

Public Document Pack
Bicester Town Council



Extraordinary Bicester Town Council Meeting

Ref: BTC04b/2627

**Wednesday 16th September 2026 7pm
Council Chamber, The Garth, Launton Road, OX26 6PS**

Members:

Cllr Paul Wheatley – **Chair**, – Cllr Dan Hallett **Vice - Chair**
Cllr Tom Beckett, Cllr Nick Cotter, Cllr Donna Ford,
Cllr Sam Holland, Cllr Harry Knight, Cllr Damien Maguire,
Cllr Rachel Mallows, Cllr Nicholas Mawer, Cllr Christopher Pruden, Cllr Alisa Russell,
Cllr Les Sibley, Cllr Jim Webb and Cllr John Willett

Other Circulation:

CDC

Cllr Bryonie Wells, Cllr Robert Parkinson, Cllr Julius Parker, Cllr Simon Lytton, Cllr Frank Ideh, Cllr G.A. Popescu. Cllr Michael Wilson

OCC

Cllr Sean Gaul, Cllr John Shiri and Cllr Matt Webb



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Friday 11th September 2026,

To all Members of The Bicester Town Council,

You are hereby summoned to attend an extraordinary meeting of the **Bicester Town Council** in **The Chamber Room, Bicester Town Council, The Garth, Launton Road, Bicester, Oxon OX26 6PS** on **Wednesday 16th September 2026** to commence for the transaction of the following business.

Paul Canning
Deputy Town Clerk

Agenda

All Council Meetings are open to the public and press, unless otherwise stated.

1. Apologies for Absence

To consider apologies and reasons for absence. Council members who are unable to attend the meeting should notify Bicester Town Council (enquiries@bicester.gov.uk) and the Town Clerk (clerk@bicester.gov.uk) prior to the meeting, stating the reason for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillors are reminded to declare any interests on any item on this Agenda in accordance with Bicester Town Council's Code of Conduct.

3. Public Session

In accordance with Standing Orders 1 d-f, members of the public may make representations, ask questions and give evidence in respect of any item of business included in the agenda. Time allocated shall not exceed 10 Minutes. No member shall speak for more than 2 minutes.

4. Presentation from CDC Officers Regarding Whitelands Sports Ground

To **NOTE** update from Cherwell District Council Officers regarding Whitelands new 3G Pitch.

5. Presentation from OCC Regarding Bicester Youth Project

To **NOTE** update from OXFORDSHIRE County Council Officers regarding Bicester Youth Project.

6. Presentation from BICESTER COUNTRYSIDE COMMUNITIES C.I.C. (Project Wrong Plan. Wrong Site.)

To **NOTE** the presentation from **BCC C.I.C.** project **PW.WS**

**7. BICESTER COUNTRYSIDE COMMUNITIES C.I.C.
(Project Wrong Plan. Wrong Site.)**

(Pages 4-8)

- 1) Council is **RECOMMENDED** to **APPROVE** the request from Bicester Countryside Communities C.I.C. for a pledge towards **Phase 1 legal advice in relation to the proposed MOD Site A development only.**
- 2) **CONSIDER** the pledged sum of **£20,000** and **APPROVE** the pledged amount decided by council with funds to be taken from Cost Centre **Community Support 109/4061 Grants to Voluntary Organisations.**

8. The Courtyard Youth Arts Centre, Bicester

(Pages 9-10)

The Council is **RECOMMENDED** to **APPROVE** the deputy Town clerk forwards the letter to relevant officers and portfolio holders for the OCC Cabinet Members for Young People.

9. Objection Letter to Planning Application Site A, MOD Bicester (Pages 11 -17)

10. Administrative Secondment

(Pages 18-19)

The Council is **RECOMMENDED** to **APPROVE** the position of Administrative Secondment.

11. Office Manager and Health & Safety Officer

(Pages 20-23)

The Council is **RECOMMENDED** to **APPROVE** the position of **Office Manager and Health & Safety Officer**

12. Date of Next Meeting:

Monday 12th October 2026, 7pm – The Chamber Room, Bicester Town Council



BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL 2026

Wednesday 16th September 2026

Chair: Cllr Paul Wheatley
Contact: 01869 252915 | paul.wheatley@bicester.gov.uk

Officer: Paul Canning
Contact: 01869 252915 | paul.canning@bicester.gov.uk

Ward Affected: All

BICESTER COUNTRYSIDE COMMUNITIES C.I.C. (Project - Wrong Plan. Wrong Site.)

1. Background

- 1.1** The Government intends to develop Site A as a large-scale asylum accommodation centre using urgent Crown development procedures. Local communities have raised concerns regarding the suitability of the site, its impact on local infrastructure, environmental considerations, and the level of planning scrutiny afforded under the proposed process.
- 1.2** The Wrong Plan, Wrong Site campaign has coordinated local engagement, information sharing, and public objection activities. Bicester Countryside and Communities CIC have been established as the legal entity responsible for receiving and managing donations and funding associated with the campaign.

2. Funding Request

- 2.1** The Bicester Countryside Communities C.I.C. has requested financial support towards Phase 1 of a proposed three-stage legal strategy, namely obtaining specialist legal advice to determine whether there are grounds for a Judicial Review of the Government's decision-making process (**Appendix a**).
- 2.2** Recommendation is a pledge of **£20,000** under **Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972**; however, the final value of any pledge shall be determined by Council. Any grant approved would be funded from the Council's approved budget and be subject to any conditions determined by Members. The approval of any pledge or grant shall not create any obligation on the Council to

provide further funding for subsequent phases of the project, and any future requests for financial assistance shall be subject to a separate application and consideration by Council.

2.3 Governance documentation has been received from– **Bicester Countryside & Communities CIC Articles of Association**, this information can be found on Companies House and bank details have also been supplied to Officers.

3. Potential Impact of MOD Site A proposal on Bicester

- 3.1** Potential impacts may include increased demand on local infrastructure, including roads, public transport, healthcare services, community facilities and other public services regularly accessed by residents of the wider area. Members may consider that any substantial increase in the population of the area has the potential to place additional pressure on facilities and services within Bicester.
- 3.2** The proposal may also have implications for local traffic and transport networks. Site users, staff, contractors, visitors and service providers may rely upon routes passing through or connecting to Bicester, potentially affecting traffic volumes and travel patterns within the town and surrounding villages.
- 3.3** There may also be economic implications for the town. Increased demand for local goods and services could provide economic benefits to some businesses, whilst any perceived impact on the area's reputation, tourism, inward investment or property market may be viewed as a concern by others. The overall effect remains uncertain.
- 3.4** Environmental and planning considerations have also been raised by residents and community groups, including concerns relating to the suitability of the site, sustainability, transport links, and the effect upon the surrounding countryside. The extent to which these matters may affect Bicester residents' forms part of the wider public discussion regarding the proposal.
- 3.5** Given Bicester's role as the nearest major town to the proposed development, Members may consider that residents have a legitimate interest in understanding the potential implications of the proposal and ensuring that appropriate planning, environmental and legal processes are followed.
- 3.6** The Government's proposal to develop Site A, a former MOD storage depot near Blackthorn and Piddington, as a large-scale asylum accommodation centre has raised concerns within the local community. Whilst the site lies outside Bicester's boundary, Bicester is the nearest principal town and may experience consequential impacts on local services, infrastructure, transport networks, community cohesion and the local economy.

Recommendation

- 3)** Council is **RECOMMENDED** to **APPROVE** the request from Bicester Countryside Communities C.I.C. for a pledge towards **Phase 1 legal advice in relation to the proposed MOD Site A development**.
- 4)** **CONSIDER** the pledged sum of **£20,000** and **APPROVE** the pledged amount decided by council with funds to be taken from Cost Centre **Community Support 109/4061 Grants to Voluntary Organisations**.

Bicester Countryside and Communities C.I.C.
Application to Bicester Town Council for consideration in respect of the project:
WRONG PLAN.WRONG SITE

Bicester Countryside and Communities C.I.C. is a Community Interest Company established in August to act as a legal and financial body for the Wrong Plan. Wrong Site (WPWS) campaign. WPWS was set up to mount an official objection to the Government plan to establish a Centre for approximately 1,250 male Asylum Seekers on land known as MOD Site A, near Piddington. It has been proposed to begin admitting residents from this December.

The case

WPWS reflects the view of hundreds of residents in Bicester and the surrounding villages. Our objections to the plan are extensive. They include the following:

1. **The impracticality of the site.** There are no public utilities on the site – no electricity, water or wastewater provision, drainage or communication cables - and no residential buildings have ever been built there. The site is essentially a field at constant risk of surface water flooding; no survey has been carried out to quantify this. The few existing units contain asbestos which will need to be carefully removed. It is situated a long way from public services.
 The plan is to build residential blocks, leisure and medical facilities but, given the amount of work to be done, the cost of this to the public purse will be enormous. A similar proposal in 2003 was abandoned, mostly due to the identification of contaminated waste on the site. It remains contaminated.
2. **The effect on the environment.** Piddington Wood is designated by the Woodland Trust as an ancient woodland and wildlife site. It currently supports a diverse range of habitats; notable species associated with the woodland and surrounding area include rare species of butterfly, several protected bat species, great-crested newts, barn owls, tree sparrows and grey partridge. There is also evidence to suggest the presence of otters and dormice; no official survey has yet taken place to rule this out. Cherwell District Council's own strategic planning evidence identifies the land immediately around the site as forming part of a landscape of 'exceptional ecological value'.
3. **The effect on the local population.** MOD Site A is close to Piddington – a village of between 350 and 400 residents. It has no facilities beyond a village hall, a church and a children's playground. The proposed site is, quite literally, miles from anywhere that the asylum seekers might be inclined to visit. It is intended that a fleet of minibuses will transport the men into Bicester daily; the prospect of groups of these men coming into the town together will undoubtedly have an adverse effect on community cohesion in Bicester. The town has welcomed a number of refugee families in the area, which have integrated well; there is concern that they may be adversely impacted by identification with the asylum seekers.
 Of the many comments we have received, the greatest proportion focuses on fears for local residents' safety, especially for women and children. Whatever our views about the motivations and situations of the asylum seekers may be, it is acknowledged that, by and large, the men will have come from cultures which have different expectations and understandings of women. The legitimate fears of residents must be taken into account.

A further aspect which is gaining prominence is the future effect on local businesses, as the 'Bicester brand' comes to be seen as a bad investment. More immediately, estate agents are reporting house buyers withdrawing from sales on the basis of mortgage lenders' and surveyors' concerns; house prices would inevitably fall, but even now residents are feeling the immediate effects.

4. **The pressure on local resources.** The publicly available Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS) Final Report 2026 identifies significant electricity-network constraints in Bicester, where connection times hinder development. It also identifies wastewater-treatment upgrades and water-supply resilience as strategic dependencies. The whole of Thames Water's operating region, including Oxfordshire, is officially classified "seriously water stressed" by the Environment Agency.
Concern has been expressed by several local GPs about the level of provision of dedicated on-site health services proposed for the Centre and the amount of pressure this will put on already stretched local services.
Currently there is a bus service which runs intermittently to HMP Bullingdon, close to MOD Site A. This would not be sufficient to provide additionally for the number of proposed residents at the Centre.
5. **The unsuitability of the site for the asylum seekers themselves.** The site is isolated and in the countryside. The nearest shop is 2 miles away and it has limited stock, serving the daily needs of villagers in Arncott. To reach Arncott, Blackthorn or Ambrosden for whatever purpose, the men would have to walk along the B4011 and adjoining roads, travelled by traffic at high speeds. There is no pavement and, of course, no street lighting.
The preparation of the site is due to continue while the first men are in residence. Given the toxic nature of the ground and materials on site, this presents an ongoing hazard, both for the residents themselves and the workers contracted to deal with these issues.
Although the government speaks of the provision of leisure facilities, these would have to be built. Trips into Bicester would provide limited scope for activity. Inevitably, some asylum seekers would simply abscond. Others would undoubtedly suffer from depression; suicide rates among such men are well documented. There is also the risk that some would turn to or become involved in local crime.
6. **The government proposal itself.** The Planning Application submitted by the government is an inadequate and misleading document. Their proposal relies on outdated and inadequate reports, AI information which is clearly incorrect, lack of recent and reliable surveys, inadequate health and safety considerations and redacted sections.

What we are requesting

WPWS volunteers have, within the last few months, compiled extensive documents based on meticulous research and FOI requests, showing why this plan is unsustainable, let alone undesirable for local residents.

The protests and campaigns run by Piddington and local activists help to raise awareness, but WPWS is the only real chance of preventing government action on this. WPWS is non-political, including volunteers from all major political parties. It is separate from the other campaigns and initiatives but keeps in close touch with these.

With the help and advice of our local MP, Calum Miller, we are preparing for a legal challenge, putting forward our case in a 160-page document. In the first instance we require up to £80,000 to obtain legal advice and recommendations in respect of the document itself. If, as we believe, this will have a positive outcome, we will then need to find upwards of £250,000. We are seeking support from local Parish councils, businesses and private donors. A fundraising campaign is in operation.

We see Bicester Town Council as an important indicator of local concern, and which would be considerably impacted should this plan be enacted. We therefore ask for your consideration in supporting Bicester Countryside and Communities CIC as the financial channel for the WPWS challenge.

Dr Jane Clements MBE

Administrator, Bicester Countryside and Communities C.I.C.

Member of the WPWS Leadership Team

September 2026



BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL 2026

Wednesday 16th September 2026

Chair: Cllr Paul Wheatley
Contact: 01869 252915 | paul.wheatley@bicester.gov.uk

Officer: Paul Canning
Contact: 01869 252915 | paul.canning@bicester.gov.uk

Ward Affected: All

The Courtyard Youth Arts Centre, Bicester

1. Background

1.3 Several residents have approached Officers regarding the Courtyard Youth Arts Centre on Launton Road which was established as a dedicated facility for young people through partnership working between Oxfordshire County Council, Cherwell District Council and Bicester Town Council. For many years the centre provided youth club sessions, arts activities, educational programmes and wider youth support services, becoming a valued community asset for local young people. Its central location and purpose-built facilities enabled it to act as a focal point for youth engagement and creative development, with many residents continuing to recall the positive impact it had on young people in the town.

1.4 In recent years, the building has ceased operating in its original role as a dedicated youth centre, leaving Bicester without a permanent indoor youth hub despite significant population growth and further planned expansion across the town. Residents have regularly approached Town Council officers to express their support for the reopening of the centre and have highlighted the lack of dedicated facilities for young people within Bicester. While alternative facilities and programmes exist, including open spaces, recreational facilities and holiday activities, there remains a recognised gap in provision for older children and teenagers. Bicester Town Council has recently expressed its support for restoring the Courtyard to its original purpose, recognising the opportunity to utilise an existing community asset to provide a safe, accessible and sustainable venue for youth activities, skills development and support services for the town's growing young population.

2. Proposal

2.1 To demonstrate the Council's support for the potential reopening of the former Courtyard Youth Arts Centre, officers recommend that Members approve the letter attached to this report for onward transmission to the OCC Cabinet Members for Young People. The letter sets out the Council's position regarding the future use of the facility and the benefits that renewed youth provision could bring to the town.

Dear Cabinet,

I am writing as Deputy Town Clerk on behalf of Bicester Town Council to confirm our strong support for restoring the former Courtyard Youth Arts Centre on Launton Road to its original purpose as a dedicated space for young people.

Residents have made clear their wish to see the building reopened for youth activities. The Council shares that view and believe it is both necessary and achievable for Bicester.

Bicester is one of the fastest-growing towns in the country. It has already expanded significantly and is set to grow further, with thousands of additional homes planned across existing and emerging developments. This rapid increase in population has brought more families and young people into the town, yet Bicester currently has no dedicated youth hub.

While outdoor facilities such as Garth Park (including the skate park and play areas) and seasonal holiday activity programmes provide valuable opportunities, they do not meet the need for a permanent, accessible, indoor space where teenagers can safely socialise, develop skills, take part in creative and recreational activities, and receive consistent positive support. The absence of such provision leaves a clear gap in the town's offer for young people.

The Courtyard is ideally placed to fill that gap. Located in the town centre and still largely configured for youth work, it successfully delivered youth club sessions, arts programmes, and wider youth work that many residents still recall as formative and positive. Returning it to that role would provide a practical, high-value solution using an existing publicly owned asset rather than requiring costly new construction.

Bicester Town Council has a long-standing interest in the Courtyard. It was originally developed as a partnership between Oxfordshire County Council, Cherwell District Council and Bicester Town Council. We believe restoring youth provision aligns with our responsibilities for community wellbeing and with the clear local demand we continue to hear from residents.

A reopened Courtyard would offer young people a constructive alternative to less positive activities, support mental health and confidence, and contribute to early intervention efforts. It would also complement existing local initiatives, including those focused on children and young people, and position Bicester to benefit from national investment in youth hubs under the Government's recent National Youth Strategy.

We recognise that any reopening would require close working with Oxfordshire County Council, Cherwell District Council, potential delivery partners and, most importantly, young people themselves, together with a sustainable operating model. The Council is ready to play a constructive role in those discussions and to explore how we can best support the process.

I would be very happy to arrange a meeting or to facilitate further conversations with Members so that practical next steps can be identified.

3. Recommendation

Council is requested to **APPROVE** officers forward the email to the relevant Officers and Portfolio holders of OCC Cabinet Members for Young People.



BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL 2026

16th September

Chair: Cllr Paul Wheatley
Contact: 01869 252915 | paul.wheatley@bicester.gov.uk

Officer: Paul Canning
Contact: 01869 252915 | paul.canning@bicester.gov.uk

Ward Affected: All

Objection Letter to Planning Application Site A, MOD Bicester

4. Background

1.5 Since the Home Office announced proposals in June 2026 to use MOD Site A in Bicester as accommodation for up to 1,250 single adult male asylum seekers, Bicester Town Council has taken an active role in representing local concerns and seeking detailed information from central government. The Council issued a formal holding position, wrote to the Home Secretary requesting clarification on matters including planning, infrastructure, healthcare, transport, community safety and environmental impacts, and subsequently submitted further questions raised by councillors. The Council has continued to press for meaningful engagement and consultation with local authorities and residents, expressing disappointment at the lack of timely responses from the Home Office and seeking extensions to consultation and representation periods where appropriate.

1.6 The Government's latest action has been to progress the proposal through the Urgent Crown Development process. On 2 September 2026, the Home Office submitted a formal planning application seeking permission for the temporary use of the site for up to ten years, including accommodation and associated support facilities for up to 1,256 residents. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has confirmed that the proposal is considered both nationally important and urgent, with a public representation period running until 17 September 2026. The Government has stated that the site remains subject to planning approval and detailed assessments, while the Town Council and other stakeholders continue to scrutinise the application and assess its potential impact on the local community.

5. Proposal

5.1 Bicester Town Council proposes to send the following letter to the Home Office, and other relevant Government agencies as a follow-up to the Town Council's latest correspondence of 7th September 2026 regarding MOD Site A. The purpose of the letter is to reaffirm the Council's concerns, seek an update on the matters previously raised, request greater clarity regarding the Government's intentions and decision-making timetable, and ensure that the views of Bicester residents continue to be represented and considered as discussions concerning the future of the site progress.

Dear Home Secretary,

Bicester Town Council resolved at its meeting on Wednesday 16th September that it strongly opposes the Government's plan to house asylum seekers on Site A of MOD Bicester in the village of Piddington. The Acting Town Clerk was authorised to submit the following points of objection.

1. Disproportionate Scale

A smaller proposal for approximately 750 people on this land was refused by an independent Planning Inspector in 2003 and subsequently cancelled. The current proposal is significantly larger, seeking accommodation for up to 1,256 people.

Piddington is a very small rural community with approximately 315 residents. The proposed accommodation would represent an increase equivalent to almost four times the existing population, producing a resulting population of approximately 1,565 — meaning the existing community would be required to absorb a population almost five times its current size.

This is not a modest increase. It represents a fundamental change to the scale and character of the settlement and surrounding area, and it is essential that the proposal is judged on its proportionality and impact on the existing community and local infrastructure — not simply on whether the physical MOD buildings can contain the proposed number of people.

The National Audit Office has previously raised serious concerns about the Home Office's large-sites asylum accommodation programme. Its March 2024 findings concluded that the programme was expected to cost more overall than the hotels it was intended to replace, rather than delivering the savings originally projected.

2. Deficiencies in the Evidence Base

- The Home Office's own application documents acknowledge that parts of the evidence base remain incomplete. Its ecological consultant states that its survey cannot be considered a comprehensive assessment, while species surveys remain outstanding. The objection evidence also identifies missing biodiversity and fire-safety information.
- No borehole investigation has been undertaken to test the ground for contamination.
- A 2010 land quality assessment found areas investigated were generally unsuitable for redevelopment to a domestic end use without remediation, and identified potential contamination risks at Site A. The more recent assessment does not resolve the contamination question raised by that earlier work. Site A was used for military storage and logistics, not as a residential community, and questions also remain about asbestos in the existing buildings and the remediation this would require.
- The main accommodation is proposed on one of the lowest and most flood-prone parts of the site, and the evidence identifies significant surface-water flood risk with unresolved questions around drainage and attenuation.

- The Transport Assessment repeatedly refers to the B1104 rather than the B4011, which borders the site — evidence of shoddy desktop research. There is a history of injury collisions on the nearby B4011 and the lack of a continuous footway or lighting along much of the route.
- The application does not demonstrate a confirmed, reliable permanent electricity or wastewater solution. The Utilities and Infrastructure Assessment says the condition and capacity of the existing electricity network cannot presently be relied upon, while questions also remain over sewage capacity, the proposed wastewater arrangements, and the capacity of local communications and telecoms infrastructure to support the development.

The preliminary ecological assessment

The preliminary ecological assessment is flawed. It states that there are no records of bats, great, crested newts, dormice, badgers, reptiles, amphibians or rare plants within 2km of the site. However, a proper search of the correct records shows 12 bat species (several right next to the site), widespread evidence of great, crested newts including on the site itself, badgers just 300m away, otter, polecat and hazel dormouse close by, and 188 records of rare and protected wildflowers — including one so scarce it has its own county recovery plan.

6. Justification for Urgency and Consideration of Alternative Sites

The application is being progressed through the Urgent Crown Development process, which bypasses the normal planning route and materially shortens the opportunity for scrutiny. We have not seen a formal statement of national importance or a formal statement of urgency published alongside the application, and no evidence has been presented as to if alternative, less harmful sites were properly considered before Piddington was selected.

Given the significance of departing from the standard process, the relevant authorities should publish clear evidence explaining why this site was chosen, why the matter is genuinely urgent, and what alternative sites were assessed and on what basis they were rejected. Urgency should not be used as a substitute for evidence.

4. Inadequate Consultation Period

The Town Council has already made representations to increase the consultation period. The published representation period runs from 7 to 17 September 2026 — just 11 days, roughly half the 21-day minimum that applies to ordinary planning applications under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, and that is prescribed at every stage of the standard Crown Development route.

Nearly two months passed between the application being submitted on 6 July 2026 and it being published for comment on 2 September 2026, and its supporting documents run to well over 1,000 pages across multiple technical disciplines. Eleven days does not give residents, councils or technical specialists a fair opportunity to examine an application of this scale and complexity.

5. Isolation of the Site and Lack of Local Facilities

Site A is several miles from central Bicester and is a rural, relatively isolated former military site. Piddington does not have the facilities that would ordinarily be expected to support a population of this size. There is no village shop, no public house, and no comparable local facility providing residents with everyday access to basic goods and services.

A substantial number of the proposed residents would inevitably need to travel outside Piddington for necessities, healthcare, shopping, recreation, legal support and other services. This raises significant questions regarding the availability and capacity of public transport, traffic generation, pedestrian safety, access to healthcare and legal advice, pressure upon neighbouring communities and their facilities, access to shops and essential services, the capacity of local public services, and the ability of the

surrounding area to accommodate such a substantial additional population. The proposal should therefore not be assessed solely based on the site itself; its impact on neighbouring villages and the wider local area must also be properly considered.

6. Absence of Pavements and Pedestrian Infrastructure

Piddington is a rural settlement and does not have a comprehensive network of pavements capable of accommodating large numbers of pedestrians. If 1,250 additional residents are placed at the site, there will inevitably be substantially more pedestrian movement between the site, public transport, neighbouring settlements and local facilities — creating legitimate concerns about highway and pedestrian safety, particularly where people are required to walk alongside rural roads without pavements.

A detailed and independent assessment should therefore establish anticipated pedestrian movements, the routes likely to be used, the adequacy of existing footways, road crossing requirements, traffic speeds, visibility, accident risks, public transport access, and whether additional pedestrian infrastructure is required.

7. Inadequate Street Lighting

There is a further concern regarding street lighting, particularly where lighting is switched off overnight. The combination of a large additional population, rural roads, limited pedestrian infrastructure and inadequate overnight lighting creates a legitimate road and pedestrian safety concern. It would be unreasonable to expect significant numbers of people to walk through an unlit rural environment without first establishing that the routes are safe and suitable. The relevant authorities should provide evidence of a specific night-time pedestrian and highway safety assessment undertaken considering the proposed accommodation.

8. Pressure on Healthcare and Public Services

An additional population of approximately 1,250 people would inevitably create additional demand for local services. Questions must therefore be answered regarding the capacity of GP surgeries, dentists, pharmacies, hospitals, ambulance services, mental health and welfare services, interpreter and translation services, police, and fire and rescue services. It should not simply be assumed that existing services have sufficient capacity: the proposal should be accompanied by clear evidence that the relevant service providers have been consulted and that the additional demand has been assessed and appropriately resourced. Should the government provide these services on site then community cohesion will be severely affected considering that it is currently impossible to register with an NHS dentist for example in Bicester.

9. Emergency Services and Access

The rural nature of Piddington also raises concerns about emergency access. The authorities should demonstrate that the increased population can be adequately served by emergency services and that there are appropriate arrangements for emergency vehicle access, evacuation, fire safety, medical emergencies, policing, safeguarding and emergency communications. The potential increase in demand should be assessed against the existing capacity of the relevant services, rather than considered in isolation.

10. Safeguarding and Community Wellbeing

The proposal would accommodate a large population of single adult men at a rural site directly adjoining small, settled communities. This requires a clear, evidence-led safeguarding assessment covering both

the wellbeing of the people accommodated and the safety of the surrounding community, including women, children and other vulnerable residents.

We have not seen evidence of what policing and reporting arrangements would be put in place, how walking routes, lighting and public transport safety have been assessed with this specific population in mind, or how any concerns raised by residents would be received and acted upon. The Government should set out these arrangements clearly before any decision is made, rather than leaving them to be resolved after the site becomes operational. The Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley has already raised many of these concerns.

11. Impact on Neighbouring Communities

Because Piddington has very limited local facilities, many of the proposed residents will necessarily use facilities in neighbouring communities. The proposal could therefore place additional pressure on nearby shops, supermarkets, GP surgeries, dentists, pharmacies, bus services, railway stations, roads, public spaces and emergency services. The assessment should consider the cumulative impact across the wider area, rather than restricting consideration to the physical boundary of the MOD site.

12. Community Cohesion and the Character of Town and Village

The introduction of a population almost four times the size of the existing community cannot reasonably be regarded as having no effect on the character and functioning of the village. This does not mean the existing community is unwilling to welcome newcomers; rather, it recognises that successful integration and community cohesion require appropriate scale, facilities, transport, services and resources. A proposal of this magnitude requires a clear plan demonstrating how community cohesion will be supported and how both existing and new residents will be able to access appropriate services and facilities. Whilst the impact on community cohesion will be most strongly felt in the village of Piddington, there is already evidence within Bicester that community cohesion is fraying.

13. Suitability of the Site

The fundamental question is whether this is an appropriate location for accommodation on this scale. The fact that the MOD site may contain buildings capable of being converted into accommodation does not demonstrate that the location is suitable for 1,250 residents. The assessment should consider the whole environment in which residents will live, including transport, healthcare, pedestrian infrastructure, lighting, shops, emergency services, recreation, access to support services and the impact on surrounding communities. A site that is physically capable of accommodating people is not necessarily one that is socially, environmentally or infrastructurally suitable for accommodating them at this scale.

14. Cost and Value for Money

No full cost for the proposal has been published. As residents and taxpayers, we ask that the Government publish the conversion, infrastructure, remediation, operating and long-term costs associated with Site A, together with how these compare with the alternatives being replaced. The National Audit Office has previously found that the Home Office's large-sites asylum accommodation programme was expected to cost more overall than the hotel provision it was intended to replace, rather than delivering the savings originally projected; this history makes published, site-specific costings for Site A even more important.

15. Accountability and Lines of Responsibility

A proposal of this scale involves multiple public bodies and contractors — including the Home Office, the Ministry of Defence, the site operator, local authorities, the police, the NHS and fire and rescue services — who may each hold different responsibilities. Before the proposal proceeds, the Government should make clear who assessed each significant risk, who is responsible for mitigating it, who will fund the

necessary measures, who will monitor whether they work, and who is accountable if they fail. Public safety requires public accountability, and this should be set out clearly rather than assumed.

16. Request for Full Evidence and Assessments

Before any decision is made, we ask that the relevant authorities publish or make available the evidence and assessments underpinning the decision to identify Piddington as a suitable location. We request evidence addressing:

1. Highway and traffic impact, including a current Transport Assessment
2. Pedestrian and road safety
3. Night-time pedestrian safety
4. Public transport capacity
5. Healthcare capacity, including a health-impact assessment
6. Police and emergency service capacity
7. Fire safety and emergency evacuation
8. Safeguarding of residents and the surrounding community, including women, children and other vulnerable people, and the policing and reporting arrangements that would be in place
9. Waste and refuse management
10. Water, sewage, electricity and communications capacity, including a utilities-capacity report
11. Environmental impact and protected-species surveys
12. Site condition, including contamination, discarded munitions, and asbestos, and the remediation required
13. Community cohesion
14. Impact upon neighbouring settlements
15. The cumulative impact of the proposed population increase
16. An equality-impact assessment
17. A formal statement of national importance and a formal statement of urgency justifying the use of the Urgent Crown Development process
18. What alternative sites were considered and why they were rejected
19. The full cost of the proposal, including conversion, infrastructure, remediation, operating and long-term costs
20. Clear lines of accountability across all bodies involved in delivering and overseeing the proposal
21. Why a site accommodating approximately 1,250 people has been considered proportionate and appropriate for a community of approximately 315 existing residents and a small market town.

17. Conclusion

We respectfully request that the proposal is reconsidered, and that an alternative and more proportionate location is identified.

The issue is not whether migrants should receive appropriate accommodation. They should. The issue is whether it is reasonable or sustainable to place approximately 1,250 additional people in a small rural community of approximately 315 residents which has no shop, no public house, limited local facilities, inadequate pedestrian infrastructure and limited overnight street lighting and very poor links to the local town.

Such a substantial population increase requires substantially more than suitable buildings. It requires appropriate infrastructure, transport, healthcare, emergency provision, pedestrian safety measures, public services and a realistic strategy for supporting both the existing community and those being accommodated.

In the absence of compelling evidence demonstrating that these matters have been properly assessed and adequately addressed, we believe there are serious grounds to conclude that the proposed site is unsuitable for accommodation on the scale proposed. We therefore respectfully ask that this objection is formally recorded and fully considered before any decision is made.

Yours faithfully,

Paul Canning

The Acting Town Clerk

For and on behalf of Bicester Town Council

7. Recommendation

Council is requested to **APPROVE** officers forward the letter **objecting to Planning Application Site A, MOD Bicester** to the Home Secretary and other relevant government agencies.



BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL

PERSONNEL MEETING

Wednesday 9th September 2026

Chair: Dan Hallett

Contact: 01869 252915 | dan.hallett@bicester.gov.uk

Officer: Paul Canning

Contact: 01869 252915 | paul.canning@bicester.gov.uk

Ward Affected: All

Administrative Secondment

1. Background

- 1.1 The Deputy Town Clerk temporarily seconded a Whitelands employee to the Council's Administrative to support the Administrative Team.
- 1.2 During this period, the employee has provided valuable support to the Mayor's Personal Assistant, whose responsibilities currently include cemetery and planning administration. The additional resource has helped maintain service delivery and workload management across the administrative function. The Mayor's Personal Assistant role has historically carried a significant workload, and the additional support has enabled greater focus on key duties and priorities.
- 1.3 This temporary secondment has increased resilience within the Administration Team by providing additional support for cemetery and planning administration, capacity for staff cross training and ensuring continuity of service.
- 1.4 The option of retaining the secondment until after the May 2027 elections would allow the Council to assess longer-term administrative requirements arising from the increase in councillor numbers from 15 to 22, together with any additional workload resulting from Local Government Reorganisation.
- 1.5 Retaining the secondment would also enable the Mayor's Personal Assistant role to become more distinct from the core administrative function. This would provide greater capacity for the postholder to undertake additional mayoral, civic responsibilities whilst ensuring sufficient administrative support remains available across the wider team.
- 1.6 The substantive Whitelands position is currently being covered by an agency member of staff, with a view to the arrangement becoming permanent, subject to operational requirements and budget considerations.

- 1.7 Retaining the additional administrator on secondment would help future-proof the Council's administrative capacity in advance of Local Government Reorganisation. It would provide flexibility to respond to any increase in responsibilities or services delegated to the Council, whilst ensuring sufficient resources are in place to meet future operational demands.

2. Proposal

- 2.1 The seconded officer would be placed on the Administrative Team pay scale. This would result in an increase in salary from SCP 4 (£26,016) to SCP 9 (£28,153), reflecting the responsibilities and duties undertaken within the role.
- 2.2 A review of the Council's administrative structure and resource requirements will be undertaken before the conclusion of the secondment to determine whether the position should be made permanent.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 The proposed change in salary from SCP 4 to SCP 9 would result in an additional staffing cost of approximately £2,137 per annum, plus associated employer on costs.
- 3.2 The Whitelands role is currently being covered by an agency member of staff. Extending the secondment until 31 March 2027 would require the continuation of this arrangement, resulting in additional agency staffing costs for the same period. Invoiced costs per week for Agency staff is £721.60 this will need to be considered as part of the overall financial impact of the proposal.
- 3.3 The arrangement provides increased operational resilience, service continuity and workforce flexibility across both the Administrative Team and Whitelands. It also allows the Council to make an informed decision on its future staffing requirements considering Local Government Reorganisation, increased councillor numbers and any additional responsibilities that may be delegated to the Council.
- 3.4 This Secondment Position has been **APPROVED** by the **PERSONNEL SUB- COMMITTEE** on Wednesday 9th of September 2026.

4. Recommendation

Council is recommended to **APPROVE** the **Administrative Secondment** until 31st March 2027.



BICESTER
TOWN COUNCIL

BICESTER TOWN COUNCIL

PERSONNEL MEETING

Wednesday 9th September 2026

Chair: Dan Hallett

Contact: 01869 252915 | dan.hallett@bicester.gov.uk

Officer: Paul Canning

Contact: 01869 252915 | paul.canning@bicester.gov.uk

Ward Affected: All

Office Manager and Health & Safety Officer

1. Background

- 1.1 The Council's increasing operational, governance and compliance responsibilities require additional capacity to support office management, health and safety, finance and staff development. The proposed part-time Office Manager and Health & Safety Officer role (**Appendix a**) would provide a single point of responsibility for office administration, facilities management, health and safety compliance, and the coordination of staff and councillor training.
- 1.2 The role would also strengthen resilience within the Council's finance function and, subject to qualifications and experience, could provide support to the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), improving Council continuity.
- 1.3 Reporting to the Deputy Town Clerk and Clerk, the post would enable the delegation of day-to-day operational responsibilities, allowing the Deputy Town Clerk to provide greater strategic support to the Town Clerk and Service Manager, with a focus on project delivery.
- 1.4 This additional capacity is particularly important given the potential increase in councillor numbers from 15 to 22 in May 2027 and the possibility of additional responsibilities being devolved to the Council through local government reorganisation. The role would improve operational efficiency, strengthen compliance and organisational resilience, and help ensure the Council is well placed to meet future demands.

2. Proposal

- 2.1 To support the Council's growing operational, governance and compliance requirements, it is proposed that an **Office Manager and Health & Safety Officer** post be established and recruitment commenced as soon as practicable.

2.2 The salary for the post, based on NJC Scale Points 26 – 28 **NJC SCP 26** (£37,280 to £39,152)

2.4 Depending on the successful applicant's qualifications, the role may be offered on a part-time basis.

2.5 The Advertisement for this position will be placed on Indeed and the Bicester Town Council Website

2.5 The **Office Manager and Health & Safety Officer** were **APPROVED** by the **PERSONNEL SUB-COMMITTEE** on Wednesday 9th of September 2026.

3. Recommendation

The Council is requested to **APPROVE** the position of **Office Manager and Health & Safety Officer** post.

Office Manager and Health and Safety Officer

Hours: 37 hours per week

Working Pattern: Monday to Friday

Salary: NJC Scale Points 26 – 28 (£37,280 to £39,152)

Location: Council Offices / Home

Responsible to: Deputy Town Clerk / Town Clerk

Job Purpose

To supervise the administration of the Council and provide financial support to ensure efficient and compliant operations. To develop and maintain Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in line with local governance and regulations. To manage the continuous professional development of employees by coordinating and supporting staff training and development across the Council.

Key Responsibilities

- **Manage Staff Training**
 - Coordinate and administer the Council's staff training programme.
 - Maintain accurate and up-to-date training records and compliance logs.
 - Identify training needs in consultation with Deputy and Town Clerk.
 - Organise, book and evaluate internal and external training courses.
 - Monitor training budgets and provide regular reports on training activity.
- **Recruitment Support**
 - Support the induction process for new staff members.
 - Complete DBS checks.
 - Support managers with the onboarding and training of new staff members.
 - Ensure accurate personnel records are maintained in BREATE Application.
- **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)**
 - Develop, review, update and maintain SOPs across all Council services.
 - Work with staff and managers to document key processes and ensure consistency.
 - Ensure all SOPs are version-controlled, accessible and regularly reviewed.
 - Support the implementation of new procedures and provide guidance to staff.
- **Finance Support**
 - Assist with budget monitoring and reporting as required.
 - Support the finance team with financial governance requirements. (Relevant qualifications required.)
- **Health and Safety Officer**
 - *Necessary experience as a Health and Safety Officer is required.*
 - Act as the key user for the Council's Peninsula Health and Safety system.
 - Maintain and keep up to date all health and safety policies, risk assessments and documentation on the Peninsula app/system to deliver, track and record staff health and safety training.
 - Deliver ('train out') health and safety modules and updates to staff via the Peninsula system.
 - Generate reports from the Peninsula system as required (e.g. training compliance, incidents, audits).

- Comply with the Council's Health and Safety Policy and take reasonable care of your own and others' health and safety.
- Report hazards, accidents, incidents and near misses promptly.
- Support the maintenance of a safe working environment and ensure health and safety considerations are reflected in relevant SOPs.
- Create KPIs for Health and safety

General Duties

- Supervise and work collaboratively with the administrative team.
- Provide cover and support to colleagues as required. Where possible, provide absence cover for Council meetings on behalf of officers.
- Ensure all work complies with Council policies, procedures and relevant legislation.
- Undertake any other duties commensurate with the grade and nature of the Office Manager role.

This job description is not exhaustive and may be subject to review and amendment in consultation with the post holder to meet the changing needs of the Council.