elsewhere in the application, I would like confirmation that the calculations include Service User shuttle buses, coaches, staff and visitor vehicles, deliveries, refuse collection, HGVs and any wastewater tanker movements that may become necessary.

If those movements have not all been included, then I believe the air-quality assessment should be reconsidered.

Noise for people already living here

The Noise Impact Assessment is another document that left me with an important unanswered question.

It appears mainly to consider how existing road noise from the B4011 will affect people living on the proposed site.

But what about the people who already live here?

I cannot find a comprehensive assessment showing what noise generated by this development will mean for existing homes in Piddington, Arncott and the surrounding countryside.

Potential noise sources include generators, wastewater treatment equipment, pumps, HGVs and deliveries, refuse vehicles, coaches, shuttle buses, car parks and construction and demolition activity.

Some of this equipment may potentially operate at night.

With a development of this size, I think existing residents deserve to know what the predicted noise levels will be at their homes before permission is granted.

It is the combination of unanswered questions that concerns me most

Any one of these issues on its own might be capable of being resolved.

What worries me is how many fundamental issues remain unresolved at the same time.

They are also connected.

If there is insufficient electrical capacity, more reliance may be placed on generators, creating additional noise and emissions.

If the existing sewerage system cannot accommodate the development, an on-site treatment works or tankering may be required, creating additional traffic, noise and potential environmental effects.

If the eventual surface-water outfall differs from what is currently assumed, the drainage and ecological assessments may need to change.

These do not feel like small details that simply need tidying up later.

They concern the basic question of whether this site can actually support a development of this size without unacceptable consequences for the surrounding communities and environment.

What I am asking for

I am not asking for every nut, bolt and pipe to be designed before a decision is made.

I am asking for the fundamental questions to be answered first.

Before permission is granted, I believe there should be clear evidence confirming:

1. where foul water from 1,256 people will go and that the solution is achievable;
2. whether the existing sewerage and wastewater infrastructure has sufficient capacity;
3. where surface water will discharge and whether the receiving system can safely accommodate it;
4. the results of the necessary hydraulic modelling and the implications for flooding;
5. that Arncott Bridge Meadows SSSI and surrounding wildlife and watercourses will not be harmed;
6. Natural England's position once the final drainage information is available;
7. that sufficient potable water and electricity can actually be provided;
8. how much reliance will be placed on generators;
9. how transport for 1,256 Service Users will actually work;
10. that all associated vehicle movements have been included in the traffic and air-quality assessments; and
11. what the development-generated noise will mean for people already living in Piddington, Arncott and the surrounding area.

If these questions cannot currently be answered, then I believe the sensible and responsible course would be to defer the decision until they can be.

If permission is nevertheless being considered before these matters are resolved, I would ask for a clear explanation of why they are considered suitable to be dealt with after planning permission rather than beforehand, together with robust conditions preventing occupation until the necessary infrastructure and environmental safeguards have been demonstrated.

Finally

I understand why this application is being dealt with urgently. I understand the Government's desire to reduce reliance on asylum hotels and that alternative accommodation needs to be found.

But urgency should not mean that legitimate questions about whether a particular site is suitable are left unanswered.

This proposal isn't for a small number of people. It is for up to 1,256 people, potentially for at least ten years.

For those people, this site will become their home.

For those [redacted] who already live in Piddington, Arncott and the surrounding area, [redacted] will live alongside the consequences of whatever decision is made.

And the wildlife, watercourses and countryside surrounding the site cannot simply be restored later if assumptions made now turn out to have been wrong.

After reading the applicant's own documents, I am left with one very simple question:

Do we actually know enough today to be confident that this particular site can safely and sustainably accommodate 1,256 people without unacceptable consequences for the people who will live there, the people who already live here, and the environment around us?

Based on the information currently available, I don't believe we do.

I therefore ask that the application is deferred until these fundamental questions have been properly answered and the necessary evidence is available to everyone making this decision.

Yours faithfully,

Katy Harlington
[redacted]