Home Office

Proof of Evidence of William Round

Senior Responsible Owner
Immigration Removal Centre Expansion Programme
Haslar Immigration Removal Centre (IRC) Phase 2

Crown Development Application CROWN/2026/0000005

October 2026

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2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 My name is [redacted]. I am a Senior Civil Servant working within Immigration Enforcement in the Home Office. I have been the Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) for the Immigration Removal Centre Expansion Programme (IRCEP) since 20 May 2024.

2.2 My published appointment letter records that I have personal responsibility for delivery of the build phases at Campsfield and Haslar, as well as the Operating Service Provider contracts for both sites. The Programme forms part of the Government Major Projects Portfolio[1].

2.3 As SRO, I oversee the Programme's delivery and the development of its operational requirements and business case. I am also responsible for key decisions on contractual commitments and for ensuring that delivery risks are identified and managed appropriately.

2.4 I have been a civil servant since June 2017, and have worked in a range of project delivery, operational, policy, communications and private office roles across four government departments.

2.5 My qualifications are:

2.5.1 I hold a degree in Philosophy, Politics and Economics from the University of Oxford.

2.5.2 I am a graduate of the Major Projects Leadership Academy, Saïd Business School, University of Oxford.

2.6 The purpose of this Proof of Evidence is to:

2.6.1 Explain the role of immigration detention within the returns system;

2.6.2 Explain the national and long-term need for additional detention capacity and the role of Haslar Phase 2 in meeting it;

2.6.3 Explain the operational consequences if the proposed capacity is not delivered;

2.6.4 Explain the principal safeguards relevant to the welfare and vulnerability of people detained in IRCs.

2.7 I am providing evidence as the Programme SRO. I am not in a position to provide expert planning evidence. Those matters will be addressed by relevant documentation and witnesses.

2.8 The evidence which I have prepared and provide in this proof of evidence is true and I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.

2.9 Some documents submitted in support of the outline planning application contain limited redactions. These were made where the Home Office considered that disclosure could reveal sensitive information relating to the security, operation or

[1] Immigration Removal Centre (IRC) Expansion programme appointment letter for Will Round, January 2025 (accessible) - GOV.UK

resilience of the immigration detention estate, including information that could undermine the safe and effective operation of the IRC and its facilities.

2.10 The Home Office considers that these limited redactions do not prevent the principal planning issues from being properly considered. Sufficient information has been made publicly available to explain the proposal and its purpose, and to enable effective scrutiny throughout the planning process.

3. THE IMMIGRATION REMOVAL CENTRE EXPANSION PROGRAMME

3.1 IRCEP's purpose is to deliver a combined 1,000 additional male detention places through expanded and modernised facilities. This requirement is a priority for Government ministers and has been approved and funded through the relevant cross-government processes, including HM Treasury approval. The Programme's business case has been subject to extensive cross-government scrutiny and assurance.

3.2 IRCEP supports the Government's priorities by increasing the detention capacity required to support the enforced removal of people who have no legal right to remain in the United Kingdom[2].

3.3 Haslar is being delivered in phases. Phase 1 comprised works on the existing but unused IRC and is expected to open in 2027, with 130 places. Phase 2 is proposed to provide a further 470 places, bringing the site's total capacity to 600. The published Haslar factsheet also confirms that Phase 2 requires planning permission and is being pursued through the Crown Development route[3].

3.4 Detention capacity is a critical, long-term constraint within the wider returns system. Haslar Phase 2 would provide 470 of the 1,000 additional places approved by Government to address the unmet need for expansion of this type of facility. Without those places, the Home Office would have less capacity and resilience to carry out enforced returns of people with no right to remain in the United Kingdom, including time-served Foreign National Offenders (FNOs).

3.5 Haslar Phase 2 therefore represents an essential component of the approved IRCEP programme. It is not discretionary capacity that could be removed without affecting the programme's intended benefits.

4. ROLE OF IMMIGRATION DETENTION

4.1 Immigration detention is an administrative measure used in support of the United Kingdom's immigration and returns system. The power to detain for immigration purposes is set out in primary legislation, principally the Immigration Act 1971, and

[2] 6 December 2024: Immigration Removal Centre (IRC) Expansion Programme (IRCEP) Accounting Officer Assessment - GOV.UK

[3] Haslar immigration removal centre: factsheet - GOV.UK

must be exercised in accordance with the wider legal framework, including the Human Rights Act 1998 and the European Convention on Human Rights

4.2 Published Home Office policy states that there is a presumption in favour of immigration bail and that alternatives to detention are used wherever possible. Decisions to detain are made on a case-by-case basis and must be supported by a statutory power and comply with published Home Office policy. Continued detention is kept under review, taking account of the individual's circumstances, any evidence of vulnerability and whether there remains a realistic prospect of removal within a reasonable period. As set out in the Home Office's Detention: general instructions guidance, "*detention is most usually appropriate to effect removal; initially to establish a person's identity or basis of claim; or where there is reason to believe that the person will fail to comply with any conditions attached to a grant of immigration bail.*"[4].

4.3 Every decision to detain or maintain detention remains subject to the statutory and policy framework. Capacity enables lawful decisions to be implemented where detention is assessed as necessary and appropriate; the volume of capacity does not itself determine who should be detained and for how long.

4.4 IRCs provide secure accommodation for individuals detained under immigration powers. They form part of the infrastructure that supports the immigration and returns system, allowing individuals to be detained safely and securely while their cases are progressed and, where appropriate, removal arrangements are completed.

4.5 Public protection is an important part of the role of immigration detention, particularly in cases involving time-served FNOs awaiting deportation. Where deportation at the end of a custodial sentence is not immediately possible, detention can help manage the risk of harm to the public and the risk of absconding while removal is pursued. It is not, however, a further punishment or an automatic consequence of criminality. Decisions to detain or maintain detention are made on a case-by-case basis, balancing public protection and immigration control considerations against the individual's circumstances, including any evidence of vulnerability, and whether removal remains realistically achievable within a reasonable period.

4.6 The availability of sufficient detention capacity is therefore a critical element of an effective immigration system. It enables the Home Office to carry out its statutory responsibilities and maintain operational resilience.

5. DEMAND / NEED

5.1 The immigration detention estate has an overall capacity of approximately 2,600 beds. However, this figure represents the estate's maximum capacity rather than the number of beds available for operational use at any given time. In practice, the number of beds in commission is typically lower, reflecting routine operational requirements, maintenance activity, estate management considerations and the need to maintain operational flexibility across the detention estate.

5.2 The difference between headline and effective capacity reflects a range of operational constraints necessary to ensure the safe, secure and effective operation

[4] Detention: general instructions (accessible) - GOV.UK

of the detention estate. These include maintenance and refurbishment of the estate, welfare and risk management considerations, and the need to maintain sufficient operational resilience.

5.3 Examples include:

5.3.1 **Single occupancy requirements arising from individual risk assessments.** While much of the detention estate comprises shared accommodation, some detained individuals require single occupancy rooms where risks cannot be appropriately managed through room sharing arrangements.

5.3.2 **The need to maintain operational headroom to respond to incidents and support priority operational activity**, including the detention and removal of the highest harm individuals, such as time-served FNOs.

5.3.3 **Maintenance, refurbishment and infrastructure works across the estate**. For example, Dungavel IRC was recently closed for refurbishment works, reducing available capacity by approximately 150 beds. While such temporary reductions contribute to pressure on operational capacity, they are not a primary driver of the requirement for additional detention capacity.

5.4 As a result, the effective operational capacity of the detention estate is materially lower than its headline capacity.

5.5 Where suitable detention capacity is unavailable, the Home Office's ability to detain individuals pending removal is constrained. This directly limits the Department's ability to remove individuals who have no lawful basis to remain in the UK. As a result, this impacts the Department's ability to enforce immigration law effectively, uphold the integrity of the UK's immigration system and achieve its public protection goals.

5.6 The Home Office uses operational analysis and demand modelling to inform future detention capacity requirements.

5.7 Home Office capacity assessments consider a range of factors that influence demand for detention, including:

5.7.1 The number and characteristics of individuals entering the immigration system;

5.7.2 Forecast removals activity;

5.7.3 Case progression and decision-making timescales;

5.7.4 Detention suitability assessments and operational requirements; and

5.7.5 The need to maintain sufficient resilience across the detention estate.

5.8 The Department's assessment of future demand indicates a sustained gap between the effective operational capacity available across the detention estate and the level of capacity required to meet current and forecast demand. As a result, the Department considers additional detention capacity to be a long-term requirement.

5.9 This requirement has been recognised through the published Accounting Officer Assessment for the IRCEP, which assessed and recorded the approved requirement for an additional 1,000 detention bed spaces. Haslar's proposed capacity of approximately 470 places would contribute towards meeting this requirement and help address the wider shortfall in detention capacity identified through the Department's long-term demand assessment.

6. ASSURANCE OF NEED

6.1 The requirement for additional detention capacity has been considered and endorsed through successive ministerial, financial and departmental governance processes. Ministers have repeatedly confirmed the importance of expanding the detention estate, and the Programme's business cases (including the Outline Business Case launching Phase 2) have been repeatedly approved by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

6.2 Within the Home Office, the Programme and its underlying requirement have been scrutinised through the Investment Committee and the Migration and Borders Transformation Board. The Permanent Secretary, as Accounting Officer, concluded through the published Accounting Officer Assessment that the Programme met the required tests for regularity, propriety, value for money and feasibility. The Migration and Borders System Board also approved the evidential basis for expansion.

6.3 Funding to complete Phase 2 at Campsfield and Haslar was subsequently allocated through the Spending Review in 2025. The Programme has also been subject to an assurance review by the National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority, supporting its continued progression.

6.4 Taken together, these decisions demonstrate that the requirement has been tested repeatedly at ministerial, departmental and cross-government level. They do not remove the need to keep demand and delivery under review, which I continue to do as SRO. They do, however, demonstrate that the additional capacity requirement is an approved and assured government requirement driven by policy, rather than an assumption developed solely to support this planning application.

7. ALTERNATIVE SITES AND CAPACITY OPTIONS

Rationale for Expanding an Existing site

7.1 The Home Office identified a requirement to increase immigration detention capacity as part of its long-term detention estate strategy. In considering how that capacity could be delivered, a range of factors were assessed including operational effectiveness, deliverability, value for money, programme timescales, Government ownership or control of land, existing infrastructure, site constraints and operational suitability.

7.2 Through the options appraisal process, the redevelopment and expansion of existing immigration detention assets was identified as the preferred approach. Existing sites offered significant advantages over the development of entirely new facilities, including established detention use, existing infrastructure and utilities, operational familiarity, reduced delivery risk and the opportunity to build upon previous Government investment. The redevelopment and expansion of Campsfield and Haslar were assessed through the IRCEP business case process and identified as the preferred combination for delivering the required capacity.

7.3 The appraisal also considered whether the requirement could be met through new sites, temporary accommodation or other parts of the Government estate. Those approaches were rejected or deprioritised because of disadvantages relating to security requirements, availability, scale, location, operational complexity or delivery time. Expanding suitable former IRC sites offered the most credible combination of pace, operational suitability and deliverability.

Rationale for Haslar's selection

7.4 Haslar was identified as one of a limited number of sites capable of making a meaningful contribution to the Home Office's capacity requirement. It is a government-controlled site with a long-established history of immigration detention use, structurally suitable buildings capable of refurbishment, existing infrastructure and service connections, sufficient land for phased expansion and good access to the strategic road network and relevant airports.

7.5 Based on alignment with operational requirements, deliverability, programme certainty and value for money, Haslar emerged as one of the most suitable locations for delivering additional capacity and was subsequently progressed as part of the IRCEP.

7.6 Haslar was not selected in isolation. Other Government-controlled and former secure sites were considered, but they presented material disadvantages relating to availability, location, scale, operational complexity or delivery time. Campsfield and Haslar were identified as the combination best able to provide the required 1,000-place uplift. A comprehensive assessment of potential alternatives did not identify any suitable site capable of delivering Haslar's planned contribution within the required timeframe, with an equivalent level of operational suitability, deliverability and certainty.

Rationale for the 470 additional places

7.7 The additional 470 places would complete Haslar's planned contribution to the wider IRCEP programme. The phased approach allowed the existing facility to be refurbished and reopened first, followed by the proposed purpose-built expansion through Phase 2. The business case concluded that stopping after Phase 1 would not provide the capacity required by the long-term detention estate strategy.

7.8 The public factsheet confirms that the Phase 2 proposals would provide an additional 470 bedspaces[5]. This expansion is critical to strengthen detention capacity, enabling more enforced returns, including of Foreign National Offenders,

[5] Haslar immigration removal centre: factsheet - GOV.UK

and individuals with no lawful right to remain, thereby supporting public safety, border integrity and the resilience of the immigration system.

7.9 The proposed scale reflects the capacity assessed as deliverable within the site while providing the infrastructure and supporting facilities required for safe and effective operation. It balances the Home Office's capacity requirement against the physical, operational and planning constraints of the site.

8. CONSEQUENCES OF NON-DELIVERY

8.1 The proposed Phase 2 development would provide 470 of the additional places included in the approved IRCEP. If Phase 2 is not delivered, those places would not become available, and a material part of the identified detention capacity requirement would remain unmet.

8.2 As explained earlier in my evidence, the headline capacity of the detention estate is greater than the capacity that is available for operational use at any particular time. Where suitable accommodation is unavailable when required, the Home Office has less flexibility to respond to changes in demand, manage maintenance and temporary disruption elsewhere in the estate, and to support planned enforced-removal activity. Non-delivery of Phase 2 would therefore perpetuate an identified constraint within the wider returns system.

8.3 Phase 1 was planned as the first stage of Haslar's redevelopment. Without Phase 2, Haslar would not make its intended contribution to the Home Office's long-term detention capacity requirement, and the supporting infrastructure and investment at the site would not be used to the extent envisaged by the Programme.

8.4 Non-delivery would therefore have consequences beyond the loss of 470 individual places. It would reduce the capacity and resilience planned across the detention estate, leave the Home Office less able to accommodate operational and refurbishment pressures, and limit the benefits expected from the phased redevelopment of Haslar.

8.5 More broadly, sufficient suitable detention capacity supports effective immigration control and public protection. Detention facilities form part of the infrastructure that the planning system recognises as serving a legitimate public safety function. Non-delivery of Haslar Phase 2 would reduce the capacity available to support enforced removals, including the removal of time-served FNOs, and would leave an unmet need for this type of facility.

8.6 For these reasons, I conclude that there is a compelling national need for the proposed development. The evidence demonstrates: (a) that detention capacity is a critical operational constraint on the returns system; (b) that the requirement for additional capacity has been comprehensively assured and approved at ministerial, departmental and cross-government level; (c) that Haslar Phase 2 forms an essential part of the approved programme and is not discretionary capacity; and (d) that non-delivery would leave an unmet need for this type of facility which cannot be met elsewhere within the required timeframe. The proposed development would therefore make an important contribution to the Government's objectives for immigration control and public safety.

9. WELFARE, VULNERABILITY AND SAFEGUARDING

9.1 The welfare and rights of detained individuals are safeguarded through a comprehensive framework of legislation, published policy and operational standards, including the Detention Centre Rules 2001[6], the Adults at Risk policy[7] and published detention guidance[8]. In practice, these safeguards apply both when an individual is first considered for detention and throughout their time in an IRC.

9.2 Individuals in IRCs have access to healthcare, welfare and faith services, legal representatives and established complaints procedures. Healthcare professionals can identify physical or mental health needs and raise concerns where detention may be affecting an individual's health or wellbeing. Relevant information is considered when the Home Office reviews whether continued detention remains appropriate. Decisions to detain and maintain detention are subject to ongoing review, including consideration of vulnerability and welfare needs. A key safeguard is the Adults at Risk policy, which assists decision-makers in identifying and considering indicators of vulnerability when determining whether detention remains appropriate.

9.3 These arrangements are supported by independent oversight and scrutiny. IRCs are monitored by Independent Monitoring Boards, which monitor the treatment and conditions experienced by detained individuals, and inspected by HM Inspectorate of Prisons and subject to wider operational and contractual assurance processes. Findings and recommendations from inspections and reviews are used to inform policy and operational practice across the detention estate.

9.4 The Home Office has learned lessons from the unacceptable mistreatment identified by the Brook House Inquiry. Changes introduced across the detention estate included strengthened assessment of suitability for detention, improved training and support for staff working with vulnerable people, closer oversight of service providers and stronger arrangements for reviewing complaints, incidents and uses of force.

9.5 In developing Haslar IRC, the Home Office has undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) to consider the potential impacts on individuals with protected characteristics and to ensure compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty. The EqIA will continue to be reviewed as the project develops.

9.6 In addition to these operational safeguards, the proposed development has been designed to provide a safe, secure and appropriate environment for those accommodated at Haslar IRC. The scheme is not simply an increase in accommodation capacity; it includes purpose-built accommodation and supporting infrastructure designed to meet the day-to-day needs of residents and support the effective operation of the centre. The layout and detailed design will be carefully developed at reserved matters stage, informed by operational experience, lessons learned across the detention estate and established best practice in the design of

[6] Detention Centre Rules 2001

[7] Adults at risk in immigration detention (accessible) - GOV.UK

[8] Detention: general instructions (accessible) - GOV.UK

secure residential environments. As a result, the development seeks to support resident welfare and wellbeing whilst maintaining the safety, security and operational resilience required of an IRC.

10. PROTEST ACTIVITY AND OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT

10.1 Haslar IRC has historically attracted public interest, and it is recognised that some individuals and groups may choose to exercise their lawful right to peaceful protest in connection with immigration detention. The Home Office respects the right to peaceful protest and recognises the important role it plays in a democratic society, whilst also seeking to ensure the safe, secure and effective operation of the immigration detention estate.

10.2 Protest activity is not unique to Haslar and has occurred previously at a number of IRCs across the detention estate. Whilst protest activity may occur from time to time in association with the proposed development, the Home Office has long-standing experience of managing such activity safely with the appropriate operational procedures, security measures and multi-agency arrangements in place. These are all designed to maintain the safety and welfare of detained individuals, staff, visitors and local communities. It is therefore considered that any protest will continue to be managed through the established procedures already in place.

10.3 It is therefore my view that any protest activity associated with the operation of the IRC can be appropriately managed through established procedures and partnership arrangements.

10.4 Furthermore, the IRC is designed to operate as a self-contained facility, with appropriate healthcare, welfare, catering, recreational and other services provided on site. Individuals detained under immigration powers are detained within the secure centre and are not permitted to leave to access the local area or local services. Haslar will therefore not place additional demand on local services, although occasional access to emergency or specialist healthcare may be clinically necessary.The IRC also incorporates robust physical security measures. Its operation is therefore not expected to place additional pressure on local facilities or give rise to unacceptable impacts on the surrounding community.

11. SUMMARY

11.1 In this evidence, I have explained why additional detention capacity is needed and why Haslar Phase 2 forms an important part of the approved Immigration Removal Centre Expansion Programme. Detention capacity is a critical, long-term constraint within the wider returns system, and the proposed development would provide 470 additional places while increasing resilience across the detention estate. This evidence demonstrates a clear national need for expansion of the facility.

11.2 Haslar offers a deliverable way of meeting part of that requirement by expanding an established operational site with existing infrastructure and previous Government

investment. The expansion would operate within the same statutory, operational, healthcare and safeguarding framework that applies across the detention estate.

11.3 In my view as SRO, Haslar Phase 2 is a necessary and deliverable component of the approved expansion programme. It would address an identified long-term capacity constraint, strengthen resilience across the detention estate and provide modern accommodation and supporting facilities operating within the established safeguards for those detained. Further, this is public service infrastructure serving a facility which contributes to achieving public safety.

[redacted]

October 2026