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
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OX26 6PS

BICESTER
TOWN COUNCIL

Dear Home Secretary,

Further to Bicester Town Council's holding letter regarding the proposed accommodation centre at MOD Bicester Site A, I am writing to provide a summary of additional concerns and observations raised by Town Councillors during subsequent discussions.

Whilst the Council continues to await the information requested in our previous correspondence, Members have identified a number of further matters which they believe require detailed consideration and response before any proposal can be properly assessed.

Planning and Site Suitability

Councillors noted that previous proposals relating to this site were refused planning permission some years ago and would welcome clarification regarding the material changes in circumstances that now lead the Home Office to consider the site suitable for a development of this scale.

There is also significant concern regarding the overall suitability and sustainability of the location. Members question whether a rural site with limited nearby services and facilities represents an appropriate location for accommodating a substantial residential population.

Infrastructure and Utilities

Concerns have been raised regarding the capacity of existing infrastructure to support the proposed development, including:

- Water supply and wastewater infrastructure.
- Electricity and telecommunications networks.
- Local highways and transport infrastructure.
- Access to healthcare and other public services.

The Council would therefore welcome evidence demonstrating that the relevant utility providers and statutory agencies have confirmed that sufficient capacity exists, together with details of any upgrades that may be required.

Access and Transport

Members are concerned that the site currently lacks safe and sustainable pedestrian connections to local services and facilities.

Clarification is requested regarding:

- Proposed pedestrian and cycle routes.
- Public transport provision.
- Traffic impacts on surrounding roads.
- Whether nearby rail stations, including those serving Bicester, are expected to experience increased demand as a result of the proposal.

Community Safety and Local Impact

The Council has received concerns from neighbouring residents relating to community safety and the impact of accommodating a large population on an isolated site in close proximity to existing residential communities. Members have also highlighted the presence of youth football facilities used by both boys and girls directly opposite the site and would welcome details of any safeguarding assessments undertaken in relation to these facilities and other community assets nearby.
In addition, councillors have noted the site's proximity to HMP Bullingdon and request clarification as to whether this has been considered as part of the Home Office's assessment of site suitability and operational risk.

Environmental Considerations

Members have queried whether comprehensive environmental and ecological assessments have been undertaken. Particular attention has been drawn to the potential presence of Great Crested Newts and associated habitats within or adjacent to the site. As a protected species, councillors would welcome confirmation that appropriate ecological surveys have been completed and that any necessary mitigation measures have been identified.

Consultation and Engagement

A further concern raised by Members relates to the apparent lack of engagement with neighbouring parish councils and local communities prior to the announcement of the proposal. The Council would welcome details of how surrounding communities, including Piddington, Upper Arncott and other affected parishes, will be consulted moving forward.

Historical and Strategic Use of the Site

Councillors have also questioned whether alternative uses for the site have been fully assessed. In particular, Members note ongoing references to Ministry of Defence storage requirements in the wider Bicester area and ask whether retaining the site for defence-related uses has been considered as part of the decision-making process. Additionally, Members seek clarification as to whether consideration has been given to the **Crichell Down Rules** and, if applicable, how these have been addressed in relation to the site.

Health and Wellbeing

Given Bicester's longstanding role as a Garrison Town, Members have raised questions regarding the potential wellbeing implications for individuals who may have fled conflict or persecution and who would be residing in close proximity to military facilities, events, and activities. The Council would appreciate understanding whether this issue has formed part of any health, wellbeing or equality impact assessments undertaken to date.

Leisure and Community Services

Councillors have also expressed concerns regarding the potential impact on existing leisure, recreational and community facilities across Bicester, and whether there would be any expectation that local councils or community organisations would meet additional demand arising from the proposed development.

The Council would be grateful if these additional concerns could be considered alongside those contained within our original holding response and addressed as part of the information requested from the Home Office.

We remain committed to constructive engagement and look forward to receiving a comprehensive response.

Yours sincerely,
Paul Canning

For and on behalf of Bicester Town Council.

Deputy Town Clerk