



15 January 2024

Dear Andrew Rosindell,

I am writing to provide an important update to you on the Government's approach to accommodating asylum seekers, with reference to your constituency.

The Home Office has always been clear that the use of hotels was a short-term measure to ensure that we meet our statutory obligation to accommodate asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute during a period of unprecedented numbers of small boat arrivals.

We have since taken significant further steps to tackle illegal migration in line with the Prime Minister's ten-point plan, including:

- Striking law-enforcement agreements with key strategic countries upstream, such as Turkey, Bulgaria, Serbia and Italy.
- Elevating cooperation with France to unprecedented levels through two landmark agreements.
- Increasing illegal working visits by more than 50 per cent on last year, resulting in a sixfold increase in the number of penalties levied.
- Overhauling our civil penalties regime – trebling illegal working fines and initiating a tenfold increase in right to rent fines for repeat offenders.
- Creating the professional enablers taskforce to increase enforcement action against lawyers who help migrants who abuse the immigration system.
- Increasing returns by more than 75 per cent on 2022, including the removal of 4,100 Albanian immigration offenders since December 2022, which has seen Albanian illegal arrivals fall by more than 90 per cent.
- Passing the Illegal Migration Act, which renders the asylum claims of people who come here directly from safe countries inadmissible and establishes safe and legal routes as the only lawful means by which to come to the UK.

Our comprehensive plan to tackle illegal migration is making progress. For the first time since the phenomenon of small boats began four years ago, arrivals are down by a third compared with 2022, despite increases in arrivals in Europe of 100 per cent in some countries.

Additionally, we have brought forward more appropriate forms of asylum accommodation, including large disused military sites and The Bibby Stockholm, which are less costly to the taxpayer and can be better managed by communities. Within the existing estate we have reformed estate management to maximise the occupancy of the existing contingency and dispersal estate, which has prevented an additional 72 hotels being occupied and saved the taxpayer millions of pounds. We have also cleared the legacy backlog on target, as a result of significant increases in the productivity of our asylum decision-makers.

Utilising hotels for asylum accommodation takes valuable assets away from communities, places pressures on local public services and imposes an unacceptable cost on the British

taxpayer. Through the improvements we have made to our system, we are now able to begin the next phase of hotel exits and to stop the procurement of new asylum hotels.

I am therefore pleased to inform you that the Home Office is now terminating the contract with Ibis Styles Romford Hotel, as asylum accommodation and it will cease being used before the end of February 2024, reflecting the contractual notice period on this property. Residents currently accommodated in the hotel will be moving to other parts of our asylum estate and we aim to complete all relocations in advance of the final closure date. Residents will be notified a minimum of 5 days in advance and moved by the Home Office in line with our existing published policies. Whilst we expect impacts on local authorities to be minimal, we are putting in place additional resource to work with our accommodation providers and local partners to manage this process and minimise disruption, particularly focusing on families.

I trust that this is a helpful update and one which you will welcome, but if you have any further specific questions, please do email Service Delivery Support & Relationship Management at ASContractSupportTeam@homeoffice.gov.uk.

With best wishes,

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Tom Pursglove', written in a cursive style.

Tom Pursglove MP
Minister for Legal Migration and the Border