Planning Inspectorate

Pre-Inquiry Note – Haslar IRC

Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (Section 293D application)

6 October 2026

Application Reference: CROWN/2026/0000005

Site address: Haslar Immigration Removal Centre (IRC), Dolphin Way, Gosport PO12 2AW.

- The Crown Development Application was made under Section 293D of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (TCPA) by The Home Office.
- The site is located within the local planning authority area of Gosport Borough Council.
- The application dated 29 May 2026, and following validation, was accepted for consideration on 3 July 2026.
- The development proposed is an outline planning application with all matters reserved (except for access) for the expansion of Haslar IRC comprising the development of new accommodation blocks and ancillary supporting accommodation, the conversion and expansion of existing site infrastructure including internal roads, demolition of existing structures, minor amendment to coastal path to accommodate the creation of additional car parking, landscaping and associated site infrastructure.
- Inquiry date 17-19 November 2026 at Gosport Town Hall, High Street, Gosport PO12 1EB.

The planning file can be found here: CROWN/2026/0000005 Haslar IRC

Gosport Borough Council objects to the proposal. Its concerns focus on heritage and design, ecology, flood risk, transport and parking, the implications for wider Haslar Peninsula regeneration, and the extent of redactions within the application documents.

The Council considers that the scale, massing and appearance (all reserved for future approval) of the proposed accommodation blocks would harm the character and appearance of the Haslar Barracks Conservation Area and the setting of heritage assets associated with Royal Hospital Haslar. It is also concerned that the expanded IRC may undermine longer-term heritage-led regeneration objectives for the peninsula.

Further concerns relate to whether sufficient evidence has been provided to demonstrate that flood risk, ecological impacts and protected species issues can be satisfactorily addressed. In transport terms, the Council questions parking demand assumptions and the potential for overspill parking, although it accepts that mitigation may be possible through conditions and planning obligations. Finally, the

Council maintains that extensive redactions hindered meaningful scrutiny of the application and constrained its assessment of several aspects of the proposal.

A substantial number of representations (approximately 500) have been received in relation to the application, the majority of which object to the proposal. Responses were submitted by local residents, community groups, amenity societies, planning consultants, Dame Caroline Dinenage MP**,** national charities, refugee and detention reform organisations and other interested parties. Whilst a small number of representations support the proposal or raise no objection, objections substantially outweigh expressions of support.

The most common issue raised concerns the need for and justification of the proposed expansion of the Immigration Removal Centre. Numerous respondents question whether the applicant has demonstrated a clear requirement for an additional 470 detention places and why such a substantial increase in capacity is necessary before the refurbished facility has resumed operation.

Several representations contend that alternative approaches, including greater use of community-based measures and alternatives to detention, have not been adequately explored. Organisations including Amnesty International, the Detention Forum, the Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network and the Coalition to Close Campsfield raise similar concerns and question the evidence supporting the claimed operational need for the development.

Other concerns raised include the effect on the development on housing delivery and wider regeneration objectives for the Haslar Peninsula, harm to the historic environment and result in unacceptable ecological and transport impacts.

Any interested party wishing to speak at the Inquiry should register with the Case Officer by emailing crownapplications@planninginspectorate.gov.uk before midday on **Friday 13 November 202**

No parties have currently requested or sought Rule 13 status under Rule 13(4).

It should be noted that the Inquiry will not consider the merits or otherwise of Government immigration policy. The need for, or desirability of, national immigration policy is not a matter for the Appointed Person. The Inquiry's role is confined to considering the planning issues raised by the proposed development and the extent to which it accords with the relevant statutory and policy framework. Evidence and submissions should therefore be directed to material planning considerations rather than wider matters of Government policy.

Main Issues

Having regard to the application submissions, the consultation responses and comments – from statutory consultees, the local community and interested parties more widely - the Council's report and resolution, the main issues for this outline application at this stage are:

1) Whether the principle of the development is acceptable, having regard to the operational need for the proposed expansion and the regeneration objectives for the Haslar Peninsula, including those in the emerging Gosport Borough Local Plan.

2) The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area, including the character or appearance of the Haslar Barracks Conservation Area, the setting and significance of nearby heritage assets, and the wider regeneration of the Haslar Peninsula.

3) The effect of the development on the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers, with particular regard to outlook, privacy, noise, lighting, traffic and construction activity.

4) Whether the proposed access arrangements, local highway network, parking provision and emergency access arrangements would satisfactorily accommodate the development.

5) Whether the development would be safe and acceptable having regard to flood risk, coastal change, climate-change resilience and emergency evacuation arrangements.

6) The effect of the development on ecology, biodiversity, protected species and habitats, the coastal environment and public access to the coast.

7) Whether sufficient information has been provided to enable the relevant planning effects of the development to be properly assessed.

Notes

The Secretary of State has exercised the powers conferred by legislation by issuing a Security Direction requiring the information identified in Annex A[1] to be treated as "sensitive information" for the purposes of section 293H(7) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

The observations made by interested parties regarding the redactions are noted, including concerns relating to transparency, public scrutiny and the inability to comment on information subject to the Security Direction. However, the Appointed Person, the Applicant and all other participants in the Inquiry are required to comply with the terms of that Direction.

The existence of the Security Direction does not prevent interested parties from raising concerns or making representations on the planning merits of the proposal, including its potential effects on matters such as traffic, parking, heritage, ecology or flood risk. Equally, it does not prevent the Applicant from responding to those concerns. Parties are encouraged to fully address the planning issues arising from the proposal and to assist the Inquiry by responding to questions from the Appointed Person, whilst remaining mindful of the restrictions imposed by the Security Direction.

At present, the Appointed Person does not intend to exercise powers to hold any part of the Inquiry in private, including under section 321 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Accordingly, all Inquiry sessions are expected to be conducted in public in accordance with the applicable Inquiry Rules, and parties should prepare and present their cases on that basis.

[1] Annex A: Secretary of State Security Direction

Draft Outline Agenda for the Inquiry

Tuesday 17 November 16.30hrs

The Inquiry will open with a brief introduction from the Appointed Person, following which interested parties will have the opportunity to address the Inquiry. As a general guide, speakers should aim to limit their remarks to around five minutes, although some flexibility may be afforded depending on the number of participants wishing to speak.

Those speaking in opposition to the proposal should be prepared to answer questions from the Appointed Person and the Applicant's advocate.

To ensure that time is used effectively, speakers are requested not to repeat points already made by others. Where a number of individuals or organisations share similar concerns, they may find it helpful to nominate a spokesperson to present submissions on their behalf. Where this occurs, additional time may be afforded to the spokesperson as appropriate.

The Inquiry will consider the planning merits of the proposal. It will not be a forum for debating the merits or otherwise of wider Government immigration policy, which falls outside the scope of the application and the Appointed Person’s remit.

Once interested parties have been heard, the Applicant will be invited to respond briefly to any matters raised, if necessary.

Wednesday 18 and Thursday 19 November starting at 10.00hrs

The Inquiry will resume with formal opening statements from the Applicant and Gosport Borough Council. As a guide, opening statements should not normally exceed 20 minutes.

The Council will then present its case and evidence. Following the examination-in-chief of each witness, the Applicant's advocate will have the opportunity to cross-examine. The Council may then undertake re-examination where necessary.

The Applicant will subsequently present its case in a similar manner, with witnesses giving evidence and being subject to cross-examination by the Council's advocate.

Subject to progress, the Inquiry is likely to include a round-table discussion on planning conditions and planning obligations that would be required in the event that permission were to be granted. Having heard from all the witnesses, closing submissions will be made, with the Council speaking first, followed by the Applicant.

A more detailed Inquiry programme will be issued once proofs of evidence have been submitted and the likely timing of witnesses has been confirmed by the advocates.

Proofs of evidence and inquiry statements are due by 20 October 2026.