

Campsfield House, Langford Lane, Kidlington

13/00692/F

Ward: Kidlington North

District Councillor: Cllr Rose
Cllr Williamson

Case Officer: Paul Ihringer

Recommendation: Approval

Applicant: Care and Custody Ltd

Application Description: single storey extension to form

Committee Referral: Major

1. Site Description and Proposed Development

- 1.1 Campsfield House is an Immigration Removal Centre (IRC) located on Kidlington's northern boundary and just to the south of London Oxford Airport. It was acquired by the UK Border Agency (UKBA)* in 1993 having formerly been a young offenders' institution. Aside from bedroom accommodation (single, double or multi occupancy) the centre provides a number of facilities including: a library; sports hall; welfare office; visitor centre; IT room; multi faith prayer room; chapel; shop; health care centre; and dining room.
- 1.2 The most significant extension to the building complex took place prior to the first occupation of the centre by the Immigration Service (see GD.CHS. 1/93). The development included a new visitor centre and a large accommodation block (133 beds). There have been a number of further additions and alterations in the intervening years, including the introduction of a number of portacabins. A development of similar proportions to that approved in 1993 was opposed by the Council in 2004 (see 04/01393/GD) - the application was withdrawn prior to it being examined at a public inquiry in 2005. At present, the IRC can currently house a maximum of 216 detainees. 26 of the allocated spaces form the short stay unit.
- 1.3 Planning permission was recently granted for three relatively modestly proportioned single storey extensions (12/01762/F). The largest of these, to the rear of the main group of buildings, has increased the size of the short stay unit, providing a minimum of 10 additional bed spaces in 4 new rooms. These works are almost complete.
- 1.4 Approval is now being sought for a single storey extension linking an existing sports hall with the previously referred to accommodation block. The newly created space would be used as a fitness room, toilet and shower facility. The existing fitness room will be converted to create a larger mosque (Muslim detainees currently make up 55% of the population). The applicant states that the current toilet/shower facility suffers from condensation problems a result of heavy shower use. This application has been submitted to take advantage of a capital investment scheme introduced by the UKBA in March 2013.

- 1.5 The proposed works will necessitate the reconfiguration of part of the existing internal layout as well as changes to external entrances and windows.

*On 1 April 2013 the UK Border Agency was split into two separate units within the Home Office: a visa and immigration service and an immigration law enforcement division.

2. Application Publicity

- 2.1 The application has been advertised by way of neighbour letter, site notice and press notice. The final date for comment was the 28th June 2013. No correspondence has been received as a result of this consultation process.

3. Consultations

- 3.1 **Kidlington Parish Council:** No objections

Oxfordshire County Council Consultees

- 3.2 **Highways Liaison Officer:** No objections

“The application proposes no change to access and parking.

“The application site comprises a secure residential institution. This application seeks consent to establish a larger fitness suite onsite adjacent to the sports hall on currently unused land. The existing fitness suite will be converted to a larger mosque.

“The application is unlikely to have a material highway impact. I have no objections in principle.”

- 3.3 **Drainage Officer:** No comments received at the time of writing

4. Relevant National and Local Policy and Guidance

4.1 Development Plan Policy

Adopted Cherwell Local Plan (Saved Policies)
GB1: Development in the Green Belt
C28: Layout, design and external appearance of new development
C31: Compatibility of proposals in residential areas

4.2 Other Material Policy and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework

5. Appraisal

- 5.1 The key issue in this case is compliance with Green Belt policy. Paragraph 89 of the NPPF lists the type of development that is acceptable in the Green Belt. The only criterion that could be of potential relevance in this case is that which refers to the extension of a building that would not “*result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building*”. As the building has been significantly extended in the past, it is concluded that the proposed development is in conflict with basic Green Belt policy and guidance. This is notwithstanding the fact that the openness of the Green Belt would not be unduly affected by the extension as it would be largely obscured from the area surrounding the Centre by other parts of the facility.
- 5.2 However, paragraphs 87 and 88 of the NPPF re-affirm previous Government guidance which states that this policy objection can be overcome if there are ‘very special circumstances’ which clearly outweigh the potential harm.
- 5.3 The proposed works, which are of an acceptable design, are not considered in anyway controversial as they are focussed on improving conditions for the detainees during their stay. It is also noted that unlike the 2012 application the Parish Council has not chosen to object (it had previously argued that they were opposed to increasing the number of detainees not improving the facilities).
- 5.4 In order to receive the necessary funding from the Home Office, the operators of Campsfield House will not only have to demonstrate a legitimate need, they will also have to show that they have considered every reasonable alternative in achieving the changes sought e.g. the potential reconfiguration of the existing space.
- 5.5 Officers have concluded that improving the living environment of the detainees as set out above does constitute ‘very special circumstances’ and sufficient justification to overcome the policy objection, particularly as the harm to the Green Belt is limited, The development is therefore considered to accord with Policy GB1 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan.
- 5.6 Given that the proposed works will result in limited additional vehicle movements to the site, it is unsurprising that the local highways authority has not raised any objections or requested that any additional parking spaces be provided.
- 5.7 Based on the assessment above, it is recommended that planning permission should be granted, as the development accords with Policies GB1, C28 and C31 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan and Government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 5.8 Good communications were maintained between the case officer and the applicant’s agent during the application process. The Council has therefore discharged its duty to be proactive in its negotiations with the applicant.

6. Recommendation

Approval, subject to the following conditions:

- 1 That the development to which this permission relates shall be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason - To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 2 Except where otherwise stipulated by conditions attached to this permission, the development shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the following approved plans:

Reason - For the avoidance of doubt, to ensure that the development is carried out only as approved by the Local Planning Authority, and in accordance with Government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 3 That the brick to be used for the external walls of the development hereby permitted shall match in terms of colour, type and texture those used on the existing building.

Reason - To ensure that the development is constructed and finished in materials which are in harmony with the materials used on the existing building and to comply with Policy C28 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan.

- 4 Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved, a detailed scheme for the surface water and foul sewage drainage of the development shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, and prior to the commencement of any building works on the site the approved surface water drainage scheme shall be carried out and prior to the first occupation of any building to which the scheme relates the approved foul sewage drainage scheme shall be implemented. All drainage works shall be laid out and constructed in accordance with the Water Authorities Association's current edition "Sewers for Adoption".

Reason - To ensure satisfactory drainage of the site in the interests of public health, to avoid flooding of adjacent land and property and to comply with Policy ENV1 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan and Government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Statement of Engagement

In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) (Amendment No 2) Order 2012 and paragraphs 186 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012), this decision has been taken by the Council having worked with the applicant/agent in a positive and proactive way as set out in the application report.