NUSRAT GHANI MP
Member of Parliament for Sussex Weald

Madam Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons
Chairman of Ways and Means
House of Commons London SW1A 0AA

Chris Bending
Wealden District Council
Council Offices
Vicarage Lane
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20 February 2026

Dear Mr Bending,

Crowborough Training Camp

Secretary of State Screening Direction – Written Statement

I write having received from the Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government a copy of the Secretary of State's full (written) statement of reasons as required by 5(5)(a) of the 2017 EIA Regulations.

The statement includes the Secretary of State's conclusions on likeliness of significant environmental effects.

I understand from the Secretary of State's Private Office that a copy of this document has been deposited with Wealden District Council (WDC) as the Local Planning Authority (LPA).

Having considered the statements made within it, I wanted to raise both inconsistencies and mistakes within the document which I believe present grounds for challenge by the LPA. I list them below and would be interested to hear what assessment WDC has made of them and what legal challenge is being raised in response to the attempt to use these as the basis for permission for the development of asylum accommodation by the Home Office.

1. Inconsistency in Period of Temporary Use

On the first page of the statement it states:

"*As sought by the Home Office (HO): the proposal is for temporary (Up to 12 months) accommodation for up to 540 Asylum Seekers.*".

Yet this period conflicts with the response sent to WDC by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) on 3 February 2026. You will recall the letter was sent by the MOD in direct response to a letter sent by WDC to the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence in relation to Planning Enforcement Action.

In their letter of 3 February 2026 DIO Secretariat (DIO) stated clearly (in the first paragraph):

"*....limited to the proposed asylum accommodation project, for an initial period of 18 months.*"

This time difference is crucial. As you will know under Class Q of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015, Crown bodies can carry out certain development for a period not exceeding 12 months.

Whilst the written statement references and is based on this period, it is clear from the DIO letter, sent in response to WDC considering enforcement action that the initial period the Home Office intends to use the site for is longer than stated. The initial period is actually 18 months.

What steps will WDC take to challenge this inconsistency and the inaccurate information in the written statement?

What assessment has WDC made of the prospects for action against the Home Office for intending a period of use which is beyond the stated 12 months in the written statement of reasons?

2. "No identified community assets"

On page 9 of the written statement it declares, in the assessment of the Secretary of State, there are:

"*No identified community assets*".

This comment flies in the face of Crowborough Training Camp being one of the biggest facilities for cadets in the South East, a vital community asset for thousands of young people. If cadet groups training facilities are not a "community asset", what is?

The Written Statement indicates that:

"*The community will be able to ask questions directly or during meetings and any issues raised will be appropriately addressed. With this mitigation, there is no foreseeable significant effect on community relations.*"

The suggested mitigation is simply not credible and flies in the face of the actual usage of Crowborough Training Camp before it was taken over by the Home Office. A point the MOD has accepted in providing an alternative after my intervention and lobbying on behalf of cadet units.

What steps is WDC as the LPA taking to challenge the factually inaccurate claim in the Written Statement and make clear the Crowborough Training Camp was a community asset given its use by thousands of cadets?

What steps will WDC take to ensure the community asset of the Crowborough Train Camp as a cadet training facility is recognised in planning terms?

3. Comments on Possible Riots

On page 8 of the written statement the document states the following about the use of Crowborough Training Camp as asylum accommodation:

"*The proposal may give rise to anxiety amongst local residents which may be adversely affected by protestors/demonstrators or riots*".

It is simply wrong to state a riot "may" give rise to anxiety, it would inevitably cause great fear and distress. Later in the document (Page 10) the Secretary of State refers to regular engagement with Sussex Police, yet does not set out clearly what resources would be provided to mitigate the risks outlined.

Given the emphasis in paragraph 96 of the National Planning Policy Framework of creating safe communities how can the comments in the Written Statement be compatible, in planning terms, with drawing a conclusion there will not be significant impacts on Crowborough from this development?

4. Monitoring of Stated Impacts

Throughout the written statement the Secretary of State makes various assertions, including:

- The "worst case scenario" on vehicular movements is 342.
- The positioning of new floodlights will not affect the dark skies of the High Weald National Landscape.
- Noise from new diesel generators will be mitigated.

How does WDC as the LPA intend to monitor the compliance with and accuracy of these statements?

I look forward to your early response.

Yours sincerely,



Nusrat Ghani MP