Home Office

Andrew Larter
Asylum Accommodation Delivery Director
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London SW1P 4DF
www.gov.uk/home-office

Date 17/03/2026

Chris Bending
Director of Place
Wealden District Council
Vicarage Lane
Hailsham
East Sussex
BN27 2AX

Dear Mr Bending

WDC's request for Crown consent under section 296A Town and Country Planning Act 1990: Crowborough Training Camp, East Sussex ("Crowborough")

I refer to your letter of 10 December 2025 to the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence. I am replying in a delegate capacity for the Home Secretary and since your incoming letter, I have been seeking legal advice and liaising with the Ministry of Defence - I am aware they have since responded to you separately.

Since this initial letter of correspondence to the Home Office, Crowborough Training Camp is now operational as an alternative asylum accommodation site. As set out in correspondence to the local authority on 21st January 2025, the Home Office commenced development of the premises under Class Q, Part 19 permitted development rights.

The Secretary of State continues to be fully aware of the need to ensure that there is a lawful planning basis for the use of Crowborough, and that the requirements of both the EIA and Habitats Regulations are satisfied. The Home Office is committed to working collaboratively with you and has provided all relevant information and documents for you to understand the basis of planning permission. My team has already:

- Provided a copy of the MHCLG screening direction
- Offered and arranged a site visit for key members of your team

I am confident that the information provided to date and the Home Office's ongoing engagement is sufficient to satisfying the public interest concerns you raise in your letter. My team remains open to discussing any further concerns with you.

The form of consent sought allows the Council to bring enforcement action against the Secretary of State. The consent sought anticipates (a) that breaches will be identified by you and (b) that that you will have to resort to enforcement action via the courts.

Where no breach has been identified and where the Home Office is constructively engaging with you, it is clearly not in the public interest to grant the consent sought and

open the door to expensive legal proceedings where the taxpayer will bear the costs on both sides.

In this circumstance, the Home Office does not consider there is any good reason to depart from the starting point established by section 296A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

As indicated above, the Home Office recognises WDC's duties and would welcome further engagement to ensure that they can be met. I am aware that representatives from WDC have visited the site already for these purposes. Therefore, having considered the proposal set out in your letter of 10 December, the Secretary of State does not consent to the local planning authority taking any step for the purposes of enforcement in relation to Crowborough at this time.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Larter
Asylum Accommodation Delivery Director
Home Office