From: [redacted]
To: Crown Casework
Cc: calum.miller.mp@parliament.uk; wpwsobjection@gmail.com
Subject: Objection to Urgent Crown Development Application – MOD Bicester Site A (Ref: PCU/RARE/C3105/3378843)
Date: 16 September 2026 22:54:53

[redacted]

Dear Secretary of State,

Urgent Crown Development application PCU/RARE/C3105/3378843 – proposed asylum accommodation for up to 1,256 people at Site A, MOD Bicester, Bicester Garrison, Launton Road, Oxfordshire, OX25 1AE

I am writing to object to the above application for the temporary change of use of the former defence storage and distribution centre at MOD Bicester.

I am a resident of Launton, in Cherwell district. My village falls inside the 8km cycling catchment identified in the Travel Plan submitted with this application, so it is an area the proposal itself recognises as being within reach of the site.

I am not asking that this application be refused outright. I am asking that it be refused as submitted, or put on hold, until the matters below have been properly looked at. My objection is about whether this site is suitable, whether the assessments supporting the application are adequate, and how quickly it is being pushed through.

1. This site was assessed and rejected for exactly this purpose in 2003, and little has changed since.

A proposal to house asylum seekers at MOD Bicester was rejected by a planning inspector in 2003, who found the site isolated, unsafe and unsuitable. It has not been used for accommodation of any kind since. It is still a semi-derelict storage depot with no accommodation buildings that could be reused, and this application would mean building a largely self-contained settlement for up to 1,256 people from scratch, in three phases.

If the site was unsuitable in 2003 because it was isolated and lacked infrastructure, the application should show what has genuinely changed. I cannot see that it does. The National Audit Office previously found that the large-site asylum accommodation programme was expected to cost more overall than the hotels it was meant to replace, and nowhere in the published documents can I find the cost of making this particular site usable, or any case that it represents value for money.

2. The Equality Impact Assessment considers the people who would be accommodated, but not the people who already live here.

The Equality Impact Assessment examines in detail whether accommodating only single adult males at this site is fair to the asylum seekers themselves. It concludes that the arrangement does discriminate on grounds of age and sex, but that this is lawful. I take no issue with that analysis.

The document does not include any equivalent assessment of the decision's effect on the area's existing population. It does not name the villages that would be affected. It sets out general intentions about health provision, policing and transport, but provides no assessment of what a development of this size would mean for services here, and no

evidence to support its assurances. It says it will be reviewed six months after sign-off, but does not explain how it would measure the effect on surrounding communities, or how residents could raise concerns once the site is open.

I would ask that this assessment be carried out and published before a decision is taken. If done afterward, it cannot influence the decision it is meant to inform.

3. There is still no settled plan for dealing with sewage, or for basic services.

The Drainage Design Statement submitted with the application clearly shows what remains unresolved. The preferred option, connecting to Bicester's sewage treatment works some six kilometres away, cannot be confirmed, because Thames Water was not consulted during the design work and it is therefore unknown whether there is capacity. Without that information, the proposal falls back on building a new sewage treatment works on the site itself, an option the statement describes as the most difficult of those considered and chose only because the alternatives could not be verified. That would require a new Environment Agency permit and a discharge point, and no suitable watercourse has been identified within the site. In the meantime, the first phase may rely on a cesspool emptied by tanker. The statement concludes that the proposals remain concepts at this stage, and that whether they would actually work has not been established.

The position on other services is much the same. The application accepts that the existing electricity supply cannot be relied on and that generators will be needed, and describes the water supply as likely to be constrained, in an area where our MP has reported that a nearby development could not open because Thames Water could not supply it.

I do not see how a decision can properly be made to house 1,256 people at a site where it has not yet been established how their sewage would be dealt with.

4. The wildlife survey is incomplete.

The ecological appraisal was based on a single visit, and says plainly that it cannot be treated as a full assessment of the site. It found habitat suitable for a range of protected species, including dormice, barn owls, great crested newts, reptiles and bats, and recommended further surveys for each. Nine of those surveys are still outstanding, and some can only be done at certain times of year, which have now passed.

Despite this, the conclusion was that there would be no significant effect on wildlife, on the basis that a management plan would address it. That plan cannot be written until the surveys are done. The site is also less than two kilometres from Arncott Bridge Meadows, a Site of Special Scientific Interest, which makes it more important, not less, to have the full picture before deciding.

5. The ground itself has not been properly investigated.

This was a wartime ordnance depot. The published assessments record asbestos on the site, several records of past industrial use, and a risk of unexploded ordnance, which the relevant report says cannot be ruled out without further research. That research has not been done. The only assessment of ground conditions is a desk study, with no on-site investigation, and it recommends targeted testing, including in the area where munitions were once handled and stored. An earlier land quality report from 2018 is blacked out entirely in the published version, so the public cannot see what it found.

I am not qualified to judge how serious any of this is, and I would not try to. My concern is

the order in which things are being done. The application asks for a decision now, based on desk studies, with the actual investigation left until after permission is granted. For a site with this history, where people would be living for at least ten years, that seems the wrong way round.

6. The site cannot safely be reached on foot, and the effects reach further than the nearest villages.

The Travel Plan submitted with the application states that travel on foot is not recommended for local trips, and confirms there are no pavements at the northern entrance and no street lighting around it. The B4011 is a single-carriageway country road with a 50mph limit. The Travel Plan's own map records three collisions on the stretch beside that entrance, and our MP has reported two deaths on this road near the site in the last three years.

Rather than provide pavements, the Travel Plan suggests residents travel to Piddington, Arncott and Bicester by minibuses run by the Home Office. The document makes no commitment on how often those would run, who would pay for them, or how long they would continue.

7. The consultation has been held on an incomplete application.

The Planning Proposal Statement confirms that two documents covering noise and air quality were not finished and would follow separately. People have therefore been asked to comment without them. Our MP has noted that only ten days were allowed for representations, against the twenty-one days that normally apply. I also understand that a legal challenge has been brought against the environmental screening decision underpinning this application, on the grounds that it relied on investigations that have not yet happened and assessed buildings half the height of those the application would permit. It would seem sensible to resolve that before deciding anything.

What I am asking for

I ask that the application be refused as submitted, or put on hold, and that the following be provided first:

- a published assessment of the effect of this proposal on the people already living in the surrounding area, setting out how those effects will be monitored, how often they will be reviewed, and how residents can raise concerns once the site is open;

- a clear account of what has changed since this site was rejected as unsuitable in 2003, and the full cost of making it usable;

- a settled solution for sewage, including confirmation from Thames Water on capacity, a confirmed discharge point and the necessary Environment Agency permit, before permission rather than after;

- completion of the nine outstanding wildlife surveys at the right time of year, and a fresh assessment based on what they find;

- proper investigation of the ground for contamination and unexploded ordnance before a decision is taken, and publication of the 2018 land quality report in full;

- a funded plan for pavements, cycling and road safety covering the wider area the Travel

Plan itself identifies; and

- a fresh consultation, on a complete application, once the outstanding documents have been published and the legal challenge resolved.

If the government intends to use this site, it should do so on the basis of evidence that matches what is actually being proposed, with the investigations finished before permission rather than promised afterwards, and with the communities affected able to see that evidence and respond to it. That is not an unreasonable request, and it is what the normal planning process would have required.

Yours faithfully,

[redacted]