

Monday 21 September 2026

Our ref: 260921

The Rt Hon Shabana Mahmood MP
Home Secretary

Dear Shabana,

RAF Linton-on-Ouse

We are writing to set out our concerns regarding the Home Office proposal to considering using the former RAF Linton-on-Ouse site to accommodate large numbers of single male asylum seekers.

We fully recognise the context in which these proposals are being considered. The Government has committed to reducing small boat crossings, bringing the asylum system under control, and ending the costly reliance on asylum hotels. We fully understand the need to identify alternative forms of accommodation that are more sustainable and deliver better value for the taxpayer.

However, while we fully support these wider objectives, there are both economic and public safety concerns at RAF Linton-on-Ouse which make it an unsuitable site to meet the Government's wider objectives.

We have both had the opportunity in recent weeks to meet with local residents and see for ourselves their concerns and get more specific information on their objections to the proposals.

Economic concerns

RAF Linton-on-Ouse is a large strategic brownfield site that we have actively been engaging with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO), Homes England and North Yorkshire Council on the potential to develop the site for housing. York and North Yorkshire faces acute housing pressures, with too many residents struggling to access affordable homes and too many communities constrained by a lack of affordable housing.

The site has the potential to deliver around 5,700 new homes, at that scale and the method in which we would seek to develop the site would ensure the necessary investment to address the infrastructure challenges that currently make the site unsuitable for asylum housing. Our understanding is that the DIO were working towards actively marketing the site from July 2029.

In addition to supporting our region to meet our significant increase in house building targets, it would support local job creation, unlock private investment, and contribute to our region's economic growth.

The economic and housing case for development is compelling and once which we are trying to advance with urgency across the county. These proposals put at risk the progress we have made towards unlocking this site and we therefore believe that it is the wrong site for a large-scale asylum accommodation centre.

Our officers have actively been engaged in discussions on this site and have provided me with several options to ensure that any housing development on the site maximises the levels of affordable and social homes, such as use of a Mayoral Development Act or establishment of a Mayoral Development Corporation/Zone.

Residents have told us that available rental units are currently sat empty and those that many that were recently been let have had their prospective tenants withdraw. This is symptomatic of a broader concern we have around the difficulties that we would experience progressing our housing proposals while the site was being used for asylum accommodation.

The commercial viability of any housing proposal would be significantly damaged by the Home Office proposals. The long-term certainty that developers require would not be present, land value would be impacted, and asylum seeker housing would negatively impact the marketability of any houses built.

Local residents are understandably frustrated that a site with such significant potential remains undeveloped years after its closure, an issue we've consistently pushed to address over the last two years. The current proposal would place further obstacles in the way of securing a long-term vision that delivers lasting benefits for communities across York and North Yorkshire.

The site is situated adjacent to a small rural village community, which other than the village school has limited other infrastructure, public transport, healthcare provision, and local services. The scale of the proposal relative to the size of the host community, raises legitimate concerns regarding its sustainability and deliverability. The site is surrounded by rented former officer accommodation, managed by property company Annington, and represents the majority of the 23% of housing in the village that is rented accommodation.

Public safety concerns

We have particular concerns regarding policing demand, which is currently negligible in this part of the county due to the villages rural setting. Public safety resources would inevitably need to be deployed if these proposals progress. Can the Home Office guarantee that any additional policing costs would be centrally funded?

Strategic policing requirements at this site would inevitably put considerable pressure on the resources of North Yorkshire Police elsewhere in the county. Taxpayers in North Yorkshire already contribute almost half of the police budget each year and resources are always stretched due to North Yorkshire's extensive geography.

Given the proximity of the primary school to the site, as well as the bus stop used for all secondary school pupils in the village, and your comments in July of this year, why is this site still being considered as suitable for open accommodation?

We remain extremely concerned about the security of this site and what measures would be put in place to ensure those accommodated at the site, as well as residents, are kept safe. We

would welcome clarity on what measures the Home Office are considering to ensure anyone with a criminal record is not housed at the site?

The proposal is to establish an open site, but as noted above the village has little to no social infrastructure. What facilities will be provided on the site and what processes will be put in place to monitor who is leaving the site, and what steps are being taken to ensure those housed at the site have access to amenities outside of the village.

Serious concerns remain regarding the impact of this proposal on fire and rescue services. These concerns have been raised directly with Home Office officials by North Yorkshire's Chief Fire Officer. North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service covers the largest county in England while operating with one of the lowest levels of funding nationally.

Any increase in demand arising from a development of this scale would place additional pressure on already constrained resources and risks undermining the service's ability to maintain operational resilience and respond effectively to incidents across York and North Yorkshire.

The implications for public safety must therefore be fully understood and addressed before any proposal is progressed.

Given these concerns, we ask cannot support these proposals and ask, once again, for the Home Office to reconsider the suitability of RAF Linton-on-Ouse for this purpose.

This government has placed a significant emphasis on the role of Mayors in representing their regions, we would welcome the opportunity to discuss these matters directly with you and your officials before any final decision is made.

Yours sincerely,



David Skaith
Mayor of York and North Yorkshire



Jo Coles
Deputy Mayor of York and North Yorkshire
for Policing, Fire and Crime