

Immigration minister Robert Jenrick has said politicians must be careful with language after the home secretary claimed southern England was facing an "invasion" of illegal migrants.

Mr Jenrick told BBC Radio 4's Today: "It's not a phrase I've used."

But he said his boss Suella Braverman was right to be straight with the public about the "sheer scale" of illegal migration.

He said "more radical options" were needed to deal with the "crisis".

Ms Braverman is under pressure to deal with overcrowding at the Manston asylum processing centre in Kent, which has reportedly led to outbreaks of disease and violence.

Braverman was warned about migrant overcrowding

Why are there problems at Manston migrant centre?

How many migrants cross the Channel in small boats?

In a Commons statement, she rejected claims she had deliberately blocked the use of hotels to ease the pressure on Manston and promised to fix the "hopelessly lax" asylum system.

Some 4,000 people are being held at the former RAF base which is only designed to accommodate 1,600 people on a temporary basis.

Hundreds of people were moved there on Sunday after a man threw firebombs at a separate immigration centre in Dover. He was later found dead nearby.

A report from a visit by the chief inspector of prisons in July found the centre had considerably improved but still identified issues such as no access to fresh air or exercise and a lack of beds, with people sleeping on rubber mats on the floor.

Since then, chief inspector Charlie Taylor said the situation had "significantly deteriorated".

Ms Braverman warned in her statement about using "inflammatory language" about illegal immigration but she has been attacked by refugee charities for using the word "invasion" to describe the number of people crossing the English Channel in small boats.

The Refugee Council said: "To describe the serious and complex situation created by the asylum crisis as an 'invasion' is appalling, wrong and dangerous.

"These are men, women and children fleeing war, persecution and conflict."

Asked on Today if Ms Braverman had been wrong to use the word, Mr Jenrick said: "I think in this job you do have to use your language carefully but you also have to accept that many millions of people across this country are rightfully extremely concerned about this issue and we mustn't diminish that.

"It's not a phrase that I've used but I do understand the need to be straightforward with the general public about the challenge that we as ministers face."

Speaking to BBC Breakfast, Mr Jenrick said conditions at Manston were "not as we would want them to be" and ministers needed to "ensure it returns to a well-run, compassionate, humane site".

He blamed the "sheer number of migrants who have crossed the Channel in recent weeks" for putting "immense pressure" on the system.

However, he said reports of outbreaks of diphtheria, MRSA and scabies at Manston were "exaggerated" and the four cases of diphtheria were individuals who had arrived at the site with the condition.

People are only supposed to be kept at Manston for 24 hours for security and identity checks, before being moved into the Home Office's asylum accommodation system, which often means a hotel.

When the chief inspector of immigration visited last week, he found some people had been there for over a month. That included one family who had been there for 32 days, sleeping on mats in a marquee.

Sources have told the BBC the home secretary was warned by officials the government was acting outside the law by failing to provide alternative accommodation.

Labour's shadow home secretary Yvette Cooper said: "No home secretary who was serious about public safety or national security would use highly inflammatory language on the day after a dangerous petrol bomb attack on a Dover initial processing centre."

The SNP said Ms Braverman's "incendiary language makes a mockery of [prime minister] Rishi Sunak's claims about so-called compassionate conservatism".

But Nigel Farage, former leader of the Brexit Party and UKIP, said in a Twitter video Ms Braverman was right to use the word "invasion".

"I really hope she stays in post but believe me the establishment are out to get her because she's got the guts to say many of these people are just not refugees," he added.

A record number of migrants have arrived in the UK on small boats this year, with nearly 1,000 making the crossing on Saturday, a further 468 crossing on Sunday and 46 on Monday.

The home secretary told MPs on Monday that taxpayers face "a bill of 6.8m a day for hotel accommodation" for migrants.