



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Rt. Hon. Priti Patel MP
Home Secretary
Home Office
2 Marsham Street, London
SW1P 4DF

20th April 2022

Dear Priti

Subject: Linton-on-Ouse asylum processing site

Whilst supportive of providing safe harbour and government accommodation for those fleeing persecution, I do not believe that the small rural village of Linton-on-Ouse is the appropriate place to house up to 1500 young, male asylum seekers.

Clearly the humane and effective asylum process is a national endeavour, so we all must play our part and I do not object to this facility in my constituency on 'not in my back yard' grounds, or a lack of compassion for those in need. Indeed, my constituents have welcomed a number of Syrian and Ukrainian families to our area and I have campaigned to allow asylum seekers to work after their claim has been outstanding for 6 months rather than the current 12. I also supported shale gas exploration in my area on the basis of national need.

However, the Home Office guidance on suitability of location for asylum seekers is quite clear. Following concerns raised about a smaller facility in your own constituency, the Home Office said there was "a failure to recognise that Rivenhall was not in a major conurbation" and that "Asylum seekers should be placed in urban areas which encompass a number of cities or towns so that they can access support easier". Witham, the location of Rivenhall has a population in excess of 25,000, Linton a population of 1200. It is located 10 miles North of York and there are only around 4 buses per day. There is very limited access to GP and health services and NHS dentistry is not available at any local surgeries. We have to acknowledge that whilst most asylum seekers of any demographic will be decent and law-abiding, in a population of up to 1500, young single men there are bound to be some that are not. There is virtually no police presence in the village.

In the Rivenhall case, the Home Office also highlighted a "failure to ensure that appropriate engagement had taken place with council officials and other service providers". No such engagement took place. Indeed, the leader of Hambleton District Council, the planning authority, had no formal notification prior to the announcement.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-essex-53804705.amp>

This announcement was included within your new Rwandan policy, which has caused confusion on exactly what the selection criteria for who will be sent to Rwanda and who will be sent to Linton. I have asked your ministers and officials this on a number of occasions and am yet to receive the detailed information and would be grateful if you could facilitate this.

I can understand that in some ways a large redundant airbase might be seen as a useful opportunity to house such a facility. Perhaps if there were much lower number and these were families, possibly including some of those seeking refuge from Russian invasion of the Ukraine, it would be different. However, the current proposal of 1500 young men in an open camp in the heart of a small rural village is not workable, sustainable or acceptable. It simply cannot be that availability of a site dictates the appropriateness of the location.

I am attending a community meeting this Saturday 23rd April where council leaders and local residents will be in attendance. I would be grateful if Home Office ministers or officials would attend and I would be happy to walk around the village and the site with them so they can see the problems first hand.

I look forward to your response.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kevin', written in a cursive style.