

Paul Canning
Deputy Town Clerk
Bicester Town Council

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24 August 2026

Dear Mr Canning,

Thank you for your letter of 16 July to the Home Secretary about the proposed use of Ministry of Defence (MoD) Bicester site for asylum accommodation. I am replying as the Minister for Border Security & Asylum.

This site is no longer in active use by the MoD. The UK Government is considering using this former military site to accommodate people seeking asylum. If taken forward, it would provide basic, safe accommodation and would be designed to be largely self-sufficient to minimise any impact on the local community.

No decision has been made in respect of the use of MoD Bicester for asylum accommodation. This site is subject to detailed feasibility assessments, which could take several months to complete. During this period, some activity on site may be visible. These assessments are part of routine exploratory work to understand the site's potential and do not predetermine its future use. Any proposals would be subject to the necessary planning permissions and approvals.

The Home Office has submitted an Urgent Crown Development application to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in relation to the proposed use of MoD Bicester for asylum accommodation. Planning forms part of the wider feasibility and due diligence work for MoD Bicester. The application enables the relevant planning issues to be considered, but it does not predetermine the outcome, and no final decision has been taken on the site's future use.

The application has been made via this route because the proposed development is considered urgent and of national importance, responding to sustained pressure on the asylum accommodation estate and the need to reduce reliance on hotels and other contingency accommodation.

Submitting a planning application does not mean a final decision has been made to use the site. The proposal remains subject to the planning process, wider due diligence and all relevant assessments and approvals. Decisions on the planning application are being made independently by the MHCLG.

If the site is taken forward an experienced, specialist provider of asylum accommodation would be appointed to manage the site on behalf of the Home Office. They would be responsible for ensuring the safe and secure operation of the accommodation and for providing wraparound support that meets the essential health and wellbeing needs of the asylum seekers.

The safety and security of the local community, the staff who work there and those accommodated on the site will be of the utmost importance. There will be a specialist and experienced provider of security services permanently on site 24/7, as well as security systems including CCTV monitoring and recording, if the site is taken forward.

The Home Office regularly works in collaboration with local authorities and other partners including police to ensure that accommodation sites are successfully managed and the impact upon the local community is minimised. This includes a comprehensive and ongoing approach to identifying and managing any public protection or safeguarding risks associated with individuals.

In terms of funding, local authorities will be eligible for asylum grant funding in line with existing provision. Police forces should include within their policing and budget plans reasonable contingencies for unexpected events within their areas. However, the Home Office has established a grant scheme for police forces impacted by large sites, to which forces may apply should the sites have an impact on business-as-usual demand. More information on the grant funding provision is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/large-sites-for-asylum-accommodation-support-for-police-forces>.

If the site is taken forward, the Home Office would engage regularly with representatives from the relevant local authorities, NHS, police forces and local partners via multi agency forums to address the concerns of those most impacted by the site and to identify ways to keep them informed.

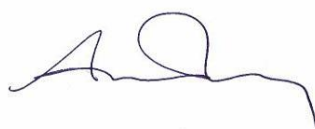
The Home Office has engaged regularly with the Secretary of State for Defence regarding the proposed use of MoD Bicester and will continue to engage regularly with all statutory partners if plans are to be progressed.

The Senior Responsible Officer for the proposed use of MoD Bicester is Dave Harding, Deputy Directory, Asylum Accommodation Integration and Engagement. For site-related engagement, communications and queries, correspondence can be directed to the Alternative Accommodation Engagement mailbox at:

AlternativeAccommodationEngagement@homeoffice.gov.uk.

The latest public information is available on the MoD Bicester factsheet, which is updated regularly on GOV.UK at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/asylum-accommodation-at-military-sites-factsheets/mod-bicester-site-a-oxfordshire-factsheet>.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'AT', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Rt Hon Anna Turley MP
Minister for Border Security & Asylum