Wealden
District Council

Mike Tapp MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
(Minister for Migration and Citizenship)
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Dear Mr Tapp MP

**Re: Use of Crowborough Army Training Centre (Crowborough Camp) as alternative asylum accommodation**

As you will know, our Council was informed on Friday 10 October 2025 that the Home Office intends to use Crowborough Camp as accommodation for up to 600 asylum seekers arriving in the UK by small boat.

Some local people will be concerned about the sudden addition of up to 600 people to the population without adequate activities and facilities, for the reasons set out below. Rumours have already spread and there are signs of community tension. We are therefore writing to set out our concerns, confirm our understanding of the proposals and ensure that we and all local partners are fully consulted as plans emerge.

We believe clear and transparent communication with the local community is vital, led by the Home Office, but in conjunction with us. We urge you to be proactive with your communication with the local community, not least to address the myths already circulating and the resulting rise in community tension. We are keen to work with you to inform our community and ensure that their questions are answered. Our communications team is available to work with your teams. Whilst we appreciate early sight of the plans, we urge you to move forward rapidly with public announcements, providing as much information as possible and committing to ongoing public dialogue. Local people with concerns should have no doubt where to go to ask questions and find reassurance.

There will be local concerns about the impact on public services. Our understanding is that you are working with the local NHS and transport providers to establish additional dedicated facilities for the site. While we agree that residents need services, it is essential that planners understand the scarcity of local services and the real risk of enhanced community tensions if

this is not adequately and sensitively managed, as it will be seen as disadvantaging local people. We request that these services be offered in a way that benefits the local community, ideally through direct access, helping to drive integration and dampen tensions.

Wealden is a quiet, rural area with few services and very low crime levels, meaning local police services are comparatively sparse and focused through the rural crime team on issues specific to Wealden. Sussex Police must be properly funded to ensure that resources are available to protect everyone—the public, service users at the camp and staff alike—and to provide a police presence that reassures local people.

We understand that Clearsprings will manage this site with on-site Home Office oversight, building on the experience of managing the two other active MOD sites nationally. We have been reassured that lessons have been learned and that the team recognises that different challenges may arise at Crowborough, requiring ongoing dialogue with local stakeholders. We stand ready to participate in those discussions, though we would ask that the Home Office suitably compensate us for this work.

Our understanding is that service users will spend around 90 days at the site whilst their cases are processed, with asylum decisions taken off-site and service users not returning. Please could you confirm that it is now realistic that cases are decided within 90 days?

We are pleased that your team recognises the need for service users to have a range of activities available on-site. We ask that you see this as an opportunity to leave a legacy for the MOD and Cadets who will return in twelve months—perhaps ensuring that any investment in facilities benefits both sets of users. We would like to discuss what is planned off-site, as local amenities are quite limited and may not be suitable for service users.

Crowborough is a strong community that proactively welcomed many Ukrainian and Afghan refugees in recent years. We reaffirm this Council's commitment to helping the Home Office connect with the many active community groups who would be a positive resource.

We recognise that the Home Office is not seeking our permission to use the Camp for this purpose, but we are keen to work with you to ensure your plans are as effective as possible and the impact on the community is carefully managed. We welcomed the opportunity for our officers to meet with your operational teams and hope this partnership working can continue.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

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