



Home Office

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Mr Stewart Fraser
The Highland Council

DECS Reference: MIN/1434320/25
Your Reference: SF

3 March 2026

Dear Mr Fraser,

Thank you for your letter of 4 December setting out your view that the intended use of Cameron Barracks for asylum accommodation would fall within the scope of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing and, therefore, require a licence under section 124 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006. I am sorry for the delay in replying to your letter.

We fully recognise the Scottish legislative framework and the council's statutory responsibilities in safeguarding residents and standards in multi-occupancy settings. We also recognise that the HMO licensing regime is designed to ensure accommodation meets appropriate standards.

In parallel, the Home Office has a statutory duty, under the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, to provide accommodation that is adequate for asylum seekers. While there is no landlord-tenant relationship in this context, our longstanding approach is to meet appropriate standards in practice and to align with relevant regulatory thresholds wherever applicable. We are keen to ensure that our approach at Cameron Barracks reflects as much as possible both the council's expectations and our statutory obligations.

Cameron Barracks has previously been used to accommodate Afghan nationals fleeing the Taliban and did not require an HMO licence for that use. It is our view that the intended use of Cameron for accommodating supported asylum seekers is the same, with the only difference being the nationality of the intended cohort to be accommodated. In light of this it is our strong contention that the use of Cameron Barracks does not require a HMO licence. If the council's view is that a licence is still required, we would be grateful for your urgent clarification, by 13 March 2026, as to why and setting out why no licence was required and sought for its previous use as accommodation for those fleeing persecution.

Thank you for your consideration and continued cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Alex Norris MP
Minister for Border Security & Asylum