Wealden District Council

Ms Nusrat Ghani MP
MP for Sussex Weald
Madam Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons
Chairman of Ways and Means
House of Commons London SW1A 0AA

By email: nusrat.ghani.mp@parliament.uk

24 February 2026
chris.bending@wealden.gov.uk
www.wealden.gov.uk
01323 443322

Dear Ms Ghani

Crowborough Training Camp
Secretary of State Screening Direction – Written Statement

I write with reference to your letter dated 20 February 2026.

It is important to be clear that whist Wealden District Council is the Local Planning Authority for the area, our powers in relation to the use of Crowborough Camp as accommodation for Asylum Seekers is severely curtailed. There are two main reasons for this -

1. The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, has issued planning consent for the works and use, under Class Q, emergency powers. In this context, the Home Office do not need to apply to Wealden as they already have planning consent.
2. The camp is what is known as Crown Land, whereby the Council can only take enforcement action against the Home Office/MOD with their written consent as landowner. Given our concerns about the camp, we wrote to the Home Office/MOD to seek this consent. This consent was denied. We cannot therefore take formal enforcement action or have a formal role in monitoring compliance with the EIA.

So, the two main powers granted to any Local Planning Authority - the power to grant/refuse a planning application and the power to take formal enforcement action - have both been taken away by Government in this case.

As you know, Wealden, has consistently raised concerns with the Home Office about its plans, including raising some of the points in your letter as part of ongoing legal proceedings to be heard this week. Whilst we may not have powers to take enforcement action, our legal case sets out clear deficiencies in the decision making by the Home Office.

Finally, I think it is important to correct a misunderstanding in the premise of your point 1. The reference to 18 months in the letter from the MOD dated 3 February is not as might first appear. The Government are not signalling their intention to use the site for 18 months, but summarising our request to the Home Office/MOD (see letter dated 10 December) to be granted planning enforcement powers at the site for a period of 18 months.

For the avoidance of doubt, we chose this timeline in case there was any delay by HO/MOD in decanting and reinstating the site following the 12 months permitted by class Q. In any event, as you will note from the end of the 3 February letter, permission to our request was denied.

I hope that this helps to clarify the position.

Yours sincerely



Chris Bending
Director of Place