

Crown Casework Team
Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local
Government

By email to:

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**The Leader's Office
Oxfordshire County Council
County Hall
New Road
Oxford
Oxfordshire
OX1 1ND**

Councillor Neil Fawcett
Deputy Leader of the Council

17 September 2026

Dear Sir or Madam

**Re: URGENT CROWN DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION MOD BICESTER SITE A:
PROPOSED NON-DETAINED ASYLUM ACCOMMODATION
Ref. PCU/RARE/C3105/3378843 (26/01833/CROWN)**

I am writing to you as Deputy Leader of Oxfordshire County Council to object to the proposed use of MOD Bicester Site A as large-scale asylum accommodation in our area.

Oxfordshire has a strong record of supporting all people in need, including those who have fled violence and persecution, which aligns with our status as a Council of Sanctuary. Our commitment is to ensure that anyone placed in the county by the Home Office is treated with basic dignity and humanity. Oxfordshire County Council does not consider that this proposal meets this commitment as it will be placing large numbers of people in an isolated site, in unsuitable accommodation, unable to work or volunteer and with limited access to basic services which are contrary to the integration, cohesion, safeguarding and public health policies and principles we aspire to. Such conditions do little to help people become part of, and contribute to, the communities in which they are living.

We will continue to speak up for the needs, safety and dignity of all our residents, both new and settled across Oxfordshire.

MOD Bicester site A is poorly connected to surrounding settlements and lacks access to buses, footways, cycleways and street lighting. There are unresolved questions about flood risk, land contamination, wildfire, hazardous materials and risks relating to fire protection between temporary accommodation units. These issues directly affect whether the site can safely accommodate such a large number of people.

Whilst the application recognises that people seeking asylum may have increased physical and mental health needs, the Council has not received sufficient assurance

about how these needs will be met. From a Public Health perspective, locally agreed arrangements for infectious disease prevention and outbreak management need to be put in place by the Home Office, alongside greater clarity on vaccination, prescribing, isolation capacity, contact tracing, room occupancy and the availability of spare rooms should there be an outbreak. Moreover, there is a question about whether shared modular accommodation can remain safe and suitable during increasingly extreme temperatures.

The proposal also gives insufficient detail on mental health support and privacy for people experiencing poor mental wellbeing or post-traumatic stress. A large institutional setting, with limited privacy and rapid turnover, could worsen distress for people who need stability and humane support.

Although the proposal is intended for adult males, errors in age assessments by the Home Office remain a significant risk. The Council requires clear, operational arrangements for identifying, safeguarding and the prompt relocation of any child who presents at the site. General references within the proposal to national guidance do not provide the site-specific safeguards needed for a facility of this scale.

The assumption that on site provision will make the development self-sufficient is not supported by adequate operational or financial detail. The Council has not received clear commitments about the range, capacity and quality of welfare and health services that will be provided on the site, nor how additional demands on adult social care, safeguarding, public health, fire and rescue, hospitals, transport and other local services would be assessed, funded and mitigated. The same concern applies to the capacity of local voluntary and community organisations to provide support at such a large scale.

The handling of the proposal by government has undermined confidence from the outset. Local authorities received less than 24 hours' notice and there was no prior engagement with local residents or partners. The application gives limited consideration to the impact on nearby communities, despite acknowledging possible anxiety, protest, demonstration or disorder associated with a non-detained site. The proximity to the Buckinghamshire border also gives the proposal a wider impact. Thames Valley Police, who have already had to engage with tensions before construction has begun, should be provided with additional financial support to keep people safe.

Moreover, the Council has not seen a sufficiently developed community engagement plan from government to prevent and respond to misinformation and community tensions. Decisions of this scale must be developed transparently and in genuine partnership with local communities which has not happened here.

Supporting people in need and standing alongside local communities are not mutually exclusive. A responsible asylum accommodation policy must do both. In the Council's view, this proposal does neither.

Yours sincerely,

Neil Fawcett

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