

## UK councils challenge asylum Hotels following landmark Court ruling



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LONDON, Aug. 20—Local councils across England are preparing legal challenges to remove asylum seekers from hotels following a landmark High Court ruling in favour of Epping Forest District Council. The court granted a temporary injunction preventing asylum seekers from being housed at The Bell Hotel in Essex, after the council argued the site posed safety risks and breached planning laws.

The ruling has set a precedent, with all 12 councils controlled by Reform UK pledging to pursue similar action. Conservative-led Broxbourne Council in Hertfordshire confirmed it is seeking urgent legal advice, while other councils are considering their options.

Border Security Minister Dame Angela Eagle said the government would continue to work with local authorities “to address legitimate concerns.” However, ministers acknowledged the ruling poses immediate challenges for the Home Office, which must now rehouse asylum seekers from The Bell Hotel before mid-September. Officials also warned that the decision could significantly impact the government’s ability to manage accommodation for the 32,000 asylum seekers currently staying in 210 hotels nationwide.

Epping’s case follows violent protests outside The Bell Hotel earlier this year, after two residents faced criminal charges. Sixteen people were later charged for disorder during demonstrations. The council argued that such incidents, coupled with planning breaches, justified urgent legal intervention.

The government has pledged to end the use of asylum hotels by the end of this Parliament, but contracts remain in place until 2029. Refugee advocates, however, caution that the ruling risks deepening hostility towards vulnerable people fleeing conflict.

Chris Whitbread, leader of Epping Forest District Council, welcomed the injunction but urged

residents not to protest further, saying: “This is the beginning, not the end.”