

Subject: Objection to Campsfield House IRC expansion; CROWN/2026/0000004

Reference: CROWN/2026/0000004 - Campsfield House Immigration Removal Centre

We are writing to object to the Home Office's proposed expansion of Campsfield House Immigration Removal Centre and ask that the application be refused.

If the application is not refused at this stage, we ask that it is determined through a full public inquiry, for the reasons explained at the end of this letter.

This is a joint submission made by [Coalition to Close Campsfield](#) and [Right to Remain](#). Coalition to Close Campsfield is a diverse group of individuals and organisations local to Oxford working together to oppose Campsfield Immigration Removal Centre. Right to Remain is a registered charity (charity number 1192934) that works with communities, groups and organisations across the UK, providing information, resources, training and assistance to help people to establish their right to remain, and to challenge injustice in the immigration and asylum system.

Summary of objections

Our objection is based on material planning considerations. In summary:

- Harm to Green Belt openness and the need for the Home Office's Green Belt case to be properly tested, particularly given the scale, height, fencing, hardstanding, lighting, parking and increased intensity of the proposed development.
- Failure to demonstrate that additional IRC capacity is needed at all, or that 240 additional detention places at Campsfield specifically are justified, including why existing IRC capacity, alternatives to detention, improved casework or other estate options would not be sufficient.
- Conflict with the adopted development plan and local economic strategy for the Langford Lane area, which supports high-value employment linked to science, technology, research, innovation and airport-related uses, rather than general employment creation through an expanded detention facility.
- Serious and insufficiently assessed cumulative impacts on roads, construction traffic, parking, emergency services, drainage, sewage, water supply, local infrastructure, local services, noise, lighting, landscape and ecology.
- Key information withheld or redacted, preventing adequate public scrutiny of the scale, layout, transport, lighting, landscape, operational and cumulative impacts of the proposal.
- The wider human and community impact of expanding immigration detention, which should be recorded as part of the public record and reinforces the need for full scrutiny of a development of this scale and sensitivity.

We also object because immigration detention causes serious harm to the people held there, and because local communities are left to carry many of the consequences of that harm. This includes families, friends, legal and community support organisations, faith groups, health and advice services, and residents who are repeatedly drawn into responding to distress, release into hardship, removal, protest and public concern.

We recognise that the Planning Inspectorate's decision will focus on material planning considerations, but this representation is also part of the public record. Humanitarian

concerns are valid and should be recorded, especially where they reinforce the need for full scrutiny of a development of this scale and sensitivity.

1. Green Belt, grey belt and cumulative pressure in the Langford Lane area

Campsfield House IRC is on Green Belt land. Green Belt policy exists to keep land open, prevent urban sprawl and avoid neighbouring settlements merging into each other. The application site sits within the Langford Lane / A44 corridor, between Kidlington and Begbroke, in an area already subject to significant development pressure.

The Home Office argues that the site should be treated as “grey belt”. Grey belt is a planning term. It does not mean land outside the Green Belt. It means land within the Green Belt which is argued to make a weaker contribution to some Green Belt purposes, or which is previously developed land. Grey belt is therefore a subsection of Green Belt land. It may mean that some restrictions are applied differently, but it does not mean automatic approval.

The Home Office still has to demonstrate that the site meets the grey belt definition and that the proposal satisfies the relevant policy tests. In particular, it must show that the development would not fundamentally undermine the wider Green Belt, that there is a clear unmet need for this type of development, and that any harm is justified.

The public material does not demonstrate this. The Home Office has not clearly shown why 240 additional detention places are needed at Campsfield specifically, why existing IRC capacity is insufficient, or why alternatives to detention and other estate options are not sufficient. This is important because the claimed need for additional detention capacity is being used to support the grey belt argument and to justify further development on protected land.

We recognise that the local context is not simple. The area around Langford Lane is already affected by existing and proposed development, including Oxford Technology Park, London Oxford Airport, Begbroke Science Park, airport-related development, employment development and wider growth pressures associated with the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. If further development comes forward on nearby land, the visual impact of the Campsfield expansion may be argued to be less significant than it would be in a more isolated Green Belt location.

However, that does not remove the need for proper scrutiny. On the contrary, the existing development pressure makes cumulative assessment more important. The issue is not only whether the proposed new buildings can be described as “infill” or whether parts of the site are already developed. The issue is whether this proposal, when considered alongside other nearby development, would contribute to the incremental urbanisation of the Langford Lane / A44 corridor and further weaken the remaining openness and settlement gap between Kidlington and Begbroke.

The proposal would more than double the capacity of the detention centre, from 160 to up to 400 detained people. It would add new accommodation blocks, increased floorspace, fencing, hardstanding, parking, lighting and security infrastructure. Even if some of this is within or close to the existing secure perimeter, it would still increase the scale, intensity and operational impact of the site.

It is also important that the Planning Inspectorate tests exactly where the new development would be located. We understand that a significant part of the proposed new-build would be on the former football field to the west of the existing buildings. Even if that land has not

been used as a football field for many years, it should not simply be treated as previously developed land. A disused sports field or open recreational area is materially different from land already occupied by buildings or hardstanding. This is important because the Home Office's grey belt case depends in part on how the site is characterised, including whether the land is treated as previously developed or still open.

The application should therefore be assessed not only by looking at the physical footprint of the new buildings, but by considering the cumulative effect of a much larger detention centre in an already pressured area. That includes cumulative impacts on roads, construction traffic, parking, emergency services, drainage, sewage, water supply, local services, noise, lighting, landscape and ecology.

The Home Office has not provided enough public information to allow these impacts to be properly tested. The redaction or withholding of key material on layout, transport, lighting, landscaping and operational impacts makes it difficult for local people and public bodies to assess what the proposal would mean in practice.

The Home Office should not be allowed to treat Campsfield as if it exists in isolation. The Planning Inspectorate should require a full assessment of the proposal in its real local context: a Green Belt site within a settlement gap, in an area already facing major development pressure and infrastructure strain.

For these reasons, the Home Office has not shown that Campsfield should properly be treated as grey belt for the purposes of this application, has not demonstrated a clear unmet need for the development, and has not shown that the cumulative planning harm is justified.

2. The need and national importance for the expansion have not been evidenced

The Home Office relies heavily on the claim that additional detention capacity is needed. The Planning Statement refers to government approval for up to 1,000 additional beds at Campsfield and Haslar, "sustained" demand across the detention estate, projected demand, resilience, and immigration enforcement priorities. [Planning Statement, p.23, paras 5.13–5.16.]

The Home Office also relies on this claimed need to support its Green Belt and grey belt case. This is important because, where the Home Office relies on the relevant Green Belt policy tests, it must show a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed. The focus should be on whether there is an unmet need for this type of development, namely immigration detention capacity, not simply on whether the proposal would create jobs, support a wider government policy aim, or assist an enforcement strategy.

Planning decisions on "unmet need" require more than an applicant restating its own policy objective. In *Double Arches Business Park, Eastern Way* [Appeal Ref: APP/P0240/W/24/3355231], the Inspector considered whether there was a need for the types of development generally, such as housing or commercial floorspace. In *Land at Colne Spring Villa* [Application Ref: S62A/2025/0076], the Planning Inspectorate accepted that there was unmet need for housing but not for a community hub, even though both formed part of the same development proposal. The question here is therefore whether there is a demonstrable unmet need for immigration detention as a development, not whether the Home Office has a general policy preference for more detention and removals.

The Planning Statement does not provide that independent assessment. It relies heavily on the Government's own future policy agenda, including a strategy "to increase capacity to 3,500 by 2030" [Planning Statement, para 5.26]. That approach risks treating the Government's own policy intention as evidence of need. The Home Office should not be able to avoid the protection given to Green Belt land by asserting that, because it has decided to expand the detention estate, there is therefore an unmet need for detention expansion.

This would invert the proper planning question. The proposal is not responding to an independently evidenced existing unmet need. Rather, the development would itself enable a future policy agenda to expand detention and removals. A policy preference for more detention cannot, without proper evidence, be treated as a demonstrable unmet need.

This concern is not new. In response to the previous Campsfield expansion proposal in 2015, Leigh Day argued that it would be "unreasonable and wrong in law" to accept asserted need based on government policy alone. It is legally necessary to critically examine policy in the course of a planning decision. In *R (Hillingdon LBC) v Secretary of State for Transport* [2010] JPL 976, the court confirmed that policy cannot simply be treated as determinative without proper scrutiny. The Planning Inspectorate should therefore critically examine whether the Home Office's current policy aim is itself based on clear evidence of unmet need for immigration detention.

Since the Planning Statement was prepared, the Home Office has also publicly linked the expansion of detention capacity at Campsfield and Haslar to a stated aim of removing more than 45,000 people over the coming decade. It stated that the projects at Haslar and Campsfield would contribute to a 40% increase in UK detention capacity and would more than triple cumulative capacity at those centres from 290 to 1,000 beds. [Home Office, Immigration Enforcement and Shabana Mahmood MP, "Illegal immigrants and foreign criminals to be removed", GOV.UK, 29 June 2026.]

That statement does not, by itself, evidence the planning need for this proposal. It is a political and operational target, not a transparent assessment of IRC capacity, occupancy, detention duration, throughput, alternatives, or the specific need for 240 additional places at Campsfield. If the Home Office relies on this target to justify the application, it should disclose the assumptions behind it. This should include how many additional detention spaces are said to be needed, over what period, for which groups of people, for what average length of detention, and why existing IRC capacity, improved casework, community-based alternatives or other estate options would not be sufficient.

The public material does not provide enough detail to allow the claimed need to be properly tested. It does not set out current IRC occupancy and utilisation, the operational constraints affecting existing IRC capacity, the modelling behind projected demand, or why additional IRC places are needed at all, still less why 240 additional places are needed at Campsfield specifically.

The latest published detention data raises serious questions about whether further IRC capacity is needed. On the figures identified from the March 2026 Home Office detention data, stated IRC capacity was 2,356 spaces, including the 160 spaces added by Campsfield Phase 1. At the end of March 2026, 1,705 people were recorded as held in IRCs. On that IRC-specific snapshot, this would indicate 651 apparent unused IRC spaces, around 28% of stated IRC capacity. [Home Office, Immigration system statistics, year ending March 2026: How many people are detained under immigration powers in the UK?]

That figure should be treated carefully. It is a snapshot and not proof that all apparently unused IRC spaces were operationally available every day. Some spaces may have been unavailable because of staffing, refurbishment, safety, cohort separation, suitability or other operational constraints. However, if the Home Office relies on those constraints, it should disclose the evidence. Without current evidence of IRC capacity, occupancy, utilisation, operational constraints and projected demand, the claimed need for 240 additional places at Campsfield is not properly evidenced.

The wider statistics also show why the need for expansion should not be assumed. The latest Home Office published detention statistics show that the number of people held in detention at the end of March 2026 was 8% higher than the previous year, but also state that detention levels had been relatively stable over the previous two and a half years. The same statistics show that, in the year ending March 2026, 51% of people leaving detention left on immigration bail, while 44% left to be returned from the UK. [Home Office, Immigration system statistics, year ending March 2026: How many people are detained under immigration powers in the UK?, sections 2 and 3.1.]

The Home Office may point to recent Channel crossing figures, increased returns activity, and the UK-France “one in, one out” pilot scheme to argue that further detention capacity is needed. However, those matters do not answer the planning question. The Home Office’s own detention statistics state that the latest increase in detention intake partly reflected the use of detention to facilitate increasing numbers of returns, and that asylum-related cases entering detention increased by 10% during a period when people were being detained under the UK-France agreement. [Home Office, Immigration system statistics, year ending March 2026: How many people are detained under immigration powers in the UK?, section 1.]

This suggests that recent detention figures may have been affected by a new and politically specific operational scheme, rather than demonstrating a stable, long-term need for major permanent expansion of the IRC estate. Recent operational fluctuation cannot, without proper evidence, justify permanent new detention infrastructure on Green Belt land.

The UK-France pilot scheme should therefore be tested carefully. The Government has said that, under the scheme, some people arriving by small boat may be detained immediately on arrival and returned to France, with an equal number of people admitted to the UK from France through a legal route. It also stated that Immigration Enforcement had set aside space in Immigration Removal Centres for the pilot. However, the publicly available figures indicate that the scheme was limited in scale by early March 2026, with 377 people returned to France and 380 people admitted to the UK under the scheme. Commentators have also questioned how far the pilot can affect overall trends because it applies to a relatively small number of people. [Home Office, UK-France treaty targeting illegal crossings comes into force, 4 August 2025; House of Commons Library, Unauthorised migration: UK-France border cooperation, 13 May 2026.]

If the Home Office relies on increased Channel crossings, the UK-France agreement, or projected returns activity to justify 240 additional places at Campsfield, it should disclose the evidence behind that reliance. This should include the number of people detained pending possible return to France, average detention periods, the number actually returned, the number released on bail, the number of IRC spaces set aside or required for that scheme, and whether the scheme is expected to continue, expand or remain temporary.

The rationale for this expansion has also shifted over time. When Campsfield’s reopening was announced in 2022, campaigners and local opponents understood it as part of the government’s wider Rwanda and immigration deterrence agenda. BID’s 2022 briefing

described the Home Office plan to reopen Campsfield as a 400-capacity detention centre. Later campaign materials also described the Campsfield and Haslar plans as adding 1,000 new detention places and linked the expansion to the government's Rwanda policy. The Rwanda scheme has since been abandoned, but the Campsfield expansion has continued. That change in policy context reinforces the need for the Home Office to explain the current evidential basis for the expansion, rather than relying on broad assertions about immigration enforcement priorities. [Bail for Immigration Detainees, "Home Office proposals to reopen Campsfield House IRC", MP briefing, 17 August 2022, hosted by Detention Forum; Bail for Immigration Detainees, "Act now to stop the re-opening of two detention centres", 15 November 2022.]

There is also important local history here. In 2015, the Home Office withdrew a previous proposal to expand Campsfield after the Home Secretary asked officials to undertake detailed work on future detention requirements. At the time, the local MP said the case put forward by the Home Office did not justify building on Green Belt land. [T Calver, "Home Office withdraws Campsfield expansion plan", *Cherwell*, 12 March 2015.] That history reinforces the need for the Planning Inspectorate to require clear, current evidence of detention capacity, projected demand and alternatives before accepting the Home Office's claimed need now.

The Home Office should also be required to explain what alternatives were considered before proposing a major permanent expansion on Green Belt land. Following the Shaw Review, the Government previously committed to reducing the use of immigration detention and to exploring community-based alternatives. [UK Parliament, *Immigration Detention: Response to Stephen Shaw's report into the Welfare in Detention of Vulnerable Persons*, 14 January 2016.] Community-based alternatives to detention have since been evaluated in the UK context. [UNHCR, *Evaluation of the Refugee and Migrant Advice Service's Alternative to Detention Pilot*, 2023.]

The local MP, Calum Miller, has also publicly questioned whether the Home Office has properly explained why the expansion is needed. [BBC News, 7 June 2026.] This reinforces the need for the Planning Inspectorate to require clear evidence of current and projected capacity, the alternatives considered, and why 240 additional places are needed at Campsfield specifically.

Without that evidence, the Home Office has not demonstrated that there is a demonstrable unmet need for additional immigration detention capacity. It has not shown that the expansion is necessary, or that it is of such national importance that it justifies the Crown Development route and further permanent development on Green Belt land.

3. The proposal conflicts with the adopted development plan.

The Home Office's own Planning Statement accepts that "the Development Plan does not make provision for the expansion of the Campsfield IRC" and that the proposals map shows the site within the Green Belt with "no specific land use allocation or designation." It also records that Kidlington's spatial strategy supports economic development close to London Oxford Airport and Begbroke Science Park, while acknowledging that the IRC is not a "typical" employment use. [Planning Statement, p.30, paras 6.3–6.5.]

The surrounding Langford Lane, London Oxford Airport and Begbroke area is identified in local policy as important for economic growth and high-value employment, including science, technology, research and airport-related employment. Policy Kidlington 1 refers to Green Belt review in this area to accommodate identified high-value employment needs. The

relevant policy aim is not simply to increase the number of jobs on any terms but it is specifically to support a particular spatial and economic strategy for this part of Kidlington: high-value employment connected to the area's science, technology, research, innovation and airport-related role. The Green Belt review and local policy context should therefore not be treated as a general permission for any development that generates employment.

The Home Office argues that the expanded IRC would create employment and would therefore be consistent with the wider spatial strategy. However, job creation alone should not be treated as enough to make the proposal consistent with that strategy. A large, secure immigration detention facility does not obviously deliver the high-value employment, science, technology, research, innovation or airport-related purpose identified for this area. The Planning Inspectorate should require the Home Office to provide a clear breakdown of the jobs it says would be created, including the type of roles, skill levels, salary bands, training pathways, local recruitment assumptions, supply-chain benefits and how those roles are said to contribute to the high-value employment objectives for the Langford Lane, London Oxford Airport, Oxford Technology Park and Begbroke Science Park area. Without that evidence, general claims about employment should be given limited weight.

There is also an opportunity-cost issue. Land in this area has been treated as strategically important because of its relationship to Oxford Technology Park, Begbroke Science Park and London Oxford Airport. A permanent expansion of a secure detention facility would not merely "create jobs"; it would entrench a use that is qualitatively different from the high-value economic development envisaged for this corridor. The Planning Inspectorate should consider whether the proposal would undermine, rather than support, the adopted spatial strategy for this area.

This concern is not new. In March 2015, during the previous Campsfield expansion proposal, then local MP Blackwood wrote to the Home Secretary questioning whether an immigration removal centre could properly be treated as the kind of employment use envisaged for this area. She noted that the relevant Local Plan Green Belt review was specifically intended for "higher value employment uses such as high technology industries in the research and development sector," and stated that "it is impossible to describe a Detention Centre as a high technology industry." She also questioned whether the claimed exceptional circumstances based on additional detention capacity had been justified. A copy of the letter is included at Appendix A.

The Planning Inspectorate should therefore scrutinise whether this proposal is genuinely consistent with the local development plan and spatial strategy, rather than treating general job creation as sufficient to make the proposal compatible with the adopted development plan.

4. Cumulative infrastructure, transport, services and environmental impacts have not been properly assessed

The proposed expansion should not be assessed in isolation. Campsfield sits within the Langford Lane / A44 area already subject to significant development pressure from Oxford Technology Park, which is seeking (OTP2) to expand to the south next to Campsfield, from the permitted construction of Oxford United stadium, to say nothing of the outline application for a huge academic campus and associated data centre at Frieze Farm, Botley Solar Farm, London Oxford Airport, Begbroke Science Park, considerable housing growth and wider strategic growth pressures.

The Home Office proposes to more than double the capacity of Campsfield, from 160 to up to 400 detained people. This is not a minor operational change. A detention centre of this scale would have increased impacts on staff travel, visitor travel, contractor access, deliveries, service vehicles, escort and transport movements, emergency response, utilities, drainage, sewage, lighting, noise and local services. These impacts need to be assessed cumulatively, alongside existing and proposed development in the area.

The public material does not provide enough information to show that the local area can absorb these additional pressures. The question is not simply whether new buildings can physically fit on the site. The question is whether the local infrastructure can cope with a much larger detention centre operating in an already pressured development corridor.

Particular concerns include:

- traffic and congestion on Langford Lane, the A44 and surrounding local roads;
- construction traffic, deliveries and operational vehicle movements;
- parking pressure and staff travel;
- pressure on emergency services, including police, ambulance and fire services;
- pressure on water supply, sewage and drainage infrastructure;
- flood risk and surface water management;
- noise, lighting and disturbance from a larger and more intensively used secure site;
- impacts on wildlife, ecology, trees, landscape and the remaining open character of the area;
- the cumulative impact of the expansion alongside other nearby developments.

These issues are especially important because Campsfield is not ordinary employment or residential development. It is a secure detention facility with specific operational demands. A larger IRC may generate distinct pressures on emergency services, escort and transport arrangements, safeguarding responses, health services, legal and advice services, and community support networks. These impacts should be properly identified and assessed rather than treated as incidental.

The application material does not appear to provide a sufficiently clear cumulative impact assessment. It does not explain, in publicly accessible terms, how the proposal would interact with other existing, consented and proposed developments in the Langford Lane / A44 area. It does not give the public enough information to understand the combined effect on transport, utilities, drainage, sewage, emergency services and local infrastructure.

This gap is made worse by the withholding or redaction of key information. Where information about transport, layout, lighting, landscaping, drainage, operational arrangements or security infrastructure is withheld from public view, local people and public bodies cannot properly test the Home Office's claims. Security-sensitive detail may need to be protected, but that cannot justify withholding the information needed to assess material planning impacts.

The Home Office should be required to provide clear evidence on cumulative impacts before any decision is made. It should explain what additional movements, demands and pressures would arise from increasing Campsfield to 400 places, how those impacts have been assessed, and what mitigation is proposed.

Without that evidence, the Planning Inspectorate cannot safely conclude that the proposal would be acceptable in transport, infrastructure, amenity, environmental or cumulative impact terms.

For these reasons, the application should be refused. If it is not refused at this stage, these issues must be examined through a public inquiry, where local evidence can be heard and the Home Office's assessment can be properly tested.

5. Key information has been withheld, so the application cannot be properly scrutinised.

Much of the material needed to assess this application has been redacted or withheld from public view. The Planning Statement says that the indicative site layout, development parameters, elevations and sections, floor plans and roof plans, landscaping plan and lighting plan contain official sensitive information and are "not submitted for approval or public consideration" but only to assist the decision-maker. [Planning Statement, p.1, paras 1.5–1.6.]

This is critical because those documents are central to understanding the scale, height, siting, appearance and visual impact of the proposed development. The public is being asked to comment on Green Belt openness, landscape impact, lighting, ecology, traffic, amenity and drainage without access to important material needed to assess those impacts.

The redaction of floor plans and layout information is particularly serious in the Campsfield context. During the previous expansion proposal in 2015, the local MP raised concerns not only about Green Belt justification, but also about "serious problems with the design of the building and how it would work in practice." [Tom Calver, "Home Office withdraws Campsfield expansion plan", Cherwell, 12 March 2015.] Those are exactly the kinds of issues the public cannot properly assess if floor plans, layout, elevations and operational information are withheld from public view.

These issues were addressed at some length in Ms Blackwood's letter to Mr Paul Ihringer of Cherwell Planning Department on 18 November 2014 (Appendix B). In the section of her letter headed 'Design and facilities', Ms Blackwood, following discussion with Campsfield's Independent Monitoring Board, addressed her concerns about:

- The siting of toilets in bedrooms
- The need for the design to allow persons detained a measure of dignity
- The lack of free flow between the existing and new buildings
- Potential for a two-tier regime in the old and new sites site with potential for unrest
- Prison-type specifications for the new-build, and
- Lack of a sports hall.

Such concerns may or may not have influenced the decision in 2015 to abandon the expansion plan. Today, the lack of detailed plans, ostensibly for security reasons that did not apply in 2014-2015, means that the present application is presented in a form that precludes proper and reasonable public scrutiny.

We invite the Planning Inspectorate to consider closely those parts of Ms Blackwood's letters that remain relevant today.

The redaction of the Transport Assessment is especially concerning. Traffic, access, parking, construction traffic and local highway impacts are central planning issues. The public cannot properly scrutinise the local impact of the proposal if key transport material is withheld or obscured.

The withholding of internal plans, layout information, doors, movement routes and operational arrangements also limits scrutiny of how the site would function in practice. Some security-sensitive information may need to be protected, but the Planning Inspectorate should still require enough information to allow proper assessment of the safety, wellbeing and security implications of the proposal for people detained there, people working there, emergency services and the surrounding community.

The withheld floor plans and layout information also prevent proper scrutiny of the amount and quality of internal, recreational and outdoor space available to people detained at the expanded centre. This is not a minor detail. The adequacy of space, access to outdoor areas and recreational provision is relevant to understanding how the site would function and whether the proposed development is appropriate in design, welfare and operational terms.

The financial case is also not available for proper public scrutiny. The application relies on claims about need, national importance and value for money, but the public material does not provide the financial information needed to test those claims. The Planning Inspectorate should give little weight to unsupported assertions of value for money unless the Home Office provides evidence capable of being assessed.

An application of this scale should not be decided while key information remains unavailable to the public. Before any decision is made, the Planning Inspectorate should require the Home Office to provide enough information for proper public scrutiny, while redacting only what is genuinely necessary for security reasons.

6. The application is silent on the harm this facility causes.

The Home Office submitted documents which present the expansion as neutral infrastructure and do not acknowledge the well-documented harm that immigration detention causes to the people held there. Inspection and monitoring bodies have repeatedly identified harm to mental and physical health, barriers to legal advice, inadequate safeguards, distress, self-harm and the particular harm caused by lengthy and indefinite detention. Most recently, the [Independent Monitoring Board's 2025 National Annual Report](#), covering adult prisons, young offender institutions and immigration detention, found that vital safeguards such as health screenings and age assessments failed to prevent harm to vulnerable people, that many people in immigration detention experienced significant distress and declining health, and that self-harm and suicide attempts were widespread. The report also noted that people in immigration detention often received minimal information and faced unacceptable barriers to legal advice and translation services.

The same report records that Campsfield reopened in December 2025, despite IMB concerns about the expansion of the immigration detention estate, noting that most people are released from detention and that less costly and harmful alternatives exist. Nor do the Home Office documents properly acknowledge the demands the facility places on the surrounding community. While the Planning Inspectorate's decision is about material planning considerations, an objection letter is part of the public record. It should reflect that a development of this scale and sensitivity is being assessed with no proper account taken of its human and community effects.

It is also relevant that the Government itself closed Campsfield in 2018 in response to the [Shaw Review's](#) finding that detention causes harm, and as part of a deliberate commitment to reduce the detention estate. This proposal reverses that position. Policy on the size of the detention estate has changed before and may change again, but new permanent buildings

on Green Belt land cannot be undone and the permanent harm to the Green Belt should not be incurred to meet a policy aim so recently reversed.

The Shaw Reviews remain the most detailed official reviews of welfare in immigration detention in the UK. The Government's previous response to Shaw accepted the need to reduce both the number of people detained and the duration of detention. Campsfield was later closed as part of that wider reduction in the detention estate. The current proposal reverses that direction by creating permanent new detention capacity on Green Belt land, without adequately explaining why the previous evidence and recommendations on detention harm and reduction have been displaced.

A major increase in detention capacity without clear public information about recreational and outdoor space is especially concerning given the known harm caused by detention. Lack of adequate outdoor and recreational space can deepen the harmful effects of confinement and should not be treated as an internal operational matter beyond scrutiny.

It is to be regretted that the proposed expansion is on land which has not previously been developed and which was indeed a football field in the days when Campsfield was a young offenders institution, a recreational facility denied to subsequent generations of immigration detainees on the site. While Campsfield is open the area should be opened up to be used again for recreation.

This is important for the planning process because the Home Office presents the expansion as neutral infrastructure, while the history and evidence show that detention is not neutral. It creates foreseeable harm for those detained and foreseeable pressure on families, communities, legal and advice services, health services, local authorities, emergency services and local residents.

7. The application should be refused or be determined by a public inquiry.

For the reasons set out above, we ask that the application is refused.

Even if some weight is given to the Home Office's claimed need for additional detention capacity, that need has not been robustly evidenced in the public material. The Home Office has not shown that additional IRC capacity is needed at all, why 240 additional IRC places are needed at Campsfield specifically, why existing IRC capacity is insufficient, what alternatives have been considered, or why permanent development on Green Belt land is justified.

By contrast, the planning harm is substantial. The proposal would add large new buildings, increased height, additional fencing, hardstanding, parking, lighting and security infrastructure. It would increase the scale, intensity and operational impact of the site. It would also further urbanise the Langford Lane / A44 corridor and risk weakening the remaining settlement gap between Kidlington and Begbroke. These harms require careful assessment and should carry significant weight.

The proposal also conflicts with the adopted development plan and local economic strategy for this area. The relevant local policy context is not simply about creating jobs in general, but about supporting high-value employment linked to science, technology, research, innovation and airport-related uses. The Home Office has not shown that an expanded immigration removal centre would support that strategy.

The application also fails to provide sufficient information for proper public scrutiny and does not adequately assess cumulative infrastructure, transport, environmental and local service impacts. In the absence of clearly demonstrated need, and given the conflict with the development plan and the lack of transparent evidence, the adverse impacts should be treated as outweighing any claimed benefits.

On the public material available, the Home Office has not shown that the proposal should be accepted as grey belt development, or that the claimed benefits clearly outweigh the harm to Green Belt openness, the conflict with the development plan and the cumulative planning impacts. Planning permission should therefore be refused.

If the application is not refused at this stage, it should be determined through a full public inquiry.

The use of the Crown Development route makes a public inquiry even more important. This proposal would normally be decided locally by an elected planning authority, with the Home Office able to appeal if permission were refused. Under the Crown Development route, the local authority is reduced to consultee status and the decision is removed from ordinary local determination.

It is questionable whether a single-site expansion of this kind genuinely has implications beyond local interests. This is a controversial proposal, facing sustained local opposition, for a major expansion of a detention centre on Green Belt land. The use of an exceptional national process should therefore weigh in favour of the fullest and most open form of scrutiny.

A hearing would not be sufficient. This application raises disputed questions of fact and evidence, including:

- the Home Office's grey belt claim;
- the extent and significance of previously developed land;
- the proposed development on the former football field;
- the height and impact of the proposed new buildings on Green Belt openness;
- the fit with the local development plan and high-value employment strategy;
- the evidence for need and national importance;
- cumulative impacts on transport, infrastructure, services, landscape and ecology;
- the impact of redacted and withheld information.

Planning Inspectorate guidance provides that an inquiry is appropriate where there is a clearly explained need for evidence to be tested through formal questioning, where the issues are complex, or where an appeal has generated substantial local interest warranting an inquiry rather than a hearing. [Planning Inspectorate, *Criteria for determining the procedure for planning, enforcement, advertisement and discontinuance notice appeals*, 5 August 2024.]

Those conditions are met here. The evidence is complex, disputed, and likely to involve technical material on Green Belt policy, transport, infrastructure, landscape, ecology, operational need, capacity, and site layout. It should be capable of being tested through formal questioning.

The need for an inquiry is even stronger because the application is subject to a direction under section 293H(7). Section 293H(7) provides that information is "sensitive" if the Secretary of State directs that it relates to matters of national security or if its disclosure would be contrary to the national interest. The Home Office requested a section 293H(7)

direction in its National Security Statement. On 4 June 2026, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government issued a direction under section 293H(7).

Government guidance on Crown Development states that where an application is subject to a direction under section 293H(7), and the sensitive information could be material to the determination of the application, it will be appropriate to determine the application under the inquiry procedure. [Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2018 to 2021), *Crown Development and Urgent Crown Development*, as of 12 May 2025.]

That applies here. The withheld and redacted material includes information about layout, development parameters, elevations and sections, floor plans, roof plans, landscaping, lighting, transport and operational matters. These are not peripheral details. They could be material to the assessment of Green Belt openness, scale, design, visual impact, transport, safety, welfare, operational impacts and cumulative effects. Where information may affect the decision but is withheld from public view, the need for the most open and rigorous form of scrutiny is greater, not less.

The Home Office also accepts in its Statement of National Importance that an inquiry is possible under this route, stating that the possibility of an inquiry is “considered reasonable”. [Home Office, Statement of National Importance, reference to add.]

There is also substantial local interest in this application. The site has been the subject of sustained protest by local community groups, including the Coalition to Close Campsfield. [See, for example, Mercedes Haas, Archie Johnston and Ned Remington, “Students join protest outside re-opened Campsfield House”, *Cherwell*, 28 February 2026.] The expansion proposal has also been the subject of local and national reporting. [See, for example, Charlotte Coles, “Immigration centre expansion plans progress”, BBC, 7 June 2026; Daniela Braw-Smith, “Home Office proposes doubling of Campsfield capacity”, *Cherwell*, 17 June 2026.]

The public interest in the expansion is acknowledged by the Home Office itself in its Statement of National Importance, which justifies the Crown Development route in part by noting that Phase 2 is significantly larger and is expected to attract greater public interest. [Home Office, Statement of National Importance, reference to add.]

Local opposition also includes opposition from the parish, district, city and county councils, the local MP, and a Cherwell District Council motion opposing the reopening and expansion of Campsfield. Taken together, these factors demonstrate substantial local interest and support the need for an inquiry rather than a less formal procedure.

In conjunction, the section 293H(7) direction, the withheld material, the complexity of the evidence, the disputed planning issues, and the substantial local interest all weigh strongly in favour of an inquiry procedure if the application is not refused outright.

For these reasons, we object to the application and ask that it is refused. If it is not refused at this stage, we ask that it is determined by public inquiry.