

## **Reference: CROWN/2026/0000004: Objection to Campsfield House Immigration Removal Centre Expansion**

We are writing to object to the Home Office's proposed expansion of Campsfield House IRC, 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.

This submission is made by the Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network (QARN), a national network established in 2006 with the objectives to inform and support Quakers working under concern, and to work to change the way that Refugees and Asylum Seekers (whether recognized under the UN Convention on the Status of Refugees or not) are treated, to ensure that justice and compassion are the guiding principles.

Quakers have had a long-standing concern about immigration detention. QARN campaigned with others for the ending of child detention in 2010 and made a public statement on immigration detention in 2012. QARN representatives sit on the national Detention Forum.

Before Campsfield House was closed in 2018 Quakers visited men held in detention there. A QARN member also attended stakeholder meetings with the centre management. These experiences deepened our understanding of the shortcomings of the immigration detention model eg in provision of health care, access to legal aid, incarceration of people who should have been exempt because of their vulnerabilities. We saw the harmful impacts on those held in detention and on all with whom they are connected.

QARN sees the proposed expansion of Campsfield House as both a local and a national issue. We regard it as neither appropriate nor necessary. We are concerned at the implications for local democracy.

In addition immigration detention has been shown to be harmful. The proposed expansion would increase the damaging impact on mental health and human dignity

### **Objections**

- *Impact on the Green Belt* : it is argued that this site should be treated as *grey belt*, a planning term for land which has been previously developed or does not contribute strongly to green belt purposes. It must be demonstrated that there is a clear unmet need for this type of development. The argument for unmet need appears to be based on government policy to enlarge the detention estate rather than unmet need for more detention capacity. There should be an environmental impact assessment to demonstrate how wildlife, trees and the ecology of the area will be affected.

- *Lack of evidence that increased capacity is required.* The original rationale for the expansion of Campsfield was linked to the Rwanda policy. This was abandoned but the Campsfield expansion was not. Evidence is required to explain this expansion and the need for an additional 240 spaces.

Although the number entering detention has increased since 2023 numbers remain lower than a decade earlier. In mid-2024 bed occupation was at 77%. While there may be operational reasons for the vacant beds, the percentage remaining unoccupied is substantial.

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It should also be noted that unlawful detention cost the Home Office payments of around £12 million in 2023-24

- *Impact on the local infrastructure.* Doubling the capacity from 160 to 400 beds is a major change involving construction of new accommodation blocks, increased road use, traffic and associated noise, parking and emergency services, drainage, water supply and sewage, lighting. The application does not provide the necessary detail on these impacts and their implications for the local community
- *Impact on the local development plan:* Campsfield does not stand alone. Its expansion conflicts with plans to develop this area to be part of a science, technology, research, innovation and business district within the Oxford-Cambridge 'corridor'. This supports high value employment rather than increased general employment with an expanded detention facility. A custodial site like Campsfield is controversial, contested and will bring reputational hazard to the zone.
- *Local democracy and national importance*  
Local opposition is substantial. The parish, district, city and county councils have recorded their opposition to the plan, as has the local MP. The Home Office argues that the Crown Development route is justified by the size of the second phase and the extent of public interest. We argue that rather than follow this procedure which bypasses the local democratic institutions there should be a public inquiry if the application is not refused.

QARN is opposed to all immigration detention. Its harms have been recorded over many years in the reports of the independent monitoring boards and organisations such as Medical Justice, Bail for Immigration Detainees (BiD) and Amnesty International. The final inspection of Campsfield House before closure described cramped and deteriorating physical conditions. 41% of those held in detention described feeling unsafe ([Campsfield House immigration detention centre detainees 'felt unsafe' - BBC News](#)).

The expansion plan makes no reference to these serious shortcomings and Mitie, the company under which they occurred will retain the contract.

We are disappointed at the lack of consideration of alternatives to detention. The government supported pilot projects on alternatives to immigration detention which were found to be more cost effective and less harmful than incarceration. The need to expand detention facilities has not been justified using evidence of its safety for the affected individuals or that it is in the public interest.

We are disturbed to see this application to continue and expand a system that has been shown to be seriously flawed.

In the light of these considerations we recommend that the planning application be refused. If it is not refused we ask for a public inquiry

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