



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Our reference: BS27415

16 June 2023

Dear EFRA Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to accompany your recent visit to the Animal and Plant Health Agency site in my constituency. I very much welcome your committee's inquiry into the APHA and was pleased to be able to discuss a number of issues during the visit.

One particular issue which was raised a number of times was the location of the site, and whether relocation was a viable option. I write today as I wish to put on record the importance of the current site.

As you are aware the APHA's site in Weybridge is also the UK's primary science capability for managing threats from animal diseases. In recent years it has responded to threats to health and the UK economy, including avian flu, bovine TB, foot and mouth, rabies and the possible spread of covid to animals. In 2021 it was also responsible for testing and confirming a case of BSE in Somerset.

These each present clear economic and health risks to the country if not managed and controlled effectively. To carry this out the APHA needs a highly skilled workforce and state of the art scientific facilities, as well as access to national and international travel links to ensure samples and scientists can have quick access to facilities.

The current site in New Haw provides all of these essential elements. The work of the APHA means animals, samples and scientists must have quick and easy access to the facilities, in order to effectively respond to risks of existing or emerging animal diseases. Delays in this work could have serious health and economic consequences.

The location in Runnymede and Weybridge provides the very best transport links, will doorstep access to the M25, M3 and M4, mainline rail services and very close links to Heathrow airport.

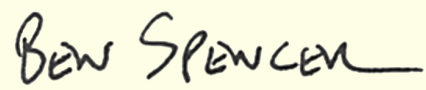
The area also boasts one of the highest levels of productivity in the country, and attracts a highly skilled workforce, both nationally and internationally, which is vital for the work of the APHA.

The fact that Defra own a site with acres of land with access to these essential resources is a huge asset, and one that could not be replaced.

The work of the APHA is vital to our health, security and trade. It is vital we invest in ensuring we maintain state of the art facilities which can identify, respond to and manage emerging risks. The right location is key to delivering this, which is why I believe it must be retained on its current site.

I would be happy to discuss these issues with the Committee further if it would be of help.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ben Spencer". The letters are cursive and connected, with a long horizontal stroke at the end of the word "Spencer".

**Dr Ben Spencer MP**  
**Runnymede and Weybridge**