Home Office

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Mr Andrew Wilson
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By email

25 November 2025

Dear Councillor Wilson,

During my attendance at the Wealden District Council Scrutiny and Performance Committee on 10 November 2025, I committed to write to you with further details on some of the points raised by Councillors during the session. I also note the follow up letter of 24 November from Chris Bending, Director of Place.

I will respond to each of these points in turn;

1. **The Committee requested an explanation on the rationale for operating the site on a non-detained basis.**

The individuals who would be accommodated at Crowborough Training Camp are asylum seekers whose claims are being processed. Those with a valid pending asylum claim are considered lawfully present in the United Kingdom under immigration legislation, and as such are not subject to removal or detention. Detention does play a key role in maintaining effective immigration control and securing the UK's borders, particularly in connection with the removal of people who have no right to remain in the UK but who refuse to leave voluntarily. Under Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights, detention must be lawful, necessary, and proportionate. Decisions to detain are taken on a case-by-case basis and detention must be for the shortest period necessary. Where detention is for the purpose of removal, there must be a realistic prospect of removal within a reasonable timescale. We are regularly held to account on this by the courts.

2. Several questions were raised about processes and sanctions available where asylum seekers go missing or remain absent from the site. Concerns were also voiced about the risk of missing asylum seekers being vulnerable to Modern Slavery.

Residents of Crowborough Training Camp would not be detained and would be free to come and go as they wish, provided they adhere to the standard site conditions. Failure to comply with these conditions, would lead to their entitlement to accommodation being reviewed and could result in the provision of accommodation being withdrawn.

The camp would have a defined boundary and monitoring arrangements to ensure safety and security, with residents signing in and out as they enter and leave. Twenty-four-hour security would be operating seven days a week on site, with a strict no-alcohol on site policy, managed by an experienced specialist provider contracted by the Home Office. This would be overseen by the Home Office assurance team on site.

The Home Office operates a clear and proportionate framework for managing unexpected absences from asylum accommodation, balancing enforcement with safeguarding responsibilities. Specifically;

Investigation and Support Conditions - Where an individual is absent for the specified period, without permission for up to 7 consecutive days or 14 days in any 6-month period, the case is investigated promptly. Residents are given the opportunity to explain their absence before any decision is taken. If no valid reason is provided, asylum support may be suspended or discontinued in line with statutory provisions under the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. Individuals retain a full right of appeal.

Safeguarding and Vulnerability Protocols - Safeguarding is central to this process. Each case is assessed individually to identify risks such as mental health concerns, exploitation, or trafficking. Where indicators of vulnerability are present, the safeguarding protocols would be activated and a safeguarding referral made. This ensures timely intervention and coordination with local authorities and police who can refer potential victims into NRM if there are concerns, they have been exploited. Vulnerable individuals may be relocated or provided alternative accommodation if absence relates to safety or health needs.

Sanctions and Compliance Controls - Residents are required to comply with Conditions of Support, including attendance checks and reporting obligations.

Persistent non-compliance may result in:

- Formal warnings
- Reduction or withdrawal of subsistence support
- Discontinuation of accommodation support
- Site operators maintain 24/7 security, conduct welfare checks, and escalate behavioural concerns through structured channels. Residents receive an induction booklet outlining site rules, sanctions, and complaint routes, supported by a Migrant Help helpline.

3. Oversight and Assurance

The Home Office monitors provider compliance through contract assurance inspections and regular situational reports. Engagement with local police and health partners ensures safeguarding risks are managed collaboratively.

This approach ensures that absences are treated seriously but proportionately, maintaining the integrity of the asylum support system while prioritising the safety and wellbeing of those accommodated.

4. Contact during the asylum application process

As well as ongoing contact conditions on site, we expect asylum seekers to stay in contact with the Home Office and comply with the asylum process, including providing up-to-date contact details and following any reporting conditions. Reporting events are scheduled to maintain contact with asylum seekers and ensure the Home Office has up-to-date details. Asylum seekers are expected to engage with reporting events to ensure their compliance with the immigration system. As part of the asylum process, a claimant may be required by the Home Office to attend a one-off reporting event or series of scheduled reporting events. Failure to attend a reporting event, may lead to a claim being withdrawn in line with Paragraph 333C(b)(iv) of the Immigration Rules.

All asylum seekers, including those receiving accommodation or financial support must keep the Home Office informed of any changes in circumstances. At the decision and appeal stage, applicants are expected to engage promptly with correspondence and attend hearings. Even after a decision, compliance remains essential, whether transitioning to refugee status or cooperating with return arrangements. These measures collectively demonstrate a clear and consistent pattern of contact throughout the process.

Further details of the asylum application process can be found here; Claim asylum in the UK: Attend an asylum screening - GOV.UK

5. Several Councillors requested confirmation on the average age of asylum seekers who would be accommodated on site.

The Home Office does not report on individual ages. Our published statistics focus on broad categories such as male vs female, over or under 18, and country of origin, as well as how these compare internationally. Detailed age-specific data was discontinued in 2023, so it is not possible to provide estimates beyond these categories.

6. Information on previous Ministerial decision about Crowborough Training Camp.

While Crowborough Training Camp and other sites have been assessed by successive ministers in the past, those decisions reflected the circumstances and priorities at the time. The current proposal is based on today's operational needs and the outcome of refreshed feasibility assessments.

7. Request for details of the impact assessment

Impact assessments, including community and equality considerations are ongoing as part of the standard process and published where appropriate.

5. Clarification on the timeline of meetings between the Home Office and Wealden District Council.

On 10 October, the Home Office held an online meeting with Wealden District Council and East Sussex County Council to formally notify them of the intention to use Crowborough Training Camp as temporary asylum accommodation. This was followed on 13 October by initial meetings with the Sussex Integrated Care Board (ICB) and Sussex Police to discuss health and public safety considerations for the site. On 15 October, a site visit took place with representatives from Wealden District Council and East Sussex County Council, providing an opportunity to see the facilities first-hand.

I trust this is helpful, please do reach out if you require any further clarity on any of the points covered.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Larter
Asylum Accommodation Delivery Director