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Waterlooville Residents Rally Against Secret Plan to House Asylum Seekers in Town Centre Flats

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Thousands of residents in Waterlooville, Hampshire, took to the streets in protest this week following revelations that the Home Office had secretly planned to move dozens of asylum seekers into new-build flats above the town's high street. Locals criticised the move as undemocratic, disruptive, and neglectful of the community's long-standing housing concerns.

The controversy stems from the Home Office's broader dispersal strategy aimed at reducing the use of hotels by relocating migrants across towns and cities in the United

Kingdom. The Waterlooville plan involved relocating 35 asylum seekers into Waterloo House, a recently converted block of 19 apartments located directly above shops in the town centre. The development is owned by the Mountley Group, whose director also operates a migrant hotel in Cosham.

The backlash began when it emerged that negotiations between the Home Office and Clearsprings Ready Homes, a private contractor responsible for sourcing accommodation for asylum seekers, had taken place without consultation with local authorities or residents. At market rates, the flats could fetch up to £250,000 each, but with house prices falling, entering into a government-backed rental agreement may offer the developer long-term financial security.

Residents flooded the town centre with placards, flags, and chants, voicing strong opposition. Protesters carried signs reading “Locals In, Illegals Out” and “Whose Streets? Our Streets!”, with some expressing concern over safety, transparency, and housing fairness.

Former Home Secretary and local MP Suella Braverman, who represents Fareham and Waterlooville, addressed the rally. Speaking to the *Daily Mail*, she said: “I’d like to thank the thousands of peaceful protestors who came out this evening to tell the government that Waterlooville says no. The British people have had enough. The invasion must end.” Braverman has previously called the relocation plans “utterly inappropriate” and launched a petition against them, which gathered over 9,000 signatures.

Attendees at the protest expressed deep frustration. Craig Jones, 41, a resident of Waterlooville, told the *Daily Mail*: “We’re opposing having illegal men. For the past two years, I’ve not seen any veterans or homeless people housed in the area. I know people who have been on the housing list for years. I would like to see this given to veterans, homeless; it’s disgusting. Everything is always kept a secret.”

Many saw the plan as an insult to struggling locals. One protester cited the town’s declining high street, long council housing waiting lists, and rising homelessness as reasons why they believed British citizens should be prioritised over asylum seekers.

The protest echoes similar events in Epping, Essex, where hundreds of residents rallied outside an asylum hotel following the arrest of Hadush Kebatu, an Ethiopian national accused of sexually assaulting a schoolgirl shortly after arriving in the UK. The incident

intensified fears and fuelled tensions, with police warning of potential unrest during the summer months.

While Epping Council has since voted unanimously to request the closure of the facility, Treasury Minister James Murray declined to address the situation directly when questioned by Sky News. “I’m not going to comment on specific cases, but I do understand people’s frustration... and whilst there can never be any place for criminal violence, there’s absolutely a right for people to protest about this,” he said.

In the meantime, the Home Office continues to seek medium-sized accommodation sites, including disused student halls and older tower blocks, as part of its effort to relocate asylum seekers more broadly across the UK. But in towns like Waterlooville, where local sentiment runs high and transparency appears absent, such plans are unlikely to proceed without resistance.