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To: The Lord Bishop of Durham

Nationality and Borders Bill: Lords Report Stage 28th February 2022

I am grateful to you for the detailed debate on the Nationality and Borders Bill on 28 February 2022. During the course of that debate, I committed to write you with further detail about accommodation centres.

Our New Plan for Immigration included proposals to introduce new asylum accommodation centres to provide basic accommodation and support to destitute asylum seekers while considering their claim. As part of the project to deliver the centres, we are undertaking initial design work that considers the size, scale and location of these sites.

The centres will be open locations without detention, where asylum seekers are free to move around and have the ability to travel outside. Security will also be present to keep individuals safe. There will be a number of sites across the UK, each with a capacity that ensures individuals are safe and secure and the service is operationally viable. These factors will be informed through engagement with key partners and stakeholders including NGOs and the third sector, as well as the market.

We aim for each accommodation centre to:

1. Be as self-sufficient as possible by providing access to relevant services including healthcare and facilities to meet the needs of asylum seekers, thereby minimising the impact on local services and communities.
2. Facilitate and support on-site case working to enable operational efficiencies and shorten the time individuals wait for an asylum decision.

I would like to reassure you on the point you made during the debate about previous conditions at Napier; the findings from the Napier judgment of *R (on the applications of NB & Ors) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* are being considered as part of the design work for accommodation centres. This includes aspects such as increased privacy, access to wrap around services, e.g. healthcare provision, and robust processes in place to assess and manage vulnerabilities, and a lack of

oppressive site design. In relation to the locations of the centres, we will ensure the devolved administrations are engaged and consulted prior to making any arrangements for centres to be established in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

As I mentioned during the debate, there are no current plans to use the centres to house families with children and we will not leave destitute families without any accommodation or access to support should they require it. In relation to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, I also mentioned this provision does not impact this group in any way as children are not accommodated under these powers.

The introduction of accommodation centres is an essential part of our strategy to expand the existing asylum accommodation estate and to ensure we continue to meet our statutory obligations to provide safe and secure housing and support to all asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute. Therefore, establishing who will be suitable for accommodation centres needs to remain flexible to ensure we can fulfil this duty effectively.

Finally, I wanted to clarify something I said during the debate on amendment 29 to the Nationality and Borders Bill on 28 February 2022. In responding to questions posed by Baroness Lister of Burtersett, Baroness Hamwee, Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle, Lord Rosser and yourself, I said the Bill does not create Accommodation Centres, that was done in 2005. It was in fact provisions within Part 2 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 that introduced the concept of accommodation centres, although not all the provisions in Part 2 have been commenced.

A copy of this letter will be placed in the libraries of both Houses.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan', written in a cursive style.

**Baroness Williams of Trafford
Minister of State**