

#### 4.0 HOME OFFICE NEED CASE FOR NEW REMOVAL CENTRE

4.1 The UK has been experiencing a high number of people seeking asylum in the country over the last 15-20 years and the Home Office has established an Immigration and Asylum policy to address the issues arising from this.

4.2 The Government is determined that the UK should have a humanitarian asylum process which honours our obligations to those genuinely fleeing persecution while also dealing robustly with those who seek to abuse our hospitality and protection. For almost 40 years only a small number of people applied for asylum in the UK. Then, in the late 1980s, the total number of applications for asylum started to rise from around 4,000 a year to approximately 100,000 in 2001 (when dependents are included).

4.3 Migration brings a number of benefits and is vital to the UK economy. However, it needs to be managed; otherwise it generates negative impacts on living conditions, oversubscribed public services, housing, and problems with social order. The UK Border Agency (UKBA) is responsible for managing migration in the United Kingdom.

4.4 The Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act (2002) sets out the Government's current policy on asylum and this sets out a comprehensive set of measures to deliver a properly managed, robust and integrated system for immigration, nationality and asylum.

4.5 The high level strategic objectives are:-

- To protect our border and our national interest
- To tackle immigration crime
- To implement fast and fair decisions

4.6 The key targets are as follows:-

- Maintaining and managing asylum intake level at 2007/8 levels
- Remove over 5,000 foreign national prisoners in 2008

- Remove more failed asylum seekers than we receive unfounded claims by December 2008.
- 4.7 The National, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 details the Government's policy on asylum and immigration setting out a comprehensive set of measures to deliver a properly managed, robust and integrated system. The then immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) had a 5-year strategy. *'Controlling our Borders: Making Immigration work for Britain'*, agreed with Ministers. The strategy was launched in February 2005 by the Prime Minister and Home Secretary, and built on the successful strategies IND had adopted. The plan develops an approach to immigration which is "simple, straightforward and robust". Key to this will be "detention of more failed asylum seekers".
- 4.8 In his forward to the Strategy, the Home Secretary states that the policy is to substantially increase the number of removals in the future. He states that swift removal of those whose asylum applications fail is central to the credibility of the asylum system and that a new asylum process will be introduced which detains more people. The aim is to move towards the point where it becomes the norm that those whose asylum applications are refused are detained. The Home Secretary also says that UKBA will substantially increase the number of other immigration offenders who are removed.
- 4.9 In the case of other immigration offenders, these are the people who may enter the country illegally (sometimes by deception) and those who overstay their permission to enter, UKBA's 5-Year Strategy introduced new arrangements for managing migration, and removal of these people is required in order to enforce the new system. In addition, other immigration offenders would include the deportation of ex-foreign national prisoners.
- 4.10 In April 2008 the IND (by then known as the Border and Immigration Agency) was amalgamated with the customs border operations and UK Visas and the UK Border Agency was formed. The Agency has responsibility for securing the United Kingdom borders and controlling migration in the UK. It manages border control for the UK, enforcing immigration and customs regulations and also considers applications for permission to enter or stay in the UK, citizenship and asylum.

- 4.11 The latest asylum statistics for 2008 show the following:
- The overall number of asylum applications is increasing again. The number of asylum applicants (excluding dependants) in 2007/08 (24,345) was 7% higher than in 2006/07 (22,835).
  - The number of applications for asylum excluding dependants, was 15% higher in Q2 2008 (5,720) than in Q2 2007 (4,960).
  - Including dependents, the number of applications to the UK increased by 13% in Q2 2008 (6,840) from Q2 2007 (6,030).
- 4.12 One of the key objectives of Government policy is to speed up the removal of applicants who have been refused asylum. For those who are to be removed the incentives to abscond are very great, and the policy of removal can only be successfully delivered if the UK Border Agency has those who are to be removed in attendance at the relevant time. This is achieved through the increased use of detention for those who would be unlikely to attend at the relevant time and location for removal.
- 4.13 In June 2008 UKBA published "Enforcing the Deal" which sets out the Home Office's plans for enforcing the Immigration laws of the UK. In the foreword the Home Secretary states that one of the key priorities is removal from the UK of those whose asylum cases fail.
- 4.14 The Report sets out the priorities for 2008/9; first of these is 'removing' those who have no right to be here, or who pose a threat to the UK, targeting the most harmful.
- 4.15 To underpin these plans the UKBA is increasing the capacity of the detention estate. Efforts to close older asylum cases, improve the management of new asylum cases, focus on compliance and improve managed migration processes will all reduce the number of people in the UK who are not entitled to be here.
- 4.16 This will in turn reduce the detention requirement in the longer-term. In the medium-term however, UKBA forecast a substantially increased requirement, likely to be in the range of 3,300 to 4,200 beds. The main Removal Estate should therefore provide at least 4,000 beds. This requirement is based on 60,000 removals per annum over the next few years; approximately 30,000 failed

asylum applicants and 30,000 other immigration offenders. Removal Centres are used for:-

- Asylum applicants whose applications have been refused, who are awaiting removal from the country and are considered to be at risk of absconding before removal;
- Ex-Foreign National Prisoners (FNPs) who have been convicted of crimes in the UK, have served their custodial sentence in a UK prison and are awaiting deportation. The UK Borders Act 2007 establishes the policy of detaining all FNPs who have served a sentence of longer than 12 months in IRCs until they are deported.

4.17 Although the period of stay in IRC's has been reducing for asylum cases, and currently an average of 2 months, the period of stay in IRC's for ex-FNP's can be much longer. The deportation paper work is more complex, the country which is receiving the person is sometimes reluctant to participate in the process and appeals against deportation are frequent and lengthy. Currently the length of stay could be 6 months or more.

4.18 Economies of scale direct UKBA toward a core estate comprising a small number of larger Centres. Activity across the UK is disparate and initial interception is most effectively achieved through a network of Holding Rooms and police cells.

4.19 The removal estate consists of 10 centres with 2,533 bed spaces. These need to be increased to at least 4,000 bed spaces in order to support delivery of the Agency's removal targets. The addition of new spaces at Brook House near Gatwick (426 in early 2009) and at Harmondsworth near Heathrow (370 in mid 2010) is already underway, and an additional 100 spaces can be provided within existing centres early in 2009, bringing the total to 3,429. Oakington is due to close at the end of 2009, with a loss of 352 spaces. If approved, the new 492 bed centre at Yarl's Wood would increase the estate to 3,569 and an 800 bed centre at Bullington would give 3,877. If both were to be built the total spaces would be 4,369.

**Current Removal Centres**

<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Centre</b>	<b>Capacity</b>
Current Position	Colnbrook, Heathrow	385
	Harmondsworth, Heathrow	259
	Yarl's Wood, Bedfordshire (Females & Families)	400
	Tinsley House, Gatwick	145
	Dover	316
	Campsfield, Oxfordshire	215
	Lindholme	112
	Dungavel, Scotland	189
	Haslar, Portsmouth	160
	Oakington	352 To remain until December 2009
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,533</b>
Early 2009	Brook House	426
Mid 2010	Harmondsworth	370
Early 2009	Existing centre expansion	100
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,429</b>
December 2009	Loss of Oakington	-352
2011-12	New Centres at Bullington and Bedford	800
		492
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,369</b>

## Conclusions

- 4.20 As described earlier, since the approval for the Accommodation Centre on the site Home Office policy has changed. Illegal immigrants whose applications remain in the UK have not been successful and who are judged to be likely abscond may be detained immediately before removal. The removal centres are needed to ensure that the decisions taken to remove those who have no right to remain are implemented fairly and with as little delay as possible. UKBA has determined that there is a need for about 4,000 secure places, and the proposed 800 bed centre at Bullington would be a significant element in the achievement of this need.
- 4.21 The site is appropriate as it is located in the south east but also close to the midlands where a proportion of illegal immigrants are found. The earlier Accommodation Centre proposal for the same site was approved by the Secretary of State after a thorough assessment of planning policies, the various impacts of the scheme and the range of mitigation measures proposed.
- 4.22 The main issues that caused concern to local residents have been addressed in this application: the centre will be secure and built to a category B prison standard surrounded by a Category C fence rather than a wall. The risk of road accidents because of asylum applicants walking along the local country roads will not arise. Measures to minimise the amount of traffic generated by the centre are proposed as part of the plan and are set out in the Transport Assessment and Travel Plan.
- 4.23 There is a national need for the additional spaces needed by UKBA and the suitability of the site at DSDC Bicester, now in UKBA ownership, has been assessed at the earlier stage when the Accommodation Centre was approved. This need, and the measures proposed to minimise the impact of the centre on the local area, outweigh other objections to the proposal.