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From: [redacted]
Sent: 13 September 2026 18:10
To: Crown Casework
Subject: REF: PCU/RARE/C3105/3378843

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Objection to Planning Application 26/01833/CROWN – MOD Bicester Site A

I am writing as a local resident to object to the proposed use of the former MOD Bicester Site A as accommodation for up to 1,256 people seeking asylum.

I want to make clear at the outset that my objection is **not to the principle of providing accommodation for people seeking asylum**. I have considerable sympathy for people who have been forced to leave their homes, and I agree that purpose-built accommodation with appropriate services is preferable to accommodating people in hotels wherever a suitable site can be found.

My concern is much more specific: **I do not believe that the application has demonstrated that this particular site is suitable for this particular use, at this scale and for the proposed duration.** Having read a number of the supporting documents, I am left with significant questions about the site's isolation and accessibility, its infrastructure, environmental impacts, the likely operation of an open-access facility of this scale, and the extent to which important matters have actually been resolved before permission is sought.

1. The suitability of the site and its isolation

The site is a former defence storage and distribution facility in a relatively rural location. The application itself acknowledges that its sustainable transport accessibility is "not ideal", and there is no pedestrian infrastructure providing a straightforward route from the site to surrounding settlements.

This seems particularly important because the proposal is for **non-detained** accommodation. Residents will be free to leave the site.

The application appears to rely substantially on the site being "self-contained", with minibuses provided for necessary journeys. I question whether this is a sufficiently realistic assumption for a population of up to 1,256 people who may be living at the site for varying periods of time.

The Transport Assessment identifies Wethersfield as a site of similar nature and scale. It also describes regular shuttle transport from Wethersfield to surrounding towns and transport for healthcare that is not available on site. This suggests that, in practice, a large non-detained rural accommodation centre cannot be assumed to be genuinely self-contained.

I would therefore ask:

- What assessment has been made of the likely volume and nature of residents' off-site journeys?

- What is the anticipated average and maximum length of stay?
- What arrangements will be made for residents who wish to leave the site for reasons other than those classified as “essential”?
- What evidence supports the assumption that the proposed minibus provision will be sufficient?
- What consideration has been given to the fact that there is no normal pedestrian route from the site to surrounding settlements?

The absence of pedestrian infrastructure seems particularly concerning given the rural nature of the surrounding roads. The issue is not that residents should be expected to walk along these roads, but that **a development of this scale is being located somewhere where safe independent movement outside the site is exceptionally difficult**.

2. What can be learned from Wethersfield?

I am particularly concerned that the experience of Wethersfield does not appear to have been used as fully as it could have been in assessing the likely operation of the Bicester site.

The applicant itself identifies Wethersfield as a comparable site, with a capacity of approximately 1,245 people compared with 1,256 proposed at Bicester.

I therefore believe the Secretary of State should consider the actual experience of operating Wethersfield, rather than relying primarily on assumptions about how Bicester will operate.

In particular, I would like to understand what lessons have been learned regarding:

- residents’ movements outside the site;
- demand for transport to surrounding towns;
- healthcare and other services not available on site;
- policing and community safety;
- the relationship between a large rural accommodation centre and surrounding communities; and
- the practical difficulties of operating a site which is intended to be largely self-contained but whose residents are not detained.

This seems particularly important because the Government is now proposing a second centre of almost identical scale while there is already several years of operational experience from Wethersfield.

3. Infrastructure and the deliverability of the proposal

I am concerned that the site is not an existing residential or barracks facility with established infrastructure that simply requires upgrading.

The application involves substantial new infrastructure, including roads, accommodation, utilities and a wastewater treatment plant.

The Utilities and Infrastructure Assessment appears to acknowledge uncertainty about the capacity and condition of existing infrastructure. In particular, the electricity supply cannot currently be relied upon and the proposal therefore anticipates that temporary and/or permanent generators may be required.

The drainage documentation similarly identifies significant uncertainty about the existing drainage network. Existing drainage infrastructure is in places described as poorly understood or non-operational, and further investigation is required.

I appreciate that detailed design and investigation are normal parts of a major development. However, in this case the proposal is being considered under an unusually accelerated planning process and is intended to accommodate more than 1,200 people.

I therefore question whether the infrastructure necessary to make this development safe and sustainable has been sufficiently established **before** planning permission is granted.

In particular:

- Has the capacity of the electricity, water and wastewater systems been conclusively established?
- What is the anticipated reliance on generators, and what will be the implications in terms of noise, emissions and ongoing operation?
- Has the proposed wastewater treatment solution been fully established, including its discharge arrangements?
- Have the existing drainage systems been sufficiently surveyed to establish how they currently function?
- Has the full extent of any contamination or other ground constraints been established before extensive demolition and ground disturbance take place?

4. Drainage, flooding and the water environment

I was particularly concerned by the drainage information submitted with the application.

I understand that the site's risk from river flooding is generally low. However, this does not appear to resolve the separate issue of surface-water management.

The submitted documents identify existing ponding and surface-water flooding, uncertainty about the existing drainage network, and the need for further investigation and hydraulic modelling. Elements of the proposed drainage strategy also remain indicative and subject to further work.

There is also a potentially important environmental dimension because of the site's relationship with nearby designated habitat and the possibility of hydrological connectivity.

I therefore question whether the drainage strategy is sufficiently developed to demonstrate, before permission is granted, that the development will not increase surface-water or pollution risks either on the site or downstream.

5. Ecology and environmental impact

I am concerned that the ecological baseline may not yet be sufficiently established.

The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal was undertaken outside the optimum April–September period for the principal habitat survey. The report itself acknowledges the limitations of a single survey and recommends further targeted surveys for a number of species and ecological interests.

This seems particularly important for a site which is currently a relatively undeveloped, semi-abandoned rural environment and which is close to designated ecological interests.

I am not suggesting that the site is necessarily of exceptional ecological value. Rather, I question whether the evidence is sufficiently complete to establish what ecological value is present **before** a decision is made to transform the site so substantially.

I am also concerned about the potential effects of the development's lighting. A 24-hour accommodation facility for more than 1,200 people will inevitably introduce substantially more lighting into what is currently a relatively rural environment. The impact on nocturnal wildlife, including bats, and on the character of the surrounding area should, in my view, be properly assessed rather than largely deferred to a later lighting condition.

6. Ground conditions, asbestos and contamination

The site's former military storage use also raises questions about ground conditions.

The application acknowledges the presence of asbestos-containing buildings requiring demolition, and further investigation is proposed into made ground, contamination and areas associated with historic storage of munitions.

Again, I am not asserting that the site is contaminated or unsafe. My concern is that **the extent of the risk appears not yet to be fully established**.

Given the scale of demolition and new construction proposed, I would ask whether the necessary intrusive investigations and contamination assessments should be completed before permission is granted, rather than relying on matters being resolved at a later stage.

7. Local services, emergency provision and community safety

The proposal includes healthcare and welfare provision on site, which I welcome.

However, "self-contained" provision cannot mean that residents will never need services outside the site. The experience of Wethersfield appears to demonstrate that external healthcare and other journeys continue to be necessary.

I therefore have questions about the capacity implications for:

- NHS and emergency healthcare;
- dental services;
- Thames Valley Police;
- Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service; and
- other local emergency and public services.

This is not to say that these services will necessarily be overwhelmed. I am asking what evidence demonstrates that the additional demand has been quantified and that the necessary capacity and arrangements are in place.

I also note that the application itself anticipates the possibility of protest activity and refers to its management as an operational policing matter. Given the scale and isolated location of the proposed centre, I would like to understand what assessment has been made of the additional policing and security requirements and how these would be resourced.

8. Ten years is a substantial period, particularly when the infrastructure is designed for longer

The application describes the proposal as temporary for ten years.

Ten years is, however, a substantial period for a development of this scale. More importantly, the supporting material indicates that the facilities are being designed so that they can operate for longer if required. Recent experience at other former military asylum accommodation sites demonstrates that “temporary” use can be extended.

This makes it particularly important that the proposal is assessed as a substantial operational facility rather than simply as a short-term emergency measure.

I therefore believe it is reasonable to ask:

- What is the intended end-state for the site after ten years?
- What safeguards will ensure that the use genuinely ends at that point?
- If an extension were subsequently sought, what would trigger a fresh assessment of the site’s suitability and impacts?
- Why is infrastructure being designed to support use beyond ten years if the proposed use is genuinely temporary?

9. Is there sufficient evidence to make a properly informed decision now?

My overarching concern is the combination of all the above issues.

I recognise that a major planning application will inevitably contain matters which are subsequently refined. However, this proposal is unusual in both its **scale and urgency**.

The speed of the formal planning process is also a concern. The application was formally validated on 2 September 2026, with the relevant local and statutory consultees consulted from 3 September and generally asked to respond by 17 September. The public representation period runs from 7 to 17 September.

I recognise that this does not mean the proposal has only been under consideration for two weeks: the Home Office’s intention to use the site has been publicly known since June, and work on the proposal clearly predates the formal application. However, the formal planning consultation is exceptionally compressed for a proposal of this scale and complexity. The Transport Assessment also confirms that no pre-application scoping discussions were held with the local planning and highway authorities because of the fast-track nature of the proposal.

I appreciate that the Urgent Crown Development process exists for a reason. Nevertheless, urgency should not mean that important questions are left to be resolved after permission has been granted.

Having reviewed the application, I am concerned that too many important elements remain dependent on further investigation, detailed design, future conditions or assumptions about how the site will operate.

Conclusion

I want to reiterate that my objection is **not an objection to asylum seekers or to the provision of decent accommodation for them**. I believe that people seeking asylum need somewhere safe and humane to live, and I would much rather see properly designed accommodation with appropriate services than continued reliance on hotels.

My concern is that **this particular site does not appear, on the evidence currently available, to have been demonstrated to be suitable for that purpose at this scale**.

The combination of the site's isolation, the lack of pedestrian connectivity, the reliance on a "self-contained" operating model for a non-detained population, the experience of the comparable Wethersfield site, uncertainties around utilities and drainage, outstanding ecological and ground investigations, the implications for local services and emergency provision, and the proposed ten-year period of use leaves me with substantial unresolved concerns.

I therefore respectfully ask the Secretary of State **not to grant planning permission unless and until these matters have been properly established and the evidence demonstrates that the site can operate safely, sustainably and without unacceptable impact on the surrounding community and environment**.

I would also ask that particular weight be given to the extent to which the outstanding matters identified in the application can genuinely be resolved through subsequent design and mitigation, rather than being left as assumptions to be addressed after planning permission has been granted.

I hope that my comments will be considered as those of a concerned local resident who has taken the time to read the evidence and is asking reasonable questions about the suitability and deliverability of the proposal.

Yours faithfully,

Rina Israeli

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