



Home Office

Statement of National Importance

Campsfield Immigration Removal Centre (IRC)

March 2026



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Contents

Introduction	2
Summary of Proposal	3
Development Proposal	3
Alternative Planning Routes	4
Illegal Migration Overview	5
Alignment with other Government Priorities	6
Conclusion	7

Introduction

This Statement is written on behalf of the Home Office in respect of a planning application which seeks permission for the proposed development at Campsfield Immigration Removal Centre, Langford Lane, Kidlington, Oxfordshire, OX5 1RE. It demonstrates that the proposal is of national importance, further evidenced with an accompanying needs assessment. The following matters are set out below, including:

- Summary of Proposals
- Alternative Planning Routes
- Illegal Migration Overview
- Alignment with other Government Priorities

Summary of Proposal

This document outlines the national importance of the proposed expansion of the Campsfield Immigration Removal Centre site, demonstrating how it satisfies the criteria set out under Regulation 4(c)(iii) of the Town and Country Planning (Crown Development Applications) (Procedure and Written Representations) Order 2025.

It includes a statement explaining why the appropriate authority considers the development to be of national importance, in accordance with the principles established in the Written Ministerial Statement dated 13 February 2025. Specifically, the development is deemed to contribute significantly to national public infrastructure and services, aligning with the Secretary of State's criteria for national importance, which include:

- Advancing national security interests
- Supporting the delivery of essential public services such as border infrastructure
- Responding to civil emergencies at national or regional level
- Delivering substantial economic, social or environmental benefits with strong public interest at national scale

This application is therefore submitted directly to the Secretary of State under the Crown Development route, as permitted by the Crown Development Order 2025.

Development Proposal

The proposal concerns the second phase of the Campsfield Immigration Removal Centre with new accommodation blocks, infrastructure and supporting facilities (Phase 1 works are already complete).

The Home Office is seeking planning permission for the delivery of the second phase of the Campsfield Immigration Removal Centre facilities. Campsfield Immigration Removal Centre will be a key government asset for enabling an increase in the number of enforced returns from the UK. This will enable us to detain more of those eligible for removal, including Foreign National Offenders (FNOs) and failed asylum seekers, which is a key logistical requirement of the enforced returns process. The second phase will provide 240 additional IRC beds (resulting in a combined total of 400 beds including Phase 1).

We are applying via the Crown Development route given the criticality of this infrastructure to enable enforced removals. Insufficient detention capacity is a critical bottleneck in the immigration system, reducing the Home Office's ability to enforce more returns.

Both the sentencing review and the returns agreement with France have placed unprecedented demand on the detention estate, making additional capacity critical to meeting Government priorities. These reforms have significantly increased the need for detention space to carry out enforced removals, and without sufficient additional capacity, the Government's ability to deliver its priorities will be critically undermined.

There is a need to ensure that this facility is operational as soon as possible. Current demand for immigration detention capacity vastly outstrips supply. Both the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary have confirmed that tackling illegal migration remains a top government priority.

The consequences of not securing a decision within this planning route include serious impacts on national security, border infrastructure and the Department's ability to enforce removals. The removal of Foreign National Offenders (FNOs) directly contributes to national security by reducing the risk posed by individuals with criminal backgrounds, thereby supporting safer communities and reinforcing the integrity of our borders.

Alternative Planning Routes

There is a consensus within the Home Office, as well as agreement with external stakeholders, that the Crown Development route is considered the most suitable option to expedite planning determination for Phase 2 at Campsfield Immigration Removal Centre.

This route was not available during Phase 1, as it was only introduced in 2025. At that time, the local planning process was deemed more appropriate given the smaller scale of the initial phase, which largely fell under permitted development. The majority of Phase 1 involved refurbishment. In contrast, Phase 2 is significantly larger and is expected to attract greater public interest, making the local planning route less appropriate.

The urgent Crown Development route is deemed not to be required, as the 'non-urgent' pathway typically takes around 12 weeks, which is well-aligned with the project timeline.

Furthermore, while there remains a possibility of a public hearing or inquiry under the Crown Development route, this is considered reasonable given the extensive early engagement that has already taken place. While there remains a potential risk of protests relating to a hearing or inquiry, particularly in relation to broader issues such as illegal migration, our previous outreach efforts provide confidence in our ability to manage and respond to any concerns effectively.

Illegal Migration Overview

Illegal migration poses a persistent challenge to border security, which is fundamental to both national and economic stability. To respond effectively, the Home Office must have the infrastructure to bring individuals who are in the UK without lawful status – whether they have arrived illegally, overstayed their permission or otherwise breached immigration conditions – into immigration detention. This enables the Home Office to enforce the removal of those who refuse to leave voluntarily.

The challenge of illegal migration is reflected in recent international statements. On 9 September 2025, the Five Eyes partners issued a joint statement reaffirming their shared commitment to a set of common principles on returns. This reflects growing international concern around the rise in regular and illegal migration, which presents a complex set of challenges for origin, transit, and destination countries. These pressures are placing increasing strain on the capacity and integrity of immigration systems globally.

In parallel with international efforts, the UK Government has demonstrated continued political focus on enforced returns. On 31 March 2025, the Prime Minister announced a significant increase in immigration enforcement activity. Between 1 July 2024 and 31 October 2025, nearly 50,000 returns were recorded (including both enforced and voluntary returns). More recently, on 19 October 2025, a record single flight of illegal migrants was returned under the UK-France agreement. The Home Secretary pledged to further scale up removals to France, stating: “This is just the beginning. I will scale up these removals to France, and I will do whatever it takes to secure our borders.” This momentum underscores the sustained political interest in enforced returns and the operational capacity required to support them. This approach is reinforced by the Government’s Restoring Order and Control policy statement, published in November 2025, which sets out a comprehensive package of reforms to increase removals of those with no right to remain. Measures include accelerated appeals, legal changes to reduce barriers and strengthened enforcement, signalling a sustained commitment to operational capacity and border integrity.

Over recent years, the number of available detention places has not kept pace with rapidly evolving demand. Capacity now stands at approximately 2,600 beds, including the newly opened Phase 1 at Campsfield IRC. The shortfall is set against a backdrop of rising illegal migration and a significant increase in small boat arrivals. The resulting pressure on the system has created an urgent need for additional, modern detention infrastructure to support the Government’s operational priorities and ensure the credibility of the immigration system. An optimal estate size would balance meeting the demands on immigration detention with maintaining efficient throughput of people through the estate.

The Home Secretary’s current priorities include reducing small boat arrivals, responding to the impact of the sentencing reforms so far as they relate to Foreign National Offenders (FNOs), and expanding enforced returns. Ministers have set ambitious targets for removals, but limited detention space remains a critical bottleneck.

To deliver on these priorities, the Phase 2 expansion of Campsfield Immigration Removal Centre is a nationally significant development that directly supports this strategic response. It delivers urgently needed detention capacity, providing greater resilience to the estate, to enable more enforced returns and reinforce the credibility of the immigration system.

Alignment with other Government Priorities

The rationale outlined above demonstrates why the second phase of the Campsfield Immigration Removal Centre development is of national importance. In addition to its core role in supporting immigration enforcement, the facility also enables delivery of wider government priorities, including:

- Increasing capacity within the immigration removal centre estate enables the removal of more FNOs, supporting the returns system and responding to sentencing reforms.
- Facilitating removals of failed asylum seekers, thereby reducing the number of illegal migrants reliant on support from the Home Office and local authorities.

Recent ministerial statements further demonstrate the government's commitment to expanding detention and returns capacity. For example, on 1 September 2025, Yvette Cooper (then Home Secretary) stated to the House of Commons:

- “We are also increasing detention and returns capacity, including a 1,000-bed expansion at Campsfield and Haslar, with the first tranche of additional beds coming online within months to support many thousands more enforced removals each year.” ([Borders and Asylum - Hansard - UK Parliament](#)).

Similarly, Minister Norris and Lord Hansen confirmed in a Written Ministerial Statement on 8 December 2025:

- “Detention plays a crucial role in maintaining effective immigration control and securing our borders. It is right that those with no right to remain in the UK are removed if they do not leave voluntarily. Campsfield IRC is the first of several new detention facilities planned under this government, with expansions at this site and Haslar IRC to provide 1,000 additional bedspaces. Every additional detention bedspace translates to more offenders and illegal migrants removed from our country as we restore order and control to our borders while providing sanctuary to those genuinely fleeing danger. This expansion will mean thousands more enforced returns of foreign national offenders and failed asylum seekers per year, sending a clear message: if you come here illegally, you will not be able to stay.” ([Campsfield Immigration Removal Centre - Hansard - UK Parliament](#)).

Conclusion

The Phase 2 expansion of Campsfield Immigration Removal Centre is a nationally significant development that supports strategic Home Office objectives, strengthens immigration enforcement capability, and contributes to critical public infrastructure.

This additional capacity is essential to enable a greater number of enforced returns. Without it, the Home Office's ability to deliver on one of its top priorities - tackling illegal migration - will be critically undermined. Timely planning determination is therefore vital to ensure operational readiness and uphold the Government's commitment to a fair, secure and humane immigration system.

The application is underpinned by a robust Outline Business Case (approved by HM Treasury), approved Spending Review funding, a comprehensive published Accounting Officer Assessment and detailed planning documentation. It reflects a balanced approach addressing both national priorities and local engagement and is ready for submission under the standard Crown Development route.