The Rt Hon Shabana Mahmood MP
Home Secretary
Home Office
Direct Communications Unit
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DP

Bicester Town Council Offices
The Garth
Launton Road
Bicester
Oxon
OX26 6PS

BICESTER
TOWN COUNCIL

Dear Home Secretary,

I write on behalf of Bicester Town Council as a matter of urgency following the Home Office announcement on 26 June 2026 of its intention to bring forward proposals to accommodate up to 1,250 single adult male asylum seekers (aged 18–65) on a "no choice" basis at the redundant MoD Bicester Site A, part of Bicester Garrison, located between Piddington and Upper Arnott.

The Home Office has indicated that the site could begin receiving residents as early as the end of 2026, subject to planning permission. Bicester Town Council notes with considerable concern that this announcement was made without any prior formal consultation or engagement with this Council, Cherwell District Council, or the wider local community.

Holding Position

Pending full clarification of the proposals, comprehensive impact assessments, meaningful consultation, and satisfactory assurances regarding local services, safety, social cohesion, and infrastructure, Bicester Town Council formally reserves its position on the proposals. This letter constitutes a holding response and does not constitute support for, or acceptance of, the proposals in any form.

Request for Urgent Clarification and Information

In order that the Council may properly discharge its duties to residents and respond in a coordinated, evidence-based manner, we respectfully request that the Home Office provide, as a matter of urgency, the following information and documentation:

a) Full details of the proposals, including exact capacity, phasing of occupation, intended duration of use, and the nature of the accommodation (e.g. modular units, existing buildings, communal facilities).
b) A clear timeline for planning applications, decision-making, site preparation, and first occupation, including any intended use of permitted development rights or special development orders.
c) Copies of all impact assessments undertaken to date, including (but not limited to) Environmental Impact Assessment, Equality Impact Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Transport Assessment, and any community safety or policing assessments.
d) Details of proposed on-site and off-site service provision, including healthcare (primary and secondary care), mental health support, education/training (if any), welfare services, and security arrangements.
e) Confirmation of the proposed consultation process with Bicester Town Council, Cherwell District Council, Oxfordshire County Council, local residents, parish councils (Piddington, Arncott and others), and other stakeholders, including timescales and methods of engagement.
f) Details of any discussions held to date with the Ministry of Defence, Thames Valley Police, local NHS Integrated Care Board, and other statutory agencies regarding capacity and resource implications.
g) The name and contact details of the senior Home Office official with overall responsibility for this proposal, and a nominated single point of contact for ongoing liaison.

Key Areas of Concern

While the Council awaits full information, initial concerns raised by councillors and residents focus on the following areas (this list is not exhaustive):

• **Local services and infrastructure:** Capacity of local NHS services (GP practices, hospitals, mental health), emergency services, waste management, utilities, and public transport in a rural/semi-rural location with limited existing provision.
• **Community safety and policing:** Impact on Thames Valley Police resources, potential for community tension, safeguarding arrangements, and the implications of accommodating a large number of adult males in close proximity to established residential communities and villages.
• **Social cohesion and community impact:** Effects on the villages of Piddington and Upper Arncott, the wider Bicester area, and the ability of local communities to absorb and integrate such a significant temporary population.
• **Lack of early engagement:** The complete absence of prior formal consultation with the Town Council and District Council is of profound concern and undermines local democratic accountability and good governance.
• **Planning and environmental considerations:** Suitability of the site, traffic generation on rural roads, environmental and ecological impacts, and the long-term use of a former MoD site.

Requested Next Steps

Bicester Town Council formally requests that the Home Office:

i. Provide a full written response to the clarification requests above by the 1st of August 2026.
ii. Agree to an urgent multi-agency meeting involving the Home Office, Ministry of Defence, Bicester Town Council, Cherwell District Council, Oxfordshire County Council, NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board, Thames Valley Police, and the Member of Parliament for Bicester and Woodstock, Callum Miller, to be arranged within the next 21 days.
iii. Commit to genuine, early, and ongoing engagement with this Council and the local community before any planning application is submitted or further decisions are taken.

The Council takes its responsibility to represent the interests of Bicester residents extremely seriously. We stand ready to engage constructively but must insist upon transparency, evidence-based decision-making, and proper regard for local capacity and community well-being.

I look forward to your prompt and comprehensive reply.

Please direct all correspondence to paul.canning@bicester.gov.uk. A hard copy of this letter is also being sent by post for your records.

Yours sincerely,
Paul Canning

For and on behalf of Bicester Town Council.

Deputy Town Clerk