

Summary Proof of Evidence

Lisa Dysch - Property Director

Serco Limited

Appeal PINS ref. APP/Y3425/W/24/2215258

CHANGE OF USE FROM STUDENT ACCOMODATION  
TO ASYLUM ACCOMODATION

Former University Halls of Residence

Stafford Education and Enterprise Park

Weston Road, Stafford, Staffordshire ST180AB

Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)

1. This Summary Proof of Evidence sets out an overview of my proof of evidence submitted to the appeal.
2. My name is Lisa Dysch and I am employed by Serco Limited (the "Appellant") as a Property Director.
3. I am part of the Contract Leadership Team which drives the delivery of the Asylum Accommodation and Support Services Contracts ("AASC") Contract.
4. I attended and spoke at the planning committee meeting held on 27 July 2022 in support of the application for planning permission. I have been involved with the Appellant's proposals at the Appeal Site from the stage of early shortlisting of properties intended to meet the AASC Contract requirements which took place in January and I have been actively involved through the Application stage and the Appeal.
5. My proof of evidence will focus on the following matters which address both the Council's original reasons for refusal (**CD/A25**), points raised in the Council's Statement of Case (**CD/C10**) and matters in the Inspector's Case Management Conference note (**CD/12**), as well as to set out the Appellant's involvement with asylum seeker accommodation generally. The proof is structured as follows:
  - 5.1. The Appellant's history of involvement in Asylum Seeker Accommodation;
  - 5.2. The mix of Asylum Seekers to be accommodated at the Appeal Site;
  - 5.3. Other Asylum Seeker Accommodation sites run by Appellant; and
  - 5.4. The Proposed Day-to-Day operation of the Appeal Site.
6. In summary, my evidence shows that the Appellant has a history of involvement in asylum seeker accommodation and was well placed to bring forward the Application. The Appellant has a robust strategy in dealing with the growing need for this kind of accommodation and is experienced in its delivery and ongoing management. I have given examples of other asylum seeker accommodation sites managed by the Appellant which have been delivered successfully and have assisted with social inclusivity and the integration of asylum seekers into their local communities.
7. I also provide an overview of the day to day operational management of the Appeal Site and I have provided further detail of the indicative mix of asylum seekers which will be accommodated at the Appeal Site.
8. My evidence, along with that of my colleague Katy Wood (**CW/E2**), demonstrates that the Appeal Site will be properly managed and will create an inclusive environment with links to the surrounding community.
9. The Appellant has contracted with the Home Office since 2012 to provide accommodation and transport services for asylum seekers in the North West of England and Scotland and Northern Ireland. In 2019 the Appellant was additionally awarded the contract for the Midlands and East of England regions.

10. The Appellant is proposing to accommodate Initial Accommodation ("IA") and Dispersed Accommodation ("DA") asylum seekers at the Appeal Site. More detail regarding the differences between IA and DA are given in my proof of evidence.
11. The layout of Stafford Court, which consists of 12 separate blocks, allows for a mix of asylum seekers who are at different stages in their claim. The proposal is to reduce the capacity of the building from 556 to 482 bedspaces which will consist of 160 bed spaces for IA and 322 bedspaces for DA.
12. The Appellant is responsible for looking after nearly 40,000 asylum seekers across nearly 7000 properties. Most of our IA sites are former student accommodation sites which have proven to be ideal for accommodating asylum seekers.
13. The Appeal Site will be managed in line with the Appellant's current operational procedures, systems and structures, which have been and continue to be successful in managing its significant current asylum seeker portfolio. The Appeal Site will be staffed 24 hours a day. There will be approximately 30 members of staff employed at the Appeal Site.
14. The Appellant notes that the Council has requested that an operational management plan for the Appeal Site be reserved by way of condition. As indicated in the draft conditions accompanying the Statement of Common Ground (**CD/C7**), the Appellant is willing to provide such a plan in collaboration with the Council.