

I am writing to object to the Home Office's proposal to expand Haslar Immigration Removal Centre in Gosport. The application reference is **CROWN/2026/0000005**.

I am a member of a national network and a local community organisation concerned about immigration detention but am writing in a personal capacity. I have visited people held in detention in Campsfield House and Yarls Wood IRCs and knew visitors to Haslar before the centre closed in 2015. I have seen how immigration detention is harmful to those detained and has a negative impact on all those with whom they have relationships. I am alarmed at the proposals for the reopening and expansion of Haslar and the expansion of Campsfield House.

Haslar has not yet reopened. The Home Office says the refurbished centre would hold up to **130 people**, with reopening expected in **2027**. The current application seeks permission to add up to **470 more detention places**, taking Haslar to a **600-bed detention centre**. In addition it is proposed that Campsfield House be expanded to 400 places. Together this means effectively **1000 new places** in the detention estate, provided by private companies for profit. I am disappointed that after previous closures the direction of travel has changed so substantially. The argument that these are needed is not persuasive. Alternatives should be explored.

My objections to the proposals for Haslar IRC are as follows

Flood risk, coastal safety and climate change

Haslar is a coastal site near the Solent. The Flood Risk Assessment says the site is partly in Flood Zone 3, is over 1 hectare, and is at risk of surface water flooding. It also says the proposed IRC expansion is classed as a "more vulnerable" use [1st Horizon, Haslar IRC, Gosport Flood Risk Assessment, Rev E, 1 May 2026, paras 2.1.6 and 1.8]..

There are also serious concerns about surface water flooding, including safe access to and exit from the site during severe weather. The Flood Risk Assessment identifies two areas of potential high-risk surface water ponding in the north of the site, and states that the route used to enter and leave the site has a high risk of surface water flooding [1st Horizon, Haslar IRC, Gosport Flood Risk Assessment, Rev E, 1 May 2026, para 8.2.3].

Climate change makes these concerns more serious. The Flood Risk Assessment says it must take account of climate change over the lifetime of the development, including sea level rise, increased rainfall intensity, offshore wind speed and extreme wave height [1st Horizon, Haslar IRC, Gosport Flood Risk Assessment, Rev E, 1 May 2026, paras 2.1.3 and 2.2.3–2.2.4].

This is supported by the wider Partnership for South Hampshire Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, which assesses flood risk now and in the future, taking account of climate change and cumulative development impacts. The strategic assessment includes East Solent coastal modelling for Gosport to Warsash and identifies a breach location at Haslar sea wall, south of Dolphin Way [Partnership for South Hampshire, Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment: Part 1 Main Report, 2024, paras 3.6.2 and 3.6.5–3.6.7; Appendix B1, East Solent Model Re-Simulations, 2024].

The Coastal Modelling Report prepared for the application gives sea-level rise estimates from a 2017 base year to 2125 of 1.093m under the higher central allowance and 1.467m under the upper end allowance [1st Horizon, Haslar IRC, Gosport Coastal Modelling Report, Rev E, 17 April 2026, Table 2.3].

Coastal Partners, the council's flood risk and coastal erosion specialists, have also warned that the site will be increasingly affected by climate change and will move further within Flood Zones 2 and 3 during the lifetime of the development. They also noted that there is no current or proposed investment to improve the flood defence, and that Environment Agency coastal erosion mapping shows the site at risk of erosion by 2055 [Gosport Borough Council pre-application advice / Coastal Partners comments, reproduced in Appendix C to the Haslar Planning Statement].

The Flood Evacuation Management Plan relies on measures such as raised floor levels, flood-resilient construction, flood warnings, staged evacuation procedures and drainage systems. But the existence of an evacuation plan does not remove the planning concern. It shows that flood evacuation is a serious operational issue.

This matters because Haslar would be a locked detention centre. People detained there would not be free to leave if there was a flood warning, severe weather, a failure of flood defences or another emergency

The Flood Evacuation Management Plan says Haslar would have capacity for 600 beds and that, in some circumstances, residents may need to be evacuated in stages, with people moved to another IRC or holding centre if transport is delayed [1st Horizon, Haslar IRC Flood Evacuation Management Plan, Rev F, 10 April 2026, paras 2.2.1 and 3.2.1]. It also says that, in an extreme flooding event, the whole site would be required to evacuate [1st Horizon, Haslar IRC Flood Evacuation Management Plan, Rev F, 10 April 2026, para 2.3.4].

The Coastal Modelling Report also shows why the breach scenario needs proper scrutiny. It says that, under the modelled breach scenario, the maximum modelled flood depth within the developable area exceeds 1.20m, and that the south-eastern boundary of the proposed buildings shows typical flood depths of 1.20m to 1.50m [1st Horizon, Haslar IRC, Gosport Coastal Modelling Report, Rev E, 17 April 2026, paras 7.1.2–7.1.3].

The risk assessment says that apart from the 2 areas of high risk too surface water flooding the risk is otherwise 'negligible'. Nonetheless it is recommended that the staff be registered with the Environment agency Floodlines Warnings Direct Service.

Clear evidence is required to demonstrate that these arrangements would be realistic and sufficient for a locked 600-bed detention centre, including during coastal flooding, surface water flooding, storms, sea level rise, flood defence failure and emergency evacuation. This should include evidence about detained people, staff, visitors, emergency services, escort vehicles, transport providers and the local road network.

The need for expansion has not been properly shown

It is not clear why 470 extra detention places are needed at Haslar This is especially concerning because Haslar has not yet reopened. The Home Office is asking for permission to expand the site to 600 places before the refurbished 130-bed centre has opened or tested in practice.

The Home Office should explain why existing IRC capacity is not enough; what alternatives have been considered, including alternatives to detention; why the expansion has to happen at Haslar; why it is asking to expand Haslar before the reopened centre has operated in practice; why a locked 600-bed detention centre is suitable on this coastal site; and how the impacts on flooding, emergency evacuation, local services, healthcare, traffic, public access, ecology and the local community would be managed.

This matters because the Home Office is relying on claimed need to justify a very large expansion. If the need for more detention places at Haslar has not been properly evidenced, the expansion should not be approved.

Healthcare and emergency services

The Home Office's assessment accepts that access to secondary care within the local area is part of healthcare provision at the IRC.

A 600-bed detention centre could create demand on local NHS services, emergency services and secure transport arrangements, including planned hospital appointments, emergency escorts, ambulance use, hospital care, mental health crisis support, medication issues and other urgent healthcare needs.

The Planning Inspectorate should require clear evidence about what this would mean for services in Gosport and the surrounding area, including whether local NHS bodies, ambulance services, police, fire and rescue services have confirmed that they can safely manage the additional demand.

There is historically a poor track record on health care provision in IRCs, and while pressure on local services may play a role, too often this has been the result of a culture of indifference and disbelief. I write from personal experience on a stakeholder committee which held discussions with IRC centre management over several years.

Local infrastructure, public access and environmental impact

A 600-bed detention centre would not just affect the land inside the secure boundary. It could also affect roads, traffic, parking, construction movements, emergency access, public access to the coast, wildlife, ecology, biodiversity, landscape, heritage and the character of the area.

The expansion would involve more buildings, fencing, lighting, CCTV, hardstanding, internal roads and operational activity. The application site also includes field areas, car parking, grassed land and land near the coast. The proposal includes changes to the England Coastal Path.

Public access to the coast is important. The Planning Inspectorate should consider whether the expansion would affect the safety, openness, accessibility and character of this part of the coast, as well as the experience of nearby residents and people using the area.

The site is in a sensitive coastal environment, and Haslar is near historic buildings and heritage sites, including the Haslar Barracks Conservation Area and Fort Monckton. The Planning Inspectorate should require clear evidence that the proposal would not cause unacceptable harm to local infrastructure, ecology, biodiversity, protected habitats, landscape, public access, heritage or the character of the area.

The Habitat Regulations Assessment identifies six European designated sites within the zone of influence, including Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar and SPA, Portsmouth Harbour Ramsar and SPA, Solent and Isle of Wight Lagoons SAC, and Solent and Dorset Coast SPA [1st Horizon, Haslar IRC, Stage 01 Habitat Regulations Assessment and Stage 02 Appropriate Assessment, Rev H, 21 May 2026, section 6.1].

The same assessment identifies potential impacts during construction and operation, including hydrological nutrient discharge, in-combination effects with other development, loss and disturbance of functionally linked land used by wintering birds, and noise, lighting and visual disturbance. This means the ecological concerns are not just general concerns: the application relies on mitigation and

off-site measures to address identified risks [1st Horizon, Haslar IRC, Stage 01 Habitat Regulations Assessment and Stage 02 Appropriate Assessment, Rev H, 21 May 2026, sections 4.1 and 5.0].

The ecology documents also rely on the fact that Haslar would be a secure IRC, with no movement of residents into surrounding areas, to say there would be no increase in recreational pressure on European sites. That should not be treated as a neutral point. It shows again that the environmental case is partly built around the locked nature of the facility.

The Waste Statement also shows that some practical operational details are still being pushed to later stages. It says exact construction waste volumes cannot be known at this stage, and that the principal contractor would later need to prepare a Site Waste Management Plan. For operational waste, it says exact volumes cannot be known until the operational waste strategy is developed [AtkinsRéalis, Haslar IRC Waste Statement, 17 March 2026, sections 3.0 and 4.1].

Operational waste would not just mean ordinary household rubbish. The Waste Statement refers to food waste, cooking oil, medical waste, bulky waste, WEEE, batteries, hazardous waste and residual waste. The Planning Inspectorate should consider how waste, servicing and operational arrangements would work for a 600-bed secure facility on this site [AtkinsRéalis, Haslar IRC Waste Statement, 17 March 2026, section 4.1].

I am concerned about the effect on wildlife both in the construction phase and subsequently. The assessment notes that there are no vulnerable resident species such as bats or beavers on the site. There is a potential issue for winter migrating birds. Around 10% of the global population of Brent Geese winter on the Solent. This is internationally important. In the risk assessment it is said that there will be consultation with the Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy. The implications are not clear.

Public scrutiny and missing information

There are two problems with public scrutiny in this application.

First, the Home Office has applied for outline planning permission, with only access being decided at this stage. This means the Planning Inspectorate is being asked to decide whether the expansion should be allowed in principle, and how people and vehicles would get in and out of the site.

Other important details may be dealt with later, including the final layout of the buildings, what the buildings would look like, landscaping, and the detailed size and design of the development. This means people are being asked to comment now on whether Haslar should become a 600-bed detention centre, before all the practical details are finalised.

Second, some important information is not being made available for full public consideration because it has been treated as official sensitive information. This includes information about site layout, development parameters, elevations and sections, floor plans, roof plans, landscaping, lighting, accommodation blocks, the Care and Separation Unit, the dining hall, flood evacuation, coastal modelling, ecology and biodiversity, transport and travel planning, local community impact, heritage, and landscape and visual impact.

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

This is especially important because, if outline permission is granted now, the basic principle of expanding Haslar into a much larger detention centre would already have been accepted. Later stages would usually focus on the details of how the expansion is built, rather than reopening the question of whether the expansion should happen at all.

The flood and coastal modelling contain assumptions and limitations. The Coastal Modelling Report states that outputs are only as good as the data inputted, that the model is a simplified representation of the existing ground levels, that roughness values involve modeller preference, and that future climate-change allowances could change and require the model to be revised [1st Horizon, Haslar IRC, Gosport Coastal Modelling Report, Rev E, 17 April 2026, section 8.0]. This modelling should not be regarded as resolving the risk unless the underlying assumptions and limitations are properly tested.

Without enough clear public information, it is very difficult for people to understand what a 600-bed detention centre at Haslar would mean in practice, or to respond properly. The application should not be approved unless the public has enough information to scrutinise the proposal and its impacts.

This is all the more important as the Crown Development planning route is an unusual one, and bypasses local planning processes. I note that the local MP has expressed her objections.

Human impact and detention harm

Immigration detention is expensive, private companies make profits, and the people held in detention suffer serious harm. This has been documented over many years by organisations such as Bail for Immigration Detainees (BiD) and Medial Justice and the Independent Chief Inspectorate for Borders and Immigration (ICIBI). The effects of that 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 Haslar.

The Planning Inspectorate's decision will focus on material planning considerations, but this is not ordinary infrastructure. It is a plan with human implications. The *raison d'être* of the planning application is to refurbish and expand a centre designed for human habitation, to hold individuals for an indeterminate time, in prison like circumstances. They cannot be erased from the plan but underline the need for full scrutiny of a development of this scale and sensitivity.

Request for refusal and public inquiry

For these reasons, I object to the application and ask that it is refused.

If it is not refused at this stage, I ask the Planning Inspectorate to examine the application through a full public inquiry after the consultation closes.

This application raises serious questions about flood risk, coastal safety, climate change, emergency evacuation, the scale of the proposed expansion, local infrastructure, healthcare and emergency services, public access to the coast, ecology, heritage, waste, the evidence for the expansion, the harm caused by detention, and the impact of missing or withheld information.

These issues should not be decided through written representations alone. 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,

Bridget Walker