

# Gazette

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- **News**

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## Government rules out proposals to develop 1,500-person migrant centre in Littleton-upon-Severn



Home Office officials have quashed plans to develop a migrant centre near the village

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**GOVERNMENT** officials have quashed plans to house up to 1,500 migrants at a huge centre near the village of Littleton-upon-Severn.

The Home Office has dismissed the idea of building a reception centre for illegal immigrants and asylum seekers at an unused business park.

Developer Charlie Tull of Blue View Properties had proposed transforming Whale Wharf Business Park into a centre where up to 1,500 migrants, who had entered the country from Calais, could stay while seeking a permanent home in the UK.

Mr Tull said that he had not yet liaised with the public on the plans because he was in discussions with the Home Office.

However, on Tuesday a Home Office spokeswoman told the Gazette there were no plans to use the site in Littleton to house migrants.

The spokeswoman said it was “not a possibility” because the government does not use German-style large reception centres in the UK.

She added: “We are not aware of any plans for such a site in South Gloucestershire. There are initial accommodation centres in each of our six regions. These are short term accommodation places before people are dispersed.”

Leader of South Gloucestershire Council and councillor for the Severn ward, Matthew Riddle, welcomed the news.

He said: “I believe that plans for a 1,500-person refugee centre at Whale Wharf didn’t fit at all with the government’s aim of bringing in the most vulnerable in a measured way and getting them quickly integrated into local communities.

“The site is very isolated, the access is via a network of country lanes – some of which are single track roads.

“In Littleton village there is only two churches and a pub and no public transport.’

“Luke Hall MP and I wrote a joint letter to Richard Harrington MP, the minister for refugees earlier in the week, pointing out the issues of having a large number of refugees in such a remote area.

“I am very pleased to hear that the Home Office has now stated that the site will not be used as a [migrant reception] centre.”

Mr Hall, MP for Thornbury and Yate, said he was glad the Home Office had ‘rightfully ruled out’ the proposals.

“Having raised this with the minister personally as well as writing to him with a list of residents’ objections to the site, I am glad to see that the Home Office has rightfully ruled out this proposal in Littleton.

“The scale of the proposal would have been inappropriate for the area and I will be objecting to any other similar facilities if they are proposed in the future.

“This will now allow South Gloucestershire Council to continue to engage with the Home Office on how it can play its part in the measured and proportionate resettlement of vulnerable refugees across the UK.”

When explaining his plan to the Gazette, Mr Tull said the centre would be self-contained accommodation for migrants who have either entered the country illegally or are seeking asylum.

He said: “It would host migrants from anywhere up to three to five months depending on how long it might take to be approved to stay in this country, but will have everything they might need to be contained comfortably during that time.

“The site itself will generate considerably less traffic than the other alternatives we have previously worked on, such as schools or activity centres.”

Mr Tull bought the business park several years ago and planning permission was granted in 2011 to convert the offices into a residential building for up to 300 children, but that has not come to fruition.

He said that, after spending time in Calais working with organisations which support migrants who are trying to cross into the UK, he decided that a reception centre for them would be a good use of the building.

<https://www.gazetteseries.co.uk/news/14121338.government-rules-out-proposals-to-develop-1500-person-migrant-centre-in-littleton-upon-severn/>