

The Highland Council

Agenda Item	<b>3</b>
Report No	<b>HC/37/25</b>

**Committee:** Highland Council

**Date:** 6 November 2025

**Report Title:** Home Office Plan to Accommodate Asylum Seekers at Cameron Barracks

**Report By:** Chief Executive

**1 Purpose/Executive Summary**

- 1.1 On **10 October 2025**, the Council was given verbal notification by Home Office officials of their intention to accommodate circa 300 adult male asylum seekers at Cameron Barracks in Inverness. This was done on a confidential basis, with clear instructions that this was not to be shared. By **13 October**, the Leader, Convener and Leader of the Opposition were briefed, in confidence, regarding what was known. As there was little detail provided, Highland Council officers asked Home Office colleagues to provide this in writing as soon as possible.
- 1.2 Due to the fact that this information did not come quickly, the Leader of the Council wrote to the Home Secretary, Shabanna Mahmood on **22 October** to express concerns about the proposals. This letter is provided in **Appendix 2**.
- 1.3 The Home Office provided written confirmation of their intentions on Monday **27 October** to Council officials. It was in this communication that Highland Council officers learned that the Council was not a delivery partner for this programme.
- 1.4 The information was provided on a confidential basis, with officers asked not to circulate. However, that same evening information regarding the use of Cameron Barracks in Inverness and Crowborough Training Camp in East Sussex for up to 900 asylum seeking adult males was released to the press. It is not clear how or who released this to the media, although Home Office officials have indicated that it was not from their office.
- 1.5 Most recently, on 3 November, the Home Office informed the Council that FAQs had been published and these are available at this link: [Cameron Barracks, Inverness: factsheet - GOV.UK](#).

- 1.6 At the point of writing, there remains a lack of detail as regards what the Home Office proposals will mean, with key questions outstanding in relation to the specifics around implementation, community safeguarding and impact on local services.
- 1.7 Whilst Highland has always been, and will continue to be, a welcoming place for those seeking a safe place to live, the Home Office proposals are unlike any previous resettlement schemes experienced here and present new and complex challenges.
- 1.8 The purpose of this report is to support a Council discussion on the Home Office proposals. Members are invited to consider the potential community impact of the proposals and the Council's limited role in this matter.

## 2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:-
- i. **Note** the Home Office intention to use Cameron Barracks for temporary accommodation for asylum seekers;
  - ii. **Note** that the Council has a limited role and powers in regard to the proposals;
  - iii. **Note** that the Council has an obligation to work with other public partners and agencies to minimise community concerns and the risk to community cohesion;
  - iv. **Note** that the Council Leader has raised concerns about the scale of the proposals and in the location identified in his letter to the Home Secretary; and,
  - v. **Approve** that the Council Leader, Convener and Leader of the Opposition write to the Home Secretary seeking urgent clarity on the precise detail of the implementation plan for this proposed scheme, including relevant impact assessments undertaken.

## 3 Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** – At this stage there are no known resource implications directly for the Council. Service provision will be developed, directed and managed by the Home Office. The Council has not been requested to support or provide any service delivery. At this stage it is unclear the extent to which there may be resourcing requirements relating to Adult Social Care, Mental Health Officers and Justice Social Work.

Information confirmed in the official notification has stated that asylum decisions will not be processed on site at Cameron Barracks and that the asylum seekers will be moved to dispersed accommodation in the private rented sector around the UK before asylum outcomes are serviced. It is therefore not anticipated that the proposal will have any implications necessarily on housing and homeless services in Highland at this time.

Since the announcement, significant officer time has been spent answering queries and concerns.

3.2 **Legal** – The proposal raises a number of potential legal issues. The Council has sought initial legal advice on these issues recognising that there is limited information available to the Council. The advice to date has not identified any immediate or obvious grounds to allow the Council to challenge the proposal.

- i. There is a complex and detailed legal framework regulating the administration of asylum in the United Kingdom. The United Nations 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees ( the 'Refugee Convention') is the founding document. Signatories to the Refugee Convention agreed not to return refugees to their countries of nationality or to other countries where they might also be persecuted. The primacy of the Refugee Convention has been enshrined into UK domestic law. In 1988 in the case of R v Secretary of State for the Home Department, ex parte Sivakumaran it was recognised by the House of Lords that the provisions of the Convention had for all intents and practical purposes been incorporated into United Kingdom law.

A number of UK Parliamentary statutes have been enacted and may need to be referred to such as the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993, the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 and the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002. Further the statutory provisions have themselves been the subject of a number of decisions in this contentious area when UK courts have considered the interaction between for example proposals/schemes and the governing legislation/Convention.

An 'asylum seeker' or an 'asylum applicant' is someone who has applied to stay in the UK as a 'refugee'. The Refugee Convention sets out detail of who may be considered a 'refugee'. The individual in making an application for asylum is making a request to be recognised as a 'refugee' under the Refugee Convention.

The Refugee Convention defines a 'refugee' as:

"A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it"

It is important not to confuse the status of asylum seekers with that of refugees. The person making the claim will continue to be an 'asylum seeker' until such time as their application for asylum and any appeal against the refusal of their application for asylum has been decided.

An asylum application will succeed if their claim is accepted by the Secretary of State. In that event the asylum seeker is recognised as a 'refugee'. This will confer an immigration status on the individual which will permit them to access public funds and local authority services.

Asylum seekers who say they are destitute can apply to the Home Office for accommodation or a subsistence payment (typically both) while they are waiting for a decision on their asylum claim. This is commonly referred to as 'asylum support'. Asylum support is provided because asylum seekers are not eligible for mainstream benefits and not usually allowed to work.

- ii. Planning – The Home Office's use of military bases to house asylum seekers has previously been tested in the English courts. While Scotland has its own Town and Country Planning system there are similarities eg in the language used in Permitted Development descriptions and it appears likely that a Scottish Court would find the approach of the English courts persuasive. In England the Court found that the use of the Class Q Emergency Development powers was lawful. The Local Authorities questioned if this was an appropriate use of the permitted development rights. The Court concluded that it was on the basis that the Government cited "urgent operational need to create additional asylum accommodation" and it saw the use of Crown Estate assets, such as military bases, as a solution.

The Local Authorities in England also failed in an attempt to judicially review the decision of the UK Government on the basis that the Secretary of State had misinterpreted the definition of "emergency" in the context of the planning legislation. Class Q is the English equivalent of the Scottish Class 91 permitted development rights. The Class 91 permitted development rights would cease after 6 months unless planning permission had been obtained to permit the development beyond the 6 month emergency period. If no such permission has been obtained there would be a breach.

However, the Planning Authority's enforcement powers are restricted when it comes to Crown land such as the Cameron Barracks. The Act prohibits the Planning Authority from taking any steps with regard to enforcement – that includes entering land, initiating proceedings, or making application. The Planning Authority may serve a notice and make an order (which is not a Court order). This would include a Stop Notice. In the event that the Planning Authority issued a Stop Notice and the Crown did not comply, the Planning Authority would need the consent of the Crown to pursue any action against it in Court.

- iii. Short Term Let – The Cameron Barracks are likely to be considered or deemed to be the principal or only home of those asylum seekers accommodated there and would not therefore be subject to short term let licensing regime.

3.3 **Risk** – Potential risks are detailed at section 7.

3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** – In line with Council policy and the [Roads \(Scotland\) Act 1984](#) - where it is illegal to hang anything from a lamp post without permission - staff have been instructed to remove any banners/flags/posters from lamp-posts. Staff will only proceed with this if it is safe to do so.

3.5 **Gaelic** – There are no Gaelic implications arising from this report.

## 4 Impacts

4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children’s Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

4.3.1 This is not a Highland Council proposal and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

**It should be noted that the Home Office was asked for a copy of their assessment on 27 October 2025. Up to this point, this has not been provided.**

## 5 Background and context

5.1 The Highlands has a strong track record in supporting refugee and displaced people fleeing war and persecution within their own countries. People come to the UK under a range of circumstances, and it is important to understand the distinction between these:

1. **Refugee** – a person who has fled their own country because they are at risk of serious human rights violations and persecution. Refugees have a legal right to remain in a country. Resettlement schemes support refugees who have the right to remain, settle within communities across the country.
2. **Asylum Seeker** – a person who has left their country and is seeking protection from persecution and serious human right violations but who hasn’t been legally recognised as a refugee and is waiting to receive a decision on their

asylum claim. Until they get a decision as to whether they will be granted refugee status and temporary leave to remain, they are known as an asylum seeker. The [Immigration and Asylum Act 1999](#) established a national policy to disperse those seeking asylum across the UK. **Appendix 4** provides some summary information on asylum arrangements in the UK.

3. **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)** - asylum seekers who are under the age of 18 without parents or guardians. They are automatically granted the status of 'looked after' and come under the care of the Local Authority.

## 5.2 **Refugee Resettlement**

Over the last 10 years, the Council, partners and communities have supported three resettlement schemes: Syrian Resettlement, Afghan Resettlement and Ukrainian Resettlement. The Council and partners have all had direct involvement in supporting the displaced persons from these schemes and re-housing a number who have chosen to make their homes in Highland. Many of the individuals and families who have chosen to stay in Highland have been able to find employment, their children are attending school and a common characteristic has been the desire of the families to make a significant contribution to their local communities.

## 5.3 **Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children**

Children's Services continue to follow legislation around the support of Unaccompanied Asylum-seeking Children (UASC) with a quota of support for 42 young people currently in council housing. This is fully-funded by the Home Office.

Since January 2022, Highland Council have supported asylum seeking children through the Home Office mandated National Transfer scheme. Through partnership working with the third sector, the Comraich service was developed (December 2022) and has supported 65 young people, aged 16 and over, as October 2025.

## 5.4 **Adult Asylum Seekers**

There are currently no adult asylum seekers housed in Highland by the Home Office or have been over the past 5 years. There may be asylum seekers living in Highland that the Council or Home Office are unaware of.

Over the last 3 years, the Home Office has been involved in a number of accommodation projects across Scotland. In recent months, this has included a number of hotel-based accommodation options outwith Glasgow which historically has accommodated the vast majority of asylum seekers in Scotland. The UK Government has made a number of recent announcements to confirm their intention to move away from hotel-based accommodation towards alternative accommodation options.

## 6. Home Office Proposal for use of Cameron Barracks for asylum accommodation

- 6.1 On 10 October 2025, Council officers were verbally briefed on a confidential basis by Home Office officials on the intention to use Cameron Barracks in Inverness to house circa 300 male asylum seekers. A map of the Barracks can be found at **Appendix 5**. The proposal is to use the premises for 12 months, after which time it would revert to an Army training base. It is anticipated this would commence from the second week in December and individuals would arrive under a phased arrival plan of approximately 60 people per week.
- 6.2 Police and NHS partners were briefed separately around the same time also on a confidential basis. A timeline outlining the communication received is detailed in **Appendix 1**.
- 6.3 Highland Council's Chief Executive briefed the Council's Convener, Leader and Leader of the Opposition on the information that had been shared. The Council Leader has written directly to the Home Secretary regarding the proposals expressing concern about the scale and potential impact. A copy of this letter can be found at **Appendix 2**.
- 6.4 A weekly Operational meeting between Home Office Officials and local partners has been established and the first of these took place on Monday 27 October.
- 6.5 It was not until the afternoon of Monday 27 October 2025 that formal written notification was received by the Council. Press coverage about the intention to use Cameron Barracks, along with a similar provision in Crowborough army training camp, East Sussex, was also issued on Monday 27 October. The Council and partners received no advance notification that this information was going to be released and it is not clear who released this with Home Office officials indicating this did not come from their office.
- 6.6 A summary of the proposals from the Home Office can be found in **Appendix 3**. The Home Office have also published an information factsheet and this can be found at the following link: [Cameron Barracks, Inverness: factsheet - GOV.UK](#). At the point of writing, there remains a lack of detail as regards what the Home Office proposals will mean, with key questions outstanding in relation to the specifics around implementation, community safeguarding and impact on local services. The efficacy of this particular site in terms of location for effective processing of applications is questionable. Council officers have continued to raise concerns at the scale of the proposal for the identified location at Cameron Barracks.
- 6.7 The role of the local authority is not yet clear. The Council have not been asked, nor has there been any indication given that we have a role in any service delivery. As noted at section 5, the Council does have significant experience in terms of previous resettlement programmes and strong partnership groups exist in Highland however, there has been no suggestion that the local authority has any role in enabling or supporting this. It should be noted that there is a clear distinction between

resettlement activities, involving education, employability, housing and integration, and the temporary asylum accommodation proposals for Cameron Barracks. It should also be noted that the remit of local authorities where there is asylum hotel accommodation has been similarly limited.

However, please see section 7 in terms of the Council's community leader role.

- 6.8 NHS Highland, Police Scotland and Scottish Fire and Rescue Service partners are all directly engaged with the Home Office to determine roles, responsibilities and expectation. It has been emphasised that additional resource must be provided in order to mitigate any local impact and strongly suggested that services must be provided onsite in order to avoid displacement of the local population.

## 7. Risks and considerations

- 7.1 The following provides a summary of some of the known risks and wider considerations of the proposal.

### 7.2 *Community impact*

Highland Council politicians and officials have raised concerns regarding the scale of the proposal and the number of people to be accommodated within the setting and therefore the potential impact that may have on services and the surrounding area. This includes the proximity of schools and residential housing with access from the Barracks to the City Centre through this residential area. These issues, including access, have been raised with the Home Office.

The Home Office have emphasised that the intention is that the Barracks is self contained and that there will be a range of activities and services on site. Therefore, the Home Office is indicating that there should be limited impact on services within the local community. With activities, including education, social and religious observance, being provided on site, the Home Office's intention is to limit any impact upon Inverness City Centre and the local community in general. However, those located at the site will have freedom of movement.

The Council and partners will continue to press the Home Office for details of the facilities to be provided in order to mitigate community concern.

### 7.3 *Resourcing*

As noted at 7.2, concerns have been expressed regarding the impact on local services and resources. NHS colleagues are in direct discussion with the Home Office regarding the additional resources required to support the asylum seekers to ensure any impact on services is mitigated. At this stage it is unclear the extent to which there may be resourcing requirements relating to Adult Social Care, Mental Health Officers and Justice Social Work.

There also remains a concern that, should any of the asylum seekers accommodated indicate they are under 18, this could lead to pressure on children's services within the area, where the Local Authority has a duty to support and accommodate unaccompanied minors.

The Home Office has indicated that checks are likely to be undertaken prior to people being transferred to Inverness to ensure it is only over 25s who are accommodated at Cameron Barracks and therefore mitigating the impact on local services.

In addition, the Council has received confirmation that asylum seekers will not receive a decision from this location on their asylum applications. If granted refugee status, asylum seekers would be accommodated across the whole of the UK. Recent experience with the resettlement of Afghan Entitled People suggests that few asylum seekers would be matched to housing in the Highland area.

#### 7.4 ***Safeguarding***

Council Officers have reinforced with the importance of security and safeguarding in all meetings with the Home Office – both to ensure the safety and address concerns from the local population as well as security for those living at Cameron Barracks. See **appendix 3** for further details.

#### 7.5 ***Community cohesion and hate crime***

The experiences of other areas in the country who have housed asylum seekers have been well documented in the media. In many cases they have been the focus of protests, not always peaceful, and some a target for protestors (sometimes from outwith those areas) deliberately wishing to incite violence and hatred. In tandem, there has been a rise in misinformation put online but also disinformation and mal-information. Disinformation is described as false information shared with intent to deceive and mal-information as true information used maliciously. Reports have indicated that this has impacted on both asylum seeking and local populations including violent incidents, targeting those in asylum accommodation, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, resettled families and migrants more generally. For this reason initial briefings were confidential and the Council repeatedly requested confirmation in writing.

7.6 Concerns have been expressed at the scale of the proposals for Cameron Barracks and it is vital that the experiences of elsewhere are not repeated in Highland. As noted in section 5, Highland has a tradition of being a welcoming area, with a strong track record in supporting people who wish to resettle here and contribute to the local economy and society. It is important a distinction is made between concerns about the proposals and the individuals themselves. As a community leader, Highland Council has a critical role in this along with our partners, particularly Police Scotland.

**8. Next Steps**

- 8.1 It is proposed that the Council Leader, Convener and Leader of the Opposition write to the Home Secretary seeking urgent clarity on the precise detail of the implementation plan for this proposed scheme, including relevant impact assessments undertaken.
  
- 8.2 In addition, Council officers, along with our Community Planning Partners, will continue to engage with the Home Office to understand the proposals for Cameron Barracks and seek to find solutions to mitigate any local concerns regarding the proposals. Information is critical and the Council and partners will continue to press the Home Office for timeous and regular communication regarding the use of Cameron Barracks.

Designation: Chief Executive

Date:

Author:

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Home Office Engagement Timeline  
Appendix 2 – Letter Council Leader to Home Secretary  
Appendix 3 – Summary of Home Office Proposals  
Appendix 4 – Information on Asylum Dispersal  
Appendix 5 – Map of Cameron Barracks

## Home Office Engagement Timeline

Date	Communication
<b>9 October 2025, 11.40am</b>	<p>Invitation from Home Office to attend a meeting at 1.30pm that day, entitled: Alternative Asylum Accommodation Plans.</p> <p>Invitation was not seen until after the meeting had started.</p> <p>Invitees: Highland Council, NHS Highland, Police Scotland, Home Office.</p>
<b>9 October 4.30pm</b>	<p>NHSH officers provided update to CEX following the initial meeting.</p> <p>Emails sent between CEX office and Home Office to clarify that there had been no other communication in relation to this with the Council before this point – confirmed. New meeting set up for 10 October.</p>
<b>9 October 2025, pm</b>	<p>Initial call between CEX and Senior Home Office Official</p>
<b>10 October 2025, 10am</b>	<p>Rescheduled briefing. Attendees: CEX, ACE – People and Senior Home Office Official</p>
<b>13 October 2025</b>	<p>Convener, Leader and Leader of the Opposition briefed.</p>
<b>20 October 2025</b>	<p>Invite issued from Home Office to join a weekly operational working group.</p>
<b>23 October 2025</b>	<p>Leader of the Council wrote to Home Secretary regarding the proposals.</p>
<b>27 October 2025</b>	<p>Written confirmation received of the intention to accommodate asylum seekers at Cameron Barracks.</p>



The Rt Hon Shabana Mahmood MP Secretary of State for the Home Department  
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London  
SW1P 4DF  
United Kingdom

Foighnich airson/Please ask for: **Councillor Raymond Bremner**  
Àireamh fòn/Direct phone: (01463) 702856  
Ur n-Àireamh-iùil/Your ref:  
Ar n-Àireamh-iùil/Our ref: RB/GM

Ceann-latha/Date: 23 October 2025

Dear Home Secretary

### **Proposed use of Inverness Cameron Barracks for Male Asylum Seekers**

I understand that your officials in the Home Office are considering the possibility of using MOD premises, Cameron Barracks, in Inverness to accommodate 300 single male asylum seekers.

I must convey to you the very deep concern we have at the scale of this proposal and the detrimental impact this will have on community cohesion in Inverness, which is a small town of 50,000.

This will be exacerbated given the location. Unlike many other military establishments, Cameron Barracks is within a 15-minute walk of the centre of Inverness. A primary and secondary school are located close by, and the barracks are surrounded by residential properties.

While Inverness and the wider Highlands have supported three resettlement programmes in the past (Syrian 2015, Afghan 2021 and Ukrainian 2022), it has done so at a scale that was appropriate and manageable for the communities that were impacted.

The scale of this proposal is unprecedented and will cause real fear and alarm to the community in Inverness, particularly given the proximity of the barracks to residential areas and the married quarters of the resident army battalion.

**Councillor Raymond Bremner**  
Leader of The Highland Council

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I would therefore be most grateful if you would reconsider the scale of this proposal as a matter of urgency. To that end, my Chief Executive would be happy to speak directly with your officials if that would be helpful.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely / Leis gach deagh dhùrachd,

Councillor Raymond Bremner  
**Leader of The Highland Council**

An Comhairliche Raymond Bremner  
**Ceannard Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd**

c.c. The Rt Hon Douglas Alexander MP, Secretary of State for Scotland

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## Home Office Proposals for the use of Cameron Barracks

### ***1. What are the proposals?***

The Home Office has advised that approximately 300 asylum-seeking adult males will be accommodated at Cameron Barracks in Inverness. This is on the basis that the Barracks has 309 available bedspaces. The proposal is to utilise the premises for 12 months, after which time it would revert to an Army training base. It is anticipated this would commence from the second week in December and individuals would arrive under a phased arrival plan of approximately 60 people per week.

The Home Office have indicated that the proposal is part of the UK Government's commitment to closing all asylum hotels. Decisions on the use of alternative asylum accommodation sites are being made on a site-by-site basis.

### ***2. Who will be accommodated?***

It is not known who will be accommodated on site but that it will be single adult males. The asylum-seekers may already have been accommodated in hotels in the UK prior to their arrival to Cameron Barracks but this has yet to be confirmed. If the asylum-seekers have already been accommodated at an hotel in the UK, they may have already been through an NHS screening process, but this has yet to be confirmed.

### ***3. What will be provided?***

Asylum seekers are:

- Entitled to certain rights and support, such as **free access to the NHS and accommodation provided** by the Home Office on a no-choice basis.
- They are **not allowed to work** but are permitted to volunteer while their claim is being considered.
- Asylum seekers in catered accommodation get **£9.95 per week** loaded onto a pre-paid debit card and this is intended to cover essential living costs.

Partners have been advised that the intention is:

- The accommodation is designed to be a self-contained campus, with all services on site
- The accommodation would be on a shared basis and be fully catered, with all meals provided on site
- Indoor and outdoor recreation facilities will be provided on site
- Multi-faith spaces will be provided
- Welfare officers will be on site and safe-guarding protocols in place
- 24/7 security will be in place on site
- The individuals will not be detained and will be free to come and go

**4. Who will be running the accommodation?**

The Home Office will contract with a private sector supplier who will be responsible for running the accommodation. As of 3 November, the Home Office confirmed that a contract has yet to be signed and that no work has taken place on site. They will be responsible for sub-contracting with other providers to provide services e.g. translation/education/activities.

**5. Who is responsible for communications?**

The Home Office is responsible for all communications. It is essential that media communications are agreed with the Home Office to ensure that there is a balance between informing the local community and maintaining the security and privacy of the asylum seekers. A weekly operational meeting has been established with partners with the opportunity to raise issues or concerns as use of the site commences.

This section is taken from the Home Office FAQs.

**6. How will the Home office manage safeguarding?**

The Home Office have indicated that the following key steps that will be taken include:

- Asylum seekers will arrive at Cameron Barracks following initial screening checks and mandatory security checks are conducted on all asylum seekers by linking biometric data to immigration, security and criminality databases. This includes criminality checks against databases for, amongst other things, convictions, pending prosecutions, wanted or missing reports as well as fingerprints and photographs.
- Service users receive a briefing and orientation about the site and the local community, including sessions on anti-social behaviour and road safety.
- The safety and security of local communities around the site, the staff who work there and those accommodated on the site are of the utmost importance, with a specialist and experienced provider of security services permanently on site 24/7.
- The Home Office will work closely and routinely with Police Scotland Highlands Division to ensure appropriate security arrangements are in place for the safety and security of the asylum seekers and the wider community.
- If criminal activity occurs on site, the provider running the site will have robust processes in place to report incidents to the police. As part of their induction process, clear expectations are set out to asylum seekers staying at the site about their expected behaviour whilst on and off the site, and this induction process is continuously updated by the service provider to reflect any feedback received from the local community or other stakeholders on behavioural issues.

## Information on Asylum Seekers and Dispersal

### Who is an Asylum Seeker?

An Asylum Seeker is a person who comes to the UK and seeks protection from persecution and serious human rights violations. Until they get a decision as to whether they will be granted refugee status and temporary leave to remain, they are known as an asylum seeker. In the UK, this means they are allocated asylum housing (or hotel if housing is unavailable), with limited rights and access to services. Asylum seekers have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF). Asylum seekers in hotels receive a cash allowance of £9.95 per week from the UK Government.

### Asylum dispersal

The [Immigration and Asylum Act 1999](#) established a national policy to disperse those seeking asylum across the UK. Until 2022, Glasgow was the only dispersal area in Scotland, and it currently accounts for approximately 95% of asylum seekers in Scotland.

The mandating of asylum dispersal for both unaccompanied children and adults throughout the UK, has resulted in an increased number of asylum seekers accommodated in properties and hotels throughout the whole of the UK. Currently, 17 local authorities in Scotland have asylum seekers placed within their boundaries.

Asylum housing and support is private sector led and delivered via a government contract. The Home Office currently contracts a company called Mears to provide housing, care services and housing maintenance and for asylum seekers. Mears is required to make sure that asylum accommodation is:

- secure, habitable and fit for purpose
- meets contractual and regulatory standards

While councils across the UK have no powers or responsibility for asylum support, local authorities have worked with all partners to mitigate any negative impacts on communities and maximise strengths, goodwill and resilience.

Elsewhere in the UK, the Home Office currently provide funding of £750 per annum per asylum seeker place in hotel accommodation.

**Information on Asylum Seekers** (from the Refugee Council):

- There were 85,112 asylum applications (relating to 109,343 people) in the UK in the year to March 2025, a 15% increase from the previous 12 months.<sup>1</sup>
  - That is equivalent to around 16 people per 10,000 UK residents — or about 0.16% of the population.
  - At the end of June 2025, the [House of Commons library reported](#) that Scotland had 5883 people in asylum accommodation provided by the Home Office. This equates to 10.7 people per 10,000 population or 0.1% of Scotland's population.
- The top five countries of origin of people seeking asylum were Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Bangladesh and Syria<sup>2</sup>
- In terms of the number of asylum applications per head of population, the UK ranks 17th highest in Europe<sup>3</sup>
- 47% of initial decisions made in the twelve months to March 2025 were grants of protection, meaning they have been awarded refugee status or humanitarian protection<sup>4</sup>
- In the year ending March 2025, 45,084 people were granted refugee protection or other leave at initial decision following an asylum claim, 35% fewer than in the previous year.<sup>5</sup>
- The proportion of successful asylum appeals in 2024 was 48% (almost unchanged from the previous year). The appeal success rate has been steadily increasing over the last decade (up from 29% in 2010).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-march-2025/how-many-people-claim-asylum-in-the-uk>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-march-2025/how-many-people-claim-asylum-in-the-uk>

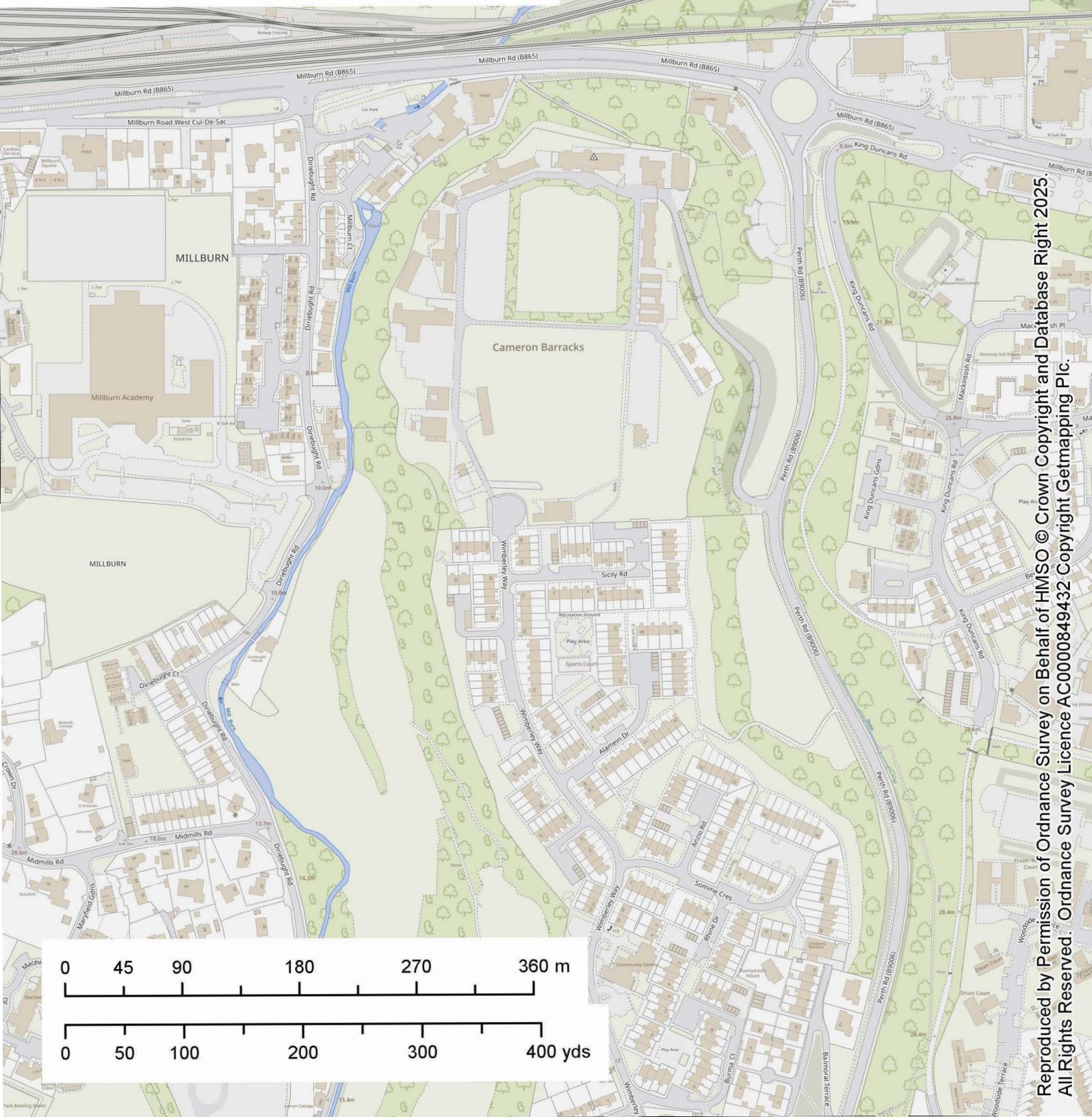
<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-march-2025/how-many-people-claim-asylum-in-the-uk>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-march-2025/summary-of-latest-statistics>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-march-2025/how-many-people-are-granted-asylum-in-the-uk>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-march-2025/how-many-people-are-granted-asylum-in-the-uk>

# APPENDIX 5 Cameron Barracks Inverness



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