

Reference: CROWN/2026/0000005

Objection to Haslar Immigration Removal Centre Expansion

On behalf of Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network (QARN)

We are writing to object to the Home Office's proposed expansion of Haslar 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 to inform and support Quakers working under concern, and to work to change the way that refugees and people seeking asylum 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. QARN representatives sit on the national Detention Forum.

Individual Quakers have been involved for many years in visiting individuals held in detention at different sites, and through this we have witnessed the harmful impacts of the use of immigration detention. In our other direct work with refugees, we have also seen that this harm does not come to an end when the person is released back into the community. We are particularly concerned about specific shortcomings of immigration detention such as absence of effective safeguards, provision of health care, access to legal aid, and incarceration of people who should have been exempt because of their vulnerabilities, including previous experiences of captivity and torture.

As noted in the recent Independent Monitoring Board report¹, with reference to immigration detention *"Uncertainty about the future was a regular, and often agonizing part of detained people's day-to-day existence. People in immigration detention often received minimal information and faced unacceptable barriers to accessing legal advice and translation services."* The report also noted that *"Vital safeguards, such as health screenings and age assessments, failed to prevent harm to vulnerable people."*

As a result of such findings in successive independent reports, previous governments have shown some concern about the damaging impact and unjustified costs of immigration detention, and this led to closure of some sites and the successful government-supported piloting of alternatives to detention – the results of which have been ignored, seemingly for political reasons.

QARN sees the proposed expansion of Haslar as both a local and a national issue. The Home Office has not presented proper evidence that it is either appropriate or necessary.

Objections

¹ *National Annual Report 2025, Adult prisons, young offender institutions and immigration detention*, June 2026, Independent Monitoring Board. IMB members are publicly appointed and report on every immigration detention facility across the UK.

- *Risk of overriding significant local concerns:* While QARN is a national body, we understand that many locally-based organisations have raised substantial concerns about expansion of Haslar due to impacts including flood risk, threats to ecology and heritage, as well as pressure on transport and other local infrastructure. We urge the Planning Inspectorate to bear in mind that this is not a straightforward building project. It would require additional scrutiny of healthcare access, emergency evacuation (especially given flood risks), impact on local services, legal access and detainee safeguarding considerations. The process of applying for outline planning permission, only considering road access issues, means that the decision on expansion is being made with a very narrow and inadequate focus, without proper evidence on its impact on people detained and on the local area. The Home Office argues that the Crown Development route is justified by the extent of public interest. We argue that rather than following this procedure which bypasses the local democratic institutions there should be a public inquiry if the planning application is not refused.

- *Lack of evidence that increased capacity is required.* We believe that the Home Office has not properly demonstrated its claim that 470 extra detention places are needed at Haslar. This expansion is part of a national plan to increase detention facilities by 1,000 new places – without proper evidence of need or efficacy. 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.
[\(https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/immigration-detention-in-the-uk/\)](https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/immigration-detention-in-the-uk/)
 It should also be noted that unlawful detention cost the Home Office payments of around £12 million in 2023-24

- *Lack of evidence that immigration detention is safe and effective.* We are disappointed that less harmful alternatives have not been properly considered. As mentioned, previously the government supported pilot projects on alternatives to immigration detention which were found to be more cost effective and less harmful than incarceration. The expansion plan makes no reference to such alternatives or to the serious shortcomings associated with the use of immigration detention. 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. As noted by the Independent Monitoring Board “*most people are released from detention, and less costly and harmful alternatives exist*”. We are disturbed to see this application to continue and expand a system that has been shown to be seriously flawed and ineffective.

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.



on behalf of the Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network garn.org.uk