# Man from Gatwick asylum hotel charged over alleged string of sexual assaults in west Surrey



A 26‑year‑old man living at a hotel being used for asylum accommodation near Gatwick has been charged with sexually assaulting three women in west Surrey over a three‑week period. According to the original report, Qais Al‑Aswad, who lives at the Four Points by Sheraton on Brighton Road in Horley, has pleaded not guilty and is due to stand trial on 20 August. The defendant has been remanded in custody at HMP Wandsworth and his legal team has asked for time to apply for Legal Aid; the court was told he will require an Arabic interpreter. The report added that he was not produced in court on the day because HMP Wandsworth experienced a power outage.

The Four Points by Sheraton is a four‑star hotel on the River Mole a few kilometres north of Gatwick, with around 110 rooms and leisure facilities; it is currently being used to house people seeking asylum. The conversion of hotels into temporary accommodation has been one element of the Home Office’s response to recent increases in asylum applications, a measure that has prompted local concern and national debate about safeguarding, support and the pressures on councils and the hostel system.

The charges come against a backdrop of heightened tensions at other hotels housing asylum seekers, where local protests have repeatedly attracted police attention. Police forces and local authorities have repeatedly stressed their dual aim of facilitating lawful protest while protecting residents and staff. In Essex, the force has published an operational update setting out how it used public‑order powers, made arrests and sought to balance the right to protest with the need to prevent disorder and protect vulnerable people. Independent reporting has warned that some demonstrations have been exploited by violent elements or far‑right groups, escalating previously peaceful gatherings.

Two incidents at The Bell Hotel in Epping have become focal points in the wider debate. One man staying at the hotel has been charged with several alleged sexual offences said to have occurred in early July; another resident, a Syrian national, has been charged with multiple counts including common assault, assault by beating and an alleged sexual assault on a man. Local and national reporting has linked those prosecutions to a series of demonstrations that prompted substantial policing operations in the town. Essex Police say they will deal robustly with criminal behaviour while facilitating lawful assemblies.

Similar problems have been reported elsewhere. In Canary Wharf, an incident close to the Britannia International Hotel — which Tower Hamlets Council confirmed had been handed to the Home Office for use as temporary accommodation — led to a policing response after a man was alleged to have entered a woman’s property. The Metropolitan Police told reporters their initial investigation had not identified offences in that particular case, and the council has said it is working with the Home Office to ensure safeguarding and support arrangements are in place for residents and the surrounding community.

The cluster of cases has revived questions about policing, local resilience and prison infrastructure. Essex Police and other forces have emphasised the scale and complexity of operations required when demonstrations around asylum accommodation turn violent, while the Ministry of Justice has recently announced an urgent package of measures for HMP Wandsworth to tackle longstanding infrastructure failings — including funding, staff and repairs — after inspectors reported serious problems with the prison’s condition. Those systemic pressures were cited in court reporting after the prison’s power problems prevented the defendant’s attendance.

The allegations against Al‑Aswad are subject to criminal process and he remains presumed innocent until proven guilty. Police and local authorities continue to say they will support victims, pursue investigations and maintain public order, while urging that protests remain peaceful and lawful as court proceedings are prepared to begin next month.

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## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15000391/Migrant-hotel-resident-attacked-women.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[7]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/lord-chancellor-orders-urgent-action-to-improve-hmp-wandsworth)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15000391/Migrant-hotel-resident-attacked-women.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.essex.police.uk/news/essex/news/news/2025/july/epping-update-on-response-to-incidents), [[4]](https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/home-news/essex-migrant-hotel-protest-epping-far-right-why-b2792740.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15000391/Migrant-hotel-resident-attacked-women.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/migrant-charged-assaulting-man-epping-b1242795.html), [[2]](https://www.essex.police.uk/news/essex/news/news/2025/july/epping-update-on-response-to-incidents)
* Paragraph 5 – [[6]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/police-metropolitan-police-marsh-wall-london-canary-wharf-b1242873.html), [[5]](https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/News_events/2025/July/Statement-from-Tower-Hamlets-Council-on-Britannia-Hotel.aspx), [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15000391/Migrant-hotel-resident-attacked-women.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 6 – [[7]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/lord-chancellor-orders-urgent-action-to-improve-hmp-wandsworth), [[2]](https://www.essex.police.uk/news/essex/news/news/2025/july/epping-update-on-response-to-incidents), [[4]](https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/home-news/essex-migrant-hotel-protest-epping-far-right-why-b2792740.html)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15000391/Migrant-hotel-resident-attacked-women.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.essex.police.uk/news/essex/news/news/2025/july/epping-update-on-response-to-incidents)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-15000391/Migrant-hotel-resident-attacked-women.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.essex.police.uk/news/essex/news/news/2025/july/epping-update-on-response-to-incidents> - This Essex Police web update provides an official timeline and operational summary of policing in Epping after a series of disturbances around The Bell Hotel. It details arrests and charges connected to protests and disorder, the use of Section 14 and other public order powers to manage assemblies, and the force’s approach to facilitating lawful protest while protecting the local community and hotel residents. The page lists named charges, numbers of arrests and court outcomes to date, and quotes senior officers stressing the need for peaceful protest and warning that criminal behaviour will be dealt with robustly.
3. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/migrant-charged-assaulting-man-epping-b1242795.html> - This Evening Standard report covers the case of Mohammed Sharwarq, a Syrian national alleged to have committed multiple offences while residing at The Bell Hotel in Epping. It summarises the charges he faces — including counts of common assault, assault by beating and a sexual assault on a man — and places the alleged offending in the context of recent unrest around the hotel. The article explains how this prosecution followed earlier allegations against another resident and notes the wider local tension and repeated protests outside the hotel, which have attracted significant police attention.
4. <https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/home-news/essex-migrant-hotel-protest-epping-far-right-why-b2792740.html> - The Independent provides a comprehensive account of the protests that erupted outside the Bell Hotel in Epping, triggered by allegations against an asylum seeker. The piece describes how initially peaceful gatherings escalated on multiple dates, with bottles and flares thrown, injuries to officers and hotel staff, and significant police deployments. It explains the timeline of the alleged sexual offences that precipitated the demonstrations, quotes senior police condemning violent elements and warns of far‑right groups seeking to exploit local anger. The article also outlines arrests, charges and local council calls for action over hotel use.
5. <https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/News_events/2025/July/Statement-from-Tower-Hamlets-Council-on-Britannia-Hotel.aspx> - This page publishes the official statement from Tower Hamlets Council regarding the Britannia International Hotel in Canary Wharf being used to provide temporary accommodation for asylum seekers. The council confirms awareness of the Government’s decision and emphasises the need for the Home Office to put in place a full package of safeguarding and support measures for people staying there. It says the council is working with the Home Office and partners to ensure safety arrangements and appropriate protections are in place for both residents and the surrounding community during the period the hotel is used for temporary housing.
6. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/police-metropolitan-police-marsh-wall-london-canary-wharf-b1242873.html> - This Evening Standard article reports on an incident near the Britannia International Hotel in Canary Wharf in which a man allegedly entered a woman’s property and was followed by a crowd. It quotes the Metropolitan Police saying the man had not been charged because the initial investigation had not identified any offences. The story also covers related arrests at the scene for breaching a dispersal order and for suspected assault on emergency workers, and it explains the complex policing operation around demonstrations outside the hotel that was being used to house asylum seekers.
7. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/lord-chancellor-orders-urgent-action-to-improve-hmp-wandsworth> - This official GOV.UK press release sets out government action following a damning inspection of HMP Wandsworth. Published by the Ministry of Justice, it details an urgent package — including redirected funding, extra staff and security measures — to address serious failings identified by His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons. The release describes overcrowding, infrastructure problems, heating and water failures reported in inspections, and lists steps being taken to repair windows, refurbish showers, improve fire safety and strengthen leadership and specialist teams charged with restoring safety and decent conditions at the prison.