# Cisswood House Hotel’s transformation into migrant accommodation divides West Sussex village



The Cisswood House Hotel, a landmark establishment in the small village of Lower Beeding, West Sussex, has found itself at the heart of a contentious local debate as it now serves as temporary accommodation for around 160 asylum-seeking migrants. Built in 1928 for Sir Woodman Burbidge, the chairman of Harrods, the hotel once welcomed wedding parties and weekend tourists, offering guests access to its well-maintained grounds and leisure facilities. However, since ceasing operations in early 2022 due to the financial impacts of the pandemic, it has transformed into a hostel, raising concerns among some residents about its implications for the tight-knit community.

While many villagers express sympathy towards the asylum seekers, over half of whom are children, there is a palpable divide in opinion about the change in the hotel's function and the challenges it brings. Some residents describe their experiences since the migrants arrived in March 2023 as a 'nightmare,' citing increased noise levels from children using the car park as a playground, along with issues of littering and trespassing. A project manager living nearby lamented the disruption, noting that the once-peaceful area has seen a spike in disturbances late into the night, disrupting families as children wrestle with the noise from football matches outside.

Amidst these complaints, there are voices of support that remind those who are critical of the migrants to acknowledge their plight. One local expressed understanding for the migrants' circumstances, stating, “They are just looking for a safe place,” reflecting a compassionate viewpoint that resonates with several community members. This sentiment aligns with statements from the Home Office, which maintains that such accommodations are meant to provide immediate, albeit temporary, shelter for those fleeing conflict and persecution, although this assertion does little to quell local unease.

Those opposed to the new arrangement voice concerns about broader implications, including declining property values. Reports have surfaced suggesting that some local homes have struggled to sell, as prospective buyers are deterred by the perceived instability and influx of new residents. With estimates indicating a staggering increase in government expenditure on asylum accommodations—from £4.5 billion to an estimated £15.3 billion over the decade—residents worry about the sustainability of local resources.

Furthermore, the former hotel features poorly maintained facilities, with reports of overgrown gardens and inadequate security. One homeowner noted that his once-thriving health spa has suffered due to the migration of his clients away from the area, echoing the frustration felt by local businesses that once benefitted from the patronage of hotel guests. Discontent has reached a point where some residents have taken matters into their own hands by putting up restrictive signage and investing in security measures for their properties to keep the new influx at bay.

Yet beneath the surface of this discord lies a community struggling with the realities of change. The local parish council confirms that the transition of Cisswood House into a refuge for asylum seekers has indeed been a surprise for many, highlighting a significant lack of public communication prior to the migrants' arrival. As discussions unfold, it remains to be seen how this sudden shift in purpose for a beloved local landmark will ultimately reshape the village's identity and community dynamics.

As the national conversation around asylum policies continues to evolve, the feelings of both compassion for the asylum seekers and frustration among local residents signal a complex challenge that encapsulates the broader issues of immigration and community integration in contemporary Britain. Balancing empathy and self-interest in a community does not often result in simple solutions, and Lower Beeding is now emblematic of this delicate negotiation.

### Reference Map

* Paragraph 1: [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14694779/100-year-old-hotel-Sussex-village-house-migrants.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/news/people/decision-to-house-refugees-at-historic-horsham-hotel-divides-opinions-4082382), [[4]](https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/business/consumer/sussex-hotel-announces-sudden-closure-3524321)
* Paragraph 2: [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14694779/100-year-old-hotel-Sussex-village-house-migrants.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/news/people/decision-to-house-refugees-at-historic-horsham-hotel-divides-opinions-4082382), [[3]](https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/news/people/hotel-near-horsham-procured-by-the-government-to-house-asylum-seekers-4080725)
* Paragraph 3: [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14694779/100-year-old-hotel-Sussex-village-house-migrants.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/news/people/hotel-near-horsham-procured-by-the-government-to-house-asylum-seekers-4080725)
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* Paragraph 6: [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14694779/100-year-old-hotel-Sussex-village-house-migrants.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/news/people/decision-to-house-refugees-at-historic-horsham-hotel-divides-opinions-4082382), [[3]](https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/news/people/hotel-near-horsham-procured-by-the-government-to-house-asylum-seekers-4080725)
* Paragraph 7: [[5]](https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/business/consumer/what-is-the-future-of-cisswood-house-hotel-this-is-what-we-know-3526073), [[6]](https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/business/consumer/hotel-near-horsham-once-earmarked-for-redevelopment-announces-it-will-not-reopen-this-month-2902057), [[7]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/jun/23/asylum-seekers-with-disabilities-abandoned-in-former-essex-care-home)

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## Bibliography

* <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14694779/100-year-old-hotel-Sussex-village-house-migrants.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/news/people/decision-to-house-refugees-at-historic-horsham-hotel-divides-opinions-4082382> - An article from the Sussex Express discusses the community's divided opinions on housing asylum seekers at the historic Cisswood House Hotel in Lower Beeding. The hotel, built in 1928 for the chairman of Harrods, ceased trading in January 2022 and was later procured by the Home Office to house refugee families. Local residents have expressed mixed feelings, with some viewing it as a disgrace and others as a sensible use of the property. The Lower Beeding Parish Council confirmed the hotel's new role as a refuge for asylum seekers, with families being moved from accommodation in Tower Hamlets, London. The Home Office stated that the use of hotels is only acceptable as a short-term contingency measure. ([sussexexpress.co.uk](https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/news/people/decision-to-house-refugees-at-historic-horsham-hotel-divides-opinions-4082382?utm_source=openai))
* <https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/news/people/hotel-near-horsham-procured-by-the-government-to-house-asylum-seekers-4080725> - This Sussex Express article reports on the Cisswood House Hotel in Lower Beeding being used by the government to house asylum seekers. The hotel, which closed to the public in January 2022, was procured by the Home Office to accommodate refugee families. The Lower Beeding Parish Council confirmed the hotel's new role, with families being moved from accommodation in Tower Hamlets, London. The Home Office emphasized that the use of hotels is only acceptable as a short-term contingency measure. ([sussexexpress.co.uk](https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/news/people/hotel-near-horsham-procured-by-the-government-to-house-asylum-seekers-4080725?utm_source=openai))
* <https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/business/consumer/sussex-hotel-announces-sudden-closure-3524321> - An article from the Sussex Express reports on the sudden closure of the Cisswood House Hotel in Lower Beeding. The hotel's managing company, Royel Hotels, announced it was ceasing trading and taking steps to place the company into creditors' voluntary liquidation. The closure was attributed to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the uncertainty surrounding the Omicron outbreak. The hotel, originally built in 1928 for the chairman of Harrods, had been a popular venue for weddings and events. ([sussexexpress.co.uk](https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/business/consumer/sussex-hotel-announces-sudden-closure-3524321?utm_source=openai))
* <https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/business/consumer/what-is-the-future-of-cisswood-house-hotel-this-is-what-we-know-3526073> - This Sussex Express article explores the future of the Cisswood House Hotel following its sudden closure in January 2022. The hotel had previously sought planning permission for redevelopment, including proposals to demolish the hotel and build flats, but these applications were turned down by Horsham District Council. The article reflects on the community's fond memories of the hotel and the uncertainty surrounding its future. ([sussexexpress.co.uk](https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/business/consumer/what-is-the-future-of-cisswood-house-hotel-this-is-what-we-know-3526073?utm_source=openai))
* <https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/business/consumer/hotel-near-horsham-once-earmarked-for-redevelopment-announces-it-will-not-reopen-this-month-2902057> - An article from the Sussex Express reports that the Cisswood House Hotel in Lower Beeding, once earmarked for redevelopment, announced it would not reopen as planned. The decision was made after careful consideration of government reopening guidelines and discussions within the team. The hotel had previously sought planning permission for redevelopment, including proposals to demolish the hotel and build flats, but these applications were turned down by Horsham District Council. ([sussexexpress.co.uk](https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/business/consumer/hotel-near-horsham-once-earmarked-for-redevelpment-announces-it-will-not-reopen-this-month-2902057?utm_source=openai))
* <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/jun/23/asylum-seekers-with-disabilities-abandoned-in-former-essex-care-home> - A Guardian article reports on the Home Office being accused of abandoning 55 asylum seekers with severe disabilities and life-limiting conditions at a former care home in Essex. The asylum seekers, who fled various conflict zones, are struggling with health conditions and have been placed in the former care home without trained care workers or nurses. The article highlights concerns about the suitability of the accommodation and the lack of support for vulnerable individuals. ([theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/jun/23/asylum-seekers-with-disabilities-abandoned-in-former-essex-care-home?utm_source=openai))