# Councils use High Court injunctions to curb long‑term use of hotels for asylum seekers



The High Court injunction secured by Epping Forest District Council over The Bell Hotel has become a touchstone in a growing confrontation over where and how asylum seekers are housed. The arrangement in Essex forced a pause on using the site for new arrivals with a deadline to vacate by 12 September, underscoring the government’s insistence that hotels are a temporary solution rather than long-term housing. In parallel, Ipswich Borough Council won an interim High Court injunction in October 2022 aimed at preventing the government from turning a town centre hotel into a hostel for asylum seekers, with the order set to last until a further hearing on 7 November. Speaking for Ipswich, David Ellesmere, the Labour leader, said the move demonstrated that other areas were not bearing their fair share, and the case has been cited in ongoing discussions about sharing the burden and the authorities’ planning powers. | According to the BBC report, the Ipswich injunction was framed as part of a broader effort to block further expansion of hotel use for asylum accommodation. ([bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-suffolk-63419279?utm_source=chatgpt.com))

The row over planning rules and what they should achieve has become a feature of local politics in areas with large asylum-housing needs. In Diss, South Norfolk’s Conservative leader Daniel Elmer argued that planning rules are being used to prioritise families over single adult males, effectively turning hotels into hostels only if a formal change of use is approved. He told the press that the community’s integration objectives would be undermined by replacing families with other groups in local hotels, and that, in his view, such a shift would require planning consent. The same coverage notes that other Conservative-leaning authorities, including Broxbourne District Council, have signalled an interest in pursuing similar legal routes following the Epping ruling, while government responses have emphasised dialogue with local areas and mitigation measures. In the national context, the Home Office is faced with tens of thousands of asylum seekers housed in hotels nationwide – a figure that has hovered in the tens of thousands and is cited in discussions about capacity and community cohesion. ([standard.co.uk](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/councils-shut-down-migrant-hotels-after-epping-court-injunction-b1243676.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com))

In the wake of these tactics, city councils have shown mixed approaches. Peterborough City Council, for example, withdrew its High Court injunction in 2022, opting to rely on planning enforcement to oppose the change of use, while arguing that hotels do not provide a long‑term solution, a line the Home Office has echoed. The broader Legal/Planning debate continues to frame how authorities respond to new arrivals, with coverage in Sky News emphasising the potential precedent of Epping’s injunction for other councils and detailing arguments on the harms and administrative burdens of moving asylum seekers quickly. The Home Office maintains that while hotels are not a durable solution, they are a necessary mechanism to meet immediate obligations, and it remains committed to working with local authorities to restore balance as pressures persist. ([bbc.co.uk](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cambridgeshire-63726585?utm_source=chatgpt.com), [news.sky.com](https://news.sky.com/story/asylum-seekers-face-being-removed-from-epping-hotel-after-council-granted-high-court-injunction-13414157?utm_source=chatgpt.com))

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/councils-shut-down-migrant-hotels-after-epping-court-injunction-b1243676.html), [[4]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-suffolk-63419279)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/councils-shut-down-migrant-hotels-after-epping-court-injunction-b1243676.html), [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/councils-shut-down-migrant-hotels-after-epping-court-injunction-b1243676.html), [[5]](https://feeds.bbci.co.uk/news/articles/cp3l08xyvn8o)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cambridgeshire-63726585), [[6]](https://news.sky.com/story/asylum-seekers-face-being-removed-from-epping-hotel-after-council-granted-high-court-injunction-13414157)

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/councils-shut-down-migrant-hotels-after-epping-court-injunction-b1243676.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/councils-shut-down-migrant-hotels-after-epping-court-injunction-b1243676.html> - Conservative-led councils are racing to emulate Epping Forest District Council's High Court injunction blocking asylum seekers from being housed in The Bell Hotel in Essex. The piece notes that South Norfolk's Conservative leader Daniel Elmer argued planning rules are being used to prioritise families over single adult males, and that converting hotels into hostels would require a change of use. It reports Broxbourne Council seeking urgent legal advice to follow Epping's lead, and mentions government responses and ongoing protests. The article frames the issue as a wider political dispute about the accommodation of asylum seekers and the role of planning law.
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cambridgeshire-63726585> - BBC News reports that Peterborough City Council withdrew its High Court injunction to stop migrants being housed in a city centre hotel, stating the move may not succeed and that it would instead enforce planning rules to oppose the change of use. The council's Conservative leader Wayne Fitzgerald emphasises the decision came after assessing costs and likelihood of success. The Home Office argued hotels are not a long‑term solution, while the council argued the use would breach planning conditions if continued as a hotel. The development highlights tensions around asylum accommodation, funding pressures, and local authority tools to manage arrivals.
4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-suffolk-63419279> - Ipswich Borough Council obtained an interim High Court injunction to halt plans to house more asylum seekers in the town centre Novotel hotel, arguing the move would place an unsustainable burden on local services and harm tourism. The order blocks uses at other hotels pending a further hearing on November 7. David Ellesmere, Ipswich's Labour council leader, says other areas are not sharing the burden, while Ipswich MP Tom Hunt welcomes the injunction but notes its temporary nature. The Home Office states it is working with authorities to find appropriate accommodation and end hotel use across the country where needed.
5. <https://feeds.bbci.co.uk/news/articles/cp3l08xyvn8o> - South Norfolk Council urged the Home Office to halt plans to replace asylum-seeking families in a Diss hotel with single adult men. Daniel Elmer, the council's Conservative leader, warned the change would harm the community and its efforts to integrate families. The Home Office responded that it would listen to local concerns and work on mitigating measures. The article notes that the hotel has served as accommodation and highlights tensions around community cohesion. It also references the broader national context, with about 32,000 asylum seekers living in hotels across the UK.
6. <https://news.sky.com/story/asylum-seekers-face-being-removed-from-epping-hotel-after-council-granted-high-court-injunction-13414157> - Asylum seekers face removal from The Bell Hotel in Epping after Epping Forest District Council secured a temporary High Court injunction. The ruling extends the deadline to remove migrants to 12 September, giving the Home Office and hotel owners time to appeal. Sky News details the arguments over planning compliance, with hotel operators claiming the injunction could hinder broader asylum policies, while the council argues the site breaches planning use. Barrister remarks mention harm to asylum seekers and safety concerns. The story notes prior protests, and confirms the Home Office's duty to provide accommodation remains contested in the current housing context.
7. <https://www.itv.com/news/2025-08-19/could-the-epping-asylum-hotel-injunction-set-a-precedent-for-other-councils> - ITV News reports on Epping's High Court injunction potentially setting a template for other councils seeking to challenge asylum hotels. The piece quotes Reform UK supporters and Conservative figures, noting that 12 councils with Reform majorities are considering legal action and that politicians see the decision as validating community concerns. It references Nigel Farage's praise and the Home Office's response, including assurances about managing the asylum housing system and continuing to close hotels. The report frames the case as part of a broader political fight over immigration policy, with local governments weighing legal routes against planning tools in run‑up elections.