

FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL PRESS RELEASE

7 November 2022

Council takes legal action to stop Wisbech hotel housing asylum seekers

Fenland District Council has launched a High Court bid to prevent an historic Wisbech hotel from being used to house asylum seekers.

The authority has today (7 November) filed an application for an interim injunction after learning that the Rose and Crown Hotel in Wisbech Market Place had secured a Home Office contract to accommodate people seeking asylum.

On Friday (4 November), the Council had said it would be prepared to take legal action amid growing concerns that the sudden closure of the hotel on Friday afternoon was an indication that it was preparing to accept asylum seekers.

The Council was informed by Serco, the contractor which runs the Home Office's asylum seeker operation, of its Rose and Crown plans late on Friday evening and has been working on its legal case over the weekend.

The injunction is aimed at preventing the hotel from being used for this purpose.

The Council said the change of the hotel to use as a hostel is a breach of planning law and the harm arising from such a breach is significant. Due to the substantial risk of harm, which is unable to be mitigated, and potential suffering of the asylum seekers, it said the hotel was a wholly unsuitable place to house vulnerable people.

It is also disappointing that Serco failed to notify the Council of its plans earlier to enable any form of discussions regarding locations to take place.

Fenland District Council Leader, Cllr Chris Boden, said: "It is thoroughly irresponsible of the Home Office to consider placing vulnerable people with no recourse to public funding in a town such as Wisbech, without any consultation or any consideration of the impact this will have on the asylum seekers themselves.

"We are in a rural location, with very limited hotel accommodation and transport links, and we already have significant issues with migrant exploitation and human trafficking, which would put any people placed here at risk."

Cllr Steve Tierney, District Councillor for Medworth, Wisbech, said: "As Councillor for the area where the Rose and Crown Hotel is located, I am deeply concerned about the plan to house asylum seekers there. There are other places which are much better placed to give these vulnerable people the support they need."

Cllr Samantha Hoy, the Council's Cabinet Member for Housing, added: "We fully understand the concerns about local hotels being used to house asylum seekers and would urge the Home Office to consider more suitable locations where any new arrivals would not be subject to the level of potential harm."

ENDS

Notes to Editors

For media enquiries, please contact the Fenland District Council press office on 01354 622226 or email: communications@fenland.gov.uk