



Anthony Browne MP
Member of Parliament for South Cambridgeshire
House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA
Tel: 0207 219 8089

The Rt. Hon Suella Braverman KC MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department
Home Office
By email only

Tuesday 28th February 2023

Dear Home Secretary,

RE: Asylum Hotel, Bar Hill

I am writing to express concerns at use of the ‘Cambridge’ Bar Hill Best Western Hotel in my constituency as emergency accommodation for asylum seekers.

Let me first assure you that those seeking asylum will always be welcomed in South Cambridgeshire. I have spoken passionately in defence of a robust asylum system, urging the Prime Minister to recognise the plight of the Hazaras in Afghanistan. My office and I have been involved in assisting those fleeing persecution from as far afield as Hong Kong and Ukraine, and I am proud to say many have found homes and made lives in South Cambridgeshire. Equally, I understand that it’s far from ideal for anyone to live in a hotel and appreciate the need for those recently arrived in the UK to feel secure and able to rebuild their lives.

However, I must express the concerns relayed to me regarding the financial impact of these proposals, and the knock-on effects that utilising the hotel will have on our local community.

As a Conservative, I firmly believe that taxpayers have a right to demand that Government spending represents good value for money. I understand those constituents concerned at the cost of accommodating asylum claimants in a four-star spa hotel, charging customers over £60 per night. The site includes state of the art gym facilities, a full spa with swimming pool, sauna and steam room, and access to an eighteen-hole golf course. This constitutes perhaps a lot more than the Home Office’s statutory responsibility to provide “suitable accommodation”.

At a time of national stringency, when residents are faced with rising inflation, higher energy costs, and increased fuel prices, it is imperative that the government is seen to make sensible spending commitments. Can you offer my constituents an assurance that this facility represents best value for our taxpayers?

At a local level, representatives are concerned about being able to accommodate any significant influx. While part of a strong community, residents are already struggling with access to vital amenities. The local GP surgery has been under significant local pressure, and was recently subject to a takeover by Cambs GP Network Ltd following notification from previous administrators that they were no longer be able to fulfil their contract. Given the stated intention to place families in accommodation at the site, your Department should also note that school places are limited, as are local bus services that would be vital for those

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seeking, for example, job or benefits support. What process has your department undertaken to ensure these concerns are addressed?

Furthermore, the hotel is a local employer, and I am keen to ensure existing staff are not unduly affected by these measures. There are significant concerns at reports of layoffs at other hotels being utilised for such purpose. As mentioned, this facility includes spa and leisure facilities, both of which are staffed and would be at risk of closure and job losses as a direct result of your Department's actions. I hope you will be able to offer the assurance that staff will not be impacted by the decision to utilise this hotel.

Finally, I would stress the importance of constant, transparent communication with residents. I am hoping you can outline any further the steps your officials will take to ensure discussions about the use of Cambridge Bar Hill, Best Western Hotel takes place in an appropriate environment accessible to all residents in a safe forum for their questions, comments and concerns.

So many in the Bar Hill community will warmly welcome those in need of vital safety and shelter, but we must not forget the impact this may have on our community and vital government funds. I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

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