

Cheryl Avery

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By email.

28th April 2022

Dear Cheryl,

Asylum Accommodation Proposals – Linton-on-Ouse, North Yorkshire

Thank you for meeting with me and members of my Executive Management Team at your first opportunity on Monday 25th April at 13:00.

As expressed at the beginning of the meeting, I had been eager to meet with you since being made aware of the Home Office Asylum Reception Facility proposal in Linton-on-Ouse on Thursday 14th April at 11:18. It was very helpful that Oliver Banner was also able to attend the meeting as the lead on this proposed development and following his presence at the Linton-on-Ouse Parish Council meeting on Thursday 21st April, where he heard first-hand some of the concerns of the local residents.

Whilst grateful you were able to talk in a little more detail about the proposed development in Linton-on-Ouse it is clear there is far more information which needs to be understood and further work which needs to be developed in the coming days.

I thought it would be useful if I set out a summary of the key points I conveyed at our meeting on Monday 25th April:

- Community fears and concerns regarding the safety of villagers, specifically women and children, in their homes and in and around the village and local area. These concerns were expressed at both the Parish Council meeting on 21st April, and at the public meeting held on 23rd April.
- Absence of any community or stakeholder consultation prior to the site proposal being launched and the impact upon public trust and confidence resulting from that omission.
- The omission of prior engagement with me as the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner. As the elected local policing body and the fire and rescue authority, I should have been notified as one of the key stakeholders within the local area.

- Disappointment at the lack of information being shared and engagement with the local residents of Linton-on-Ouse following the announcement on 14th April. While Oliver Banner represented the Home Office at the Parish Council meeting on 21st April, it was unfortunate that nobody attended the public meeting held on Saturday 23rd April, where local residents and stakeholders had hoped to learn more about the site proposals.
- Speed at which the site proposals are being developed following the announcement on 14th April, which gives little time to conduct any meaningful consultation and engagement even at this stage.
- Fundamental concern about how the former RAF base in the rural village of Linton-on-Ouse has been determined as the most appropriate site in the country - the details of which may be set out within a feasibility report which I would be interested to review.
- Additional demands on policing regarding the site security and residents of the facility, safeguarding the villagers and wider community impact and resourcing across North Yorkshire and York. This increase in policing demand will require support and central funding to ensure North Yorkshire Police are able to service the impacts.
- Impact on fire demand which was unclear due to lack of information being available on who has operational primacy of the site. The legal status of the site will of course determine the requirements and demand placed on North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service - if the base will cease to be the Crown property then operational responsibility will pass to North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service. This comes at a time when we are launching and consulting on our statutory Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP - locally termed the 'Risk and Resource Model') which impacts our ability to progress at this stage with consultation launching on 23rd May. The IRMP came before me for approval yesterday (26 April 2022), and I have been left with no choice but to approve it subject to the explicit caveat that it omitted the Linton-on-Ouse proposals.

At the meeting you had asked for my feedback as to how the Home Office should approach community liaison and engagement moving forwards. Paramount to any constructive engagement with the local residents is for the Home Office to provide clear facts, perhaps in the form of a Home Office Newsletter for example, which responds to the concerns and questions raised by the villagers of Linton-on-Ouse and sets out details about both the short- and long-term proposals. I would suggest this is prepared and distributed as a matter of urgency.

Once further information is shared with the local residents it would be beneficial to invite them to a workshop on the site so they can see the facility and meet with you and the security providers. This invitation should also include all local key stakeholders, supported by a separate stakeholder working group.

It would be helpful if you nominated a Home Office community liaison officer to ensure there is also an accessible and consistent contact for the villagers and I would ask this is shared with my Chief Executive so the Office can ensure they too are part of the engagement plans.

I was heartened by your indication that a mechanism exists to ensure that additional policing demand is resourced from central funds.

However, I noted with concern that no consideration had been given to fire and rescue implications. As we agreed, I have asked my Chief Executive to make arrangements to convene a working group, to include

yourselves, my Office and North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service to explore and identify solutions for the legal, operational and resourcing implications for North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service.
I have attached my letter to the Home Secretary today which you will see captures a summary of the concerns expressed by residents and my expectations on how we can achieve the best possible outcomes for all involved.

You will appreciate it is my role as the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner of North Yorkshire and York to ensure the community is heard and their concerns are addressed, and that people are safe and feel safe in their homes and in their local community so I hope we can continue to communicate regularly.

I look forward to hearing from you very soon.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Zoë Metcalfe', written in a cursive style.

Zoë Metcalfe

North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner.