

Detention Forum response

Objection to Campsfield House IRC expansion, CROWN/2026/0000004

Dear Planning Inspectorate

We are writing to object to the Home Office's proposal to expand Campsfield House Immigration Removal Centre by 240 places, from 160 to 400 places. The application reference is **CROWN/2026/0000004**.

We are responding as a network of over 60 independent organisations across the UK united by our concern at the how caused my immigration detention to the mental health and well-being of people who are detained.

We object for the following reasons:

The need for expansion has not been properly shown

The Home Office has not clearly explained why 240 extra detention places are needed at Campsfield specifically. It relies on broad claims about projected demand, immigration enforcement priorities and resilience across the detention estate, but the public cannot properly test the evidence behind those claims.

The Home Office should be required to explain:

- why existing IRC capacity is not enough;
- what alternatives have been considered;
- why the expansion has to happen at Campsfield;
- why permanent development on Green Belt land is justified.

This matters because the Home Office is relying on claimed need to justify development that would otherwise cause serious planning harm, including harm to Green Belt land. If the need for more detention places has not been properly evidenced, the Home Office has not shown that the harm to the Green Belt is justified.

The expansion should not be approved as the Home Office has not made the case that this additional detention capacity is needed.

Furthermore, we are concerned that the Home Office is by-passing established local democratic structures of accountability to be able to push through a scheme that they have been unable to justify.

Public scrutiny and human impact

Immigration detention causes serious harm to the people held there; all of the academic research supports this claim of harm. The effects of this harm do not stop

at the perimeter fence. Families, legal representatives, community groups, health and advice services, faith groups, local residents and local authorities are often left responding to the consequences of detention, including distress, release into hardship, safeguarding concerns, destitution, emergency support needs, removal, protest and public concern.

The application does not properly address this harm or the wider impact of expanding detention capacity at Campsfield.

We understand 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.

This proposal is not ordinary infrastructure. It is a major expansion of a detention centre, and it should receive the closest possible scrutiny.

Green Belt harm

Campsfield is on Green Belt land. Green Belt land is meant to stay open and protected from unnecessary development. The proposed expansion would add large new accommodation blocks, up to 16 metres tall, compared with the tallest existing building at 9.4 metres. It would also add more parking, fencing, lighting, hardstanding and security infrastructure. This would make the site more built-up and less open.

The Home Office's main argument is that the site should be treated as "grey belt". Grey belt is a category within the Green Belt. It does not mean the land has stopped being Green Belt, and it does not mean development should automatically be allowed. The Home Office still has to meet the relevant planning tests, including showing that there is a clear need for this type of development.

We are concerned that the expansion would harm the openness of the Green Belt and further urbanise the Langford Lane / A44 corridor.

We are also concerned about the wider Langford Lane Green Belt context, including the remaining open gap between Kidlington and Begbroke. Cherwell District Council has previously raised concerns about nearby Green Belt development in the Langford Lane / A44 area, including concerns about unrestricted sprawl and the coalescence of Kidlington and Begbroke. We think similar concerns should be properly considered here, alongside the scale, height and intensity of the proposed Campsfield expansion.

The Planning Inspectorate should require the Home Office to show clearly which parts of the site are already developed, which parts remain open, and how the new buildings, fencing, parking, lighting and hardstanding would affect the openness of the Green Belt.

Local infrastructure and environmental impact

The application does not provide enough evidence about the impact of a much larger detention centre on the local area.

We are concerned about the effect of this proposal on local infrastructure.

The Planning Inspectorate should consider these impacts alongside other planned and permitted development in the area, not look at Campsfield in isolation. The local area is already facing major development pressures, including housing, business and innovation development, and other large projects.

The redaction of transport information is especially concerning because traffic, access, parking and construction traffic are central planning issues. The public needs enough information to understand how the expansion would affect the local road network and local infrastructure.

Conflict with local planning priorities

The area around Langford Lane, London Oxford Airport, Oxford Technology Park and Begbroke Science Park is identified for high-value employment and economic growth. A large immigration detention centre is not the same kind of use as science, technology, research, innovation or airport-related employment.

The Home Office should not be allowed to rely on general job creation alone to claim that the proposal fits the local economic strategy. The Planning Inspectorate should consider whether the expansion genuinely fits the adopted development plan and local planning priorities for this area.

Owing to the proven harm caused to people by immigration detention, we do not think that an immigration detention centre should not be treated as high-value employment.

Redacted and withheld information

Important information has been withheld or redacted. This includes material about layout, design, lighting, transport, drainage, landscape and visual impact, and how the site would operate.

Some security-sensitive information may need to be protected, but the public still needs enough information to understand the planning impacts.

The Planning Inspectorate should not approve a major expansion of a detention centre on Green Belt land without proper public scrutiny.

The withholding of key information makes it harder for local people, community groups and public bodies to understand the real impact of the proposal. This is especially serious because the Home Office is using the Crown Development route, which removes the decision from ordinary local determination by Cherwell District Council.

Request for refusal and public inquiry

For these reasons, we object to the application and ask that it is refused. If it is not refused at this stage, we ask the Planning Inspectorate to examine the application through a full public inquiry after the consultation closes.

This application raises serious questions about Green Belt harm, the scale and height of the new buildings, local infrastructure, the evidence for the expansion, and the

impact of withholding parts of the application from public view. These issues should not be decided through written representations alone.

We believe that a public inquiry would allow the Home Office's case to be scrutinised in public and the evidence to be properly tested before any decision is made.

Yours faithfully,

Jonathan Ellis

On behalf of

The Detention Forum – www.detentionforum.org.uk

20th July 2026