

Here is an update on Standish's Kilhey Court by our Standish councillors. Our councillors - one Conservative and two Labour - have come together to issue a statement about the situation, with asylum seekers now being housed in the former hotel.

Councillor Ray Whittingham, Councillor Debbie Parkinson and Councillor Terry Mugan have been working together and individually - and with Wigan Council - to try to persuade the Home Office and Macdonald hotels to overturn the wrongheaded decision to use the historic building for this purpose.

Please be aware of blatant lies circulating in the village about Kilhey Court, untruths put about by people with self-serving and political agendas, offering easy answers and untested, inexperienced solutions.

Here is the statement from our councillors...

"All Standish councillors have been working hard over the last few weeks to overturn the decision to use Kilhey Court as a contingency hotel.

Our village, Standish, where all three of us have lived for 42, 47 and 70 years, is a welcoming place; we help others in times of need but Kilhey Court is a totally unsuitable location for housing asylum seekers.

This is a Home Office decision in conjunction with Macdonald Hotels and Serco.

We object on the grounds that the hotel is inappropriate based on our concerns around safety of this location, proximity to the existing Britannia Hotel. Extracts of Wigan Council's letter to the Home Office, August 17, 2023

We are using the most appropriate channels to object including writing directly to the Home Office, and using the multi agency meetings via the Council and Full Council. All Standish Councillors, along with those from Aspull have attended meetings with Council Officers and the Police for many weeks, sometimes twice per week since the Home Office made the decision that Kilhey Court was to be used as contingency accommodation.

Home Office rules prevent local councillors sitting in the meetings with Serco etc.

We expressed to the council that we fully support the efforts our authority is doing to get the decision overturned and made direct representations and objections ourselves to those involved.

Independently, Standish Councillors wrote to the Home Office expressing objections, concerns and why this hotel is completely inappropriate to be used as contingency accommodation and Councillor Parkinson and Councillor Mugan also had communications with Directors at MacDonald Hotels, the owners of Kilhey Court, the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary. The responses, where received, have been less than satisfactory.

We are trying all avenues to persuade the very people who are the only people who can reverse the Home Office decision.

Legal advice has been sought and the advice is that we would not win a legal injunction, and the cost to the taxpayer of such action would be very considerable. Only one such injunction has been successful.

Park Hall was reversed by the Government for criteria which no longer exists and in Bolton, that hotel could not be used for two purposes (it was already being used to house homeless in the town).

It has been mentioned that many "Staff have lost their jobs" but we have been informed by very trustworthy sources that all who wanted work have been offered work at other hospitality venues nearby. Also that no weddings or events have been cancelled by the hotel but guest accommodation has.

The majority of weddings have been moved by choice to Wrightington Country Club at the request of those involved. We thank our local hospitality venues for assisting residents with weddings and other events and indeed staff with jobs, our community pulls together when needed.

Facts:

- Residents at the hotel do not have access to leisure facilities – the pool was drained the day after Serco announced the decision
- Local GPs are not used or affected, medical services are provided from elsewhere
- Hotel food is not given, all kitchens were closed and meals are brought in daily by Serco
- Asylum seekers accommodated in contingency hotels, receive bed and board and £9.58 per week. They are not entitled to benefits and are not allowed to work until their case is heard.

Also see the FAQs from the Council:

<https://www.wigan.gov.uk/.../FAQ-People-seeking-asylum.aspx>

And other information...

<https://www.wigan.gov.uk/.../Statement-August-18-2023.aspx>