

23 February 2023

**(by email)**

The Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP  
Minister of State (Minister for Immigration)  
Home Office  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

Dear Minister

**Planned accommodation of asylum seekers at the Best Western Yew Lodge Hotel in Kegworth, Leicestershire**

We are writing to you as Leaders of the two affected local authorities. We are extremely concerned regarding the anticipated arrival of a large number of young single male asylum seekers at the Yew Lodge Hotel in Kegworth, now known to be from next Monday, 27<sup>th</sup> February. Kegworth is a village of approximately 4,000 residents with limited facilities.

Our concerns are focused on the following key issues which we know officers from our Councils have raised with the Home Office in a recent meeting and which we are aware have also been raised by a number of other local and regional agencies.

1. The adequacy of engagement with local authorities and other agencies prior to asylum seekers being housed in the hotel

Both Leicestershire County Council and North West Leicestershire District Council have been given very limited notice of the planned use of the Yew Lodge Hotel and very limited information has been shared with the two authorities, and other partners, to assist them in preparing for asylum seeker arrivals. Although the Home Office wrote to the two Councils and other partners on 7<sup>th</sup> February to state that the hotel had been identified as a site for accommodating asylum seekers, only today are we informed when the hotel will start to be used. We still do not know whether the asylum seekers will arrive at once or in stages, or what the demographic composition of the arrivals will be. This makes effective preparation for their arrival extremely difficult, and the uncertainty creates understandable concern within the local community providing fertile environment for rumour and misinformation. In our view proper due process has not been followed, particularly in terms of consulting councils and other partners in time to check the suitability of the hotel for this purpose and enable essential services to be prepared. Commitments made by the Home Office to engage in advance dialogue locally appear not to have been met.

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Cabinet Office

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2. The adequacy of resources available to local authorities and other agencies to provide effective support.

We are concerned that in light of ongoing and intense financial pressures on local authorities, and the lack of additional funding being made available by Government to support dispersed asylum seekers, the provision of effective services to asylum seekers will prove difficult to provide and that there will inevitably be impacts on our residents who rely on our local services. It is unacceptable for these additional pressures to be placed on Councils without funding provided to recognise the extra burdens. The County Council's Children and Families Service is already at breaking point and cannot cope with these additional demands. This is a very real problem not recognised by your officials and contractors.

A further important consideration is that the branch surgery in Kegworth is at capacity and unable to take new patients with no other practices within walking distance. Introduction of a large number of new, vulnerable residents into the village will put significant additional strain on already stretched NHS services (including 111 and 999). We also note a further concern and frustration that the NHS in Nottinghamshire (Kegworth is on the border) have yet to come to a decision on the model for primary care and other NHS provision for the asylum seekers in this location. This is exacerbated by the likelihood that NHS provision for the asylum seekers will further reduce the availability of primary care provision to local residents.

We are also concerned about the cumulative impact of asylum seeker resettlement across Leicestershire (and Leicester) and note that the numbers being accommodated in the county and city far exceed those in neighbouring areas. With the anticipated additional 220 asylum seekers accommodated at Kegworth, Leicestershire and Leicestershire will be accommodating 1,183 asylum seekers (663 in Leicestershire), compared with 850 in Derby and Derbyshire, 433 in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, 426 in Lincolnshire, and 421 in Northamptonshire. The 663 in Leicestershire compares with just 96 in Nottinghamshire. An explanation for this unequal distribution will be very welcome.

3. The suitability of the hotel and the village to host this number of asylum seekers

As stated above Kegworth is a small settlement. It has limited facilities and certainly none to support the cultural and religious needs of those to be housed at the hotel. Voluntary and community sector assistance available in the village will also be unable to provide a significant amount of support. The hotel and its leisure facilities previously available to local residents will no longer be available to them.

The community is already expressing its concern loudly in opposition to the proposed use of the hotel. We are concerned that the settlement of such a large number of asylum seekers in such a small settlement will inevitably create tensions which may not materialise in larger settlements with a wider range of facilities available.

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Finally, this is not the first time that local authorities and partners in Leicestershire have been put in this position. Unilateral decisions have been taken by the Home Office and Serco without consideration of local circumstances, facilities or views; there has been inadequate consultation, a failure to properly acknowledge or address the impact on local services, and an unwillingness to take account of the impacts on local communities. It is disappointing to see that the lessons from previous mistakes and poor practice have not been learnt.

We urge you to reconsider the use of this hotel for the reasons provided and, if that is not possible, we would ask you to provide an explanation of why this hotel and community are considered appropriate for this purpose and why Leicestershire is being forced to play a disproportionate role in facilitating the Home Office's dispersal programme?

Yours sincerely



Nicholas Rushton  
Leader  
Leicestershire County Council



Richard Blunt  
Leader  
North West Leicestershire District Council