Nusrat Ghani MP
Kieran Mullan MP
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House of Commons
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14 November 2025
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Dear Ms Ghani MP, Dr Mullan MP and Ms Davies MP

We write in reference to your letter dated 13 November 2025.

Firstly we would start by rejecting your statements that the alleged views of former Ministers, Home Office Officials, failed legal challenges from other Councils in any way affect the legal powers of either the Council or the Home Office. We understand that this is a complex area of law and that there is much misinformation in the public domain, but you will appreciate that we can only work on the particular facts in this case and within the law of the land. As you know, we are seeking legal advice from two KCs – specialising in public administration and planning law - on potential challenges of the proposals, however we are sure that you will agree that this should be done for the right reasons with a prospect of success, not running to the court without grounds and wasting public money. We would remind you that if you feel there are current grounds for legal challenge, you have as many rights as the Council in this regard.

As our local MPs we would have thought it far more constructive if you decided to work with us as your local Council in challenging the approach of the Home Office. We would encourage you to stop making unfounded statements that only spread mis-information. If we work together in a responsible and reasoned way, it will give us all the best chance of success rather than wasting considerable time and effort responding to your questions, particularly when they are based on a false narrative.

Whilst we also reject the premise that we must respond to every one of your questions in the way that you wish, we are equally keen to work with you and any other partners locally that wish to see the Home Office change their mind and not utilise the site as planned. In this spirit, please see following answers -

1. No.
2. Not applicable, given 1.
3. Not applicable, given 1.
4. Not applicable, given 1.

5. We have asked this question or a variant of it of the Home Office on multiple occasions but are yet to receive a reply.
6. See 5.
7. We do not have a planning application and so cannot consult with any group in that way. Notwithstanding this, outside the planning system we have held public meetings and sought to give all sectors of our community an opportunity to raise their concerns with the Home Office. In addition, as you know, the Council has a very strong track record of protecting the Forest in our decision making and this would be a key consideration, should a planning application be made to the Council.
8. Not a question, however as 1. No such notice has been received by the Council.
9. Not applicable.
10. Not applicable at this stage as no such application has been received by the Council. Outside the planning system we have held public meetings and sought to give all sectors of our community an opportunity to raise their concerns with the Home Office.
11. Yes. The guidance you refer forms part of the National Planning Proactive Guidance (NPPG) and if very familiar to our expert planning teams.
12. At the current time we are doing daily not weekly updates for the public. We will keep this under review as the Home Office progress with their planning.
13. This is not, as has been suggested, a decision by this Council. As such, Wealden do not have a duty to coordinate partners in the way that you suggest. However as a Council we have engaged with our local public sector partners and will continue to do so. On the topic of funding, if, despite our concerns, the site proceeds we believe it correct that all local partners are compensated by the Home Office for the cost of their decision. For the avoidance of doubt, no funding has yet been offered to Wealden by the Home Office - you can see the officials from the Home Office confirm this during the meeting of our Scrutiny & Performance Committee on Monday 10th November 2025.
14. As above, we are not aware that the Home Office has yet made an application.
15. No. See 14.
16. Yes. See 14.
17. No, we have not been consulted. You will understand that we cannot pre-determine our response to an application/consultation from government that we have not yet received, to do so would risk the Councils ability to object. That said, as we have set out above and in many public statements, we are not supportive of the Home Office proposals.
18. We have not been contacted by the Planning Inspectorate, or notified of any such application.
19. See 18.
20. As no works have commenced nor applications made, we have no lawful powers to request the documents you mention. We have however asked the Home Office to confirm their approach to this. Again, at the Scrutiny and Performance committee, you can see Home Office officials confirming that they have not yet finalised their approach to obtaining planning permission. We are pushing them to clarify their position at pace and ahead of them undertaking any works at the site.
21. See 18.
22. See 18.
23. See 18.
24. See 20.

Moving forward, we are keen to prioritise working with our partners and engaging with our community, to ensure that the Home Office reconsider their plans, not exchanging long letters with you.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

Cllr James Partridge
Leader of the Council and Governance, Waste and Local Economy Portfolio Holder

[redacted]

Cllr Rachel Millward
Deputy Leader of the Council and Culture, Community and Communications Portfolio Holder

Copied to:

Crowborough Town Mayor Natalie Whittle
Cllr Ian Tysh
Cllr Alison Arthur
Cllr Jane Clark
Cllr Martyn Everitt
Cllr Andrew Wilson
Cllr Gareth Owen-Williams