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Male only asylum Surrey hotel “shock”

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A Surrey council leader has said she was “shocked” to learn of Home Office proposals to house exclusively male asylum seekers in a hotel in a village.

In a strongly worded letter to the Secretary of State for the Home Department, Spelthorne Borough Council (SBC) leader Joanne Sexton expressed “serious concerns” regarding changes to plans for The Stanwell Hotel on the villages Town Lane.

SBC said it had previously approved for families and single women to be accommodated at the venue but the new plans would mean relocating the current families and women and replacing them with men.

The Home Office said it wants to close all hotels by the end of Parliament and will “continue to work closely with community partners”.

Cllr Sexton said the existing group of families at the hotel were “integrating well and building community ties. This abrupt change risks undermining all of that”.

In her letter to the Home Office, the leader said the council is “determined to avoid circumstances that could lead to civil unrest”. Describing the potential upheaval as an “adult male intensification”, Cllr Sexton added she is “alarmed about the potential consequences of the proposed changes and the impact they will have”.

A council spokesperson added that, while Spelthorne had a history of supporting asylum seekers including both Afghan and Ukrainian refugees, it still expects to be properly consulted and involved in decisions that significantly impact the local area.

SBC is urging the government to listen to the concerns of the local authority and the community, and is calling on the Home Office to immediately reconsider and consult on the way forward.

A Home Office spokesperson said: “The government is reducing expensive hotel use as part of a complete overhaul of the asylum system.

“From over 400 asylum hotels open in summer 2023, costing almost £9m a day, there are now less than 210.

“We will continue to work closely with community partners across the country, and discuss any concerns they have, as we look to fix this broken system together. The security of the local communities within which hotels are located will always be our paramount concern.”

The Home Office has a legal obligation to support asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute by providing appropriate support, which usually includes accommodation.

Outside of The Stanwell Hotel, Stanwell, Staines. (Credit: Google Street View)

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