[redacted]
Deputy Director, Crown Development and Special Projects
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
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By email: [redacted]

Wealden District Council

12 October 2026
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Dear [redacted]

Crowborough Training Camp: Urgent Crown Development Application under section 293B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990
Reference: PCU/RARE/C1435/3379159

I write further to your letter of 6 October 2026, responding to the Council's detailed representations of 3 September, and the subsequent formal notification of 7 October, signed by [redacted], Head of Crown Development, confirming that the Secretary of State has agreed to determine the Home Office's application under the Urgent Crown Development procedure.

Your letter expressly confirmed that the Council's representations concerning the statutory requirement for urgency, including the chronology of events, the existing operation of the site, the availability of alternative planning routes and our request for further information under section 293B(8), would be placed before the Secretary of State and considered alongside all other relevant material before a decision was made.

The notification issued the following day confirms that the Secretary of State has concluded that the proposal is nationally important and urgent, having regard to the Written Ministerial Statement of 13 February 2025.

However, no reasons or supporting analysis have been provided to explain how that conclusion was reached, or how the Council's detailed representations were considered and addressed.

This is a matter of considerable concern to the Council.

Our representations of 3 September raised specific and substantive questions about whether the statutory requirement that the development be carried out as a matter of urgency was satisfied. In particular, we identified that the site was already operational, that the expiry of the existing temporary planning arrangements had been foreseeable for some considerable time, and that the Home Office had obtained agreement for extended occupation in April 2026, several months before submitting its application.

We also raised the question of why the ordinary Crown Development procedure under section 293D could not have been pursued within the period available.

These matters go directly to the statutory test under section 293B(6)(b), which is distinct from the separate question of national importance.

The Council therefore formally requests a detailed written explanation of the basis upon which the Secretary of State concluded that the statutory conditions in section 293B(6) were satisfied.

In particular, we require an explanation addressing the following:

1. **The assessment of urgency:** How the Secretary of State concluded that it was necessary for the proposed development to be carried out as a matter of urgency, including the specific operational timetable relied upon and the consequences of not securing an accelerated planning decision.

2. **The Council's representations:** How the matters raised in our letter of 3 September were assessed, particularly the chronology of the Home Office's decisions, the existing operation of the site, the known requirement to secure further planning permission and the extent to which any delay in bringing forward the application was taken into account.

3. **Alternative planning procedures:** What assessment was undertaken of the availability and suitability of the ordinary Crown Development procedure under section 293D, including whether that route could have been pursued at an earlier stage and why it was considered insufficient to meet the Home Office's requirements.

4. **The evidential basis for the decision:** What evidence was provided by the Home Office to demonstrate that the exceptional urgent procedure was necessary, rather than simply preferable or expedient, and whether further information was sought under section 293B(8).

We also formally request copies of the relevant material underpinning the decision, including the Home Office's statement justifying urgency, any supporting evidence, the advice and recommendations placed before the Secretary of State, and the decision record itself.

We would additionally welcome confirmation of how and when the Council's representations were placed before the decision maker and the manner in which they were considered.

Where any material is withheld, please identify the documents or categories of information concerned and explain the basis for withholding them. We would expect any material capable of disclosure with appropriate redactions to be provided.

We recognise that section 293B does not expressly require detailed reasons to accompany notification of the decision. Nevertheless, given the exceptional nature of the Urgent Crown Development procedure, the significance of the separate statutory tests and the detailed representations submitted by this Council, we consider that a substantive explanation of the decision and the evidence upon which it was based is entirely warranted.

Given the strict timescales applicable to any potential legal challenge, we require a substantive written response within seven calendar days of this letter, by 5.00 pm on Monday 19 October 2026.

The Council has sought high level specialist legal advice and expressly reserves its position concerning the lawfulness of the decision to accept the application under section 293B, including the consideration of any further legal steps.

I trust that you will recognise the importance of providing a prompt and comprehensive response.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

Chris Bending
Director of Place
Wealden District Council

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