

Our Ref EM/CC/4380

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3712-00

29 August 2008

Dear Mr Duxbury

**Campsfield Removal Centre**

On behalf of UK Border Agency and further to our recent meeting on site at Campsfield I am writing to enclose an application for a new workshop/education/multi-faith building on land within the existing secure fence immediately to the east of the existing buildings

As discussed at our meeting on site there is a continuing need for removal centre places nationally for immigration offenders and failed asylum applicants pending their removal from the country

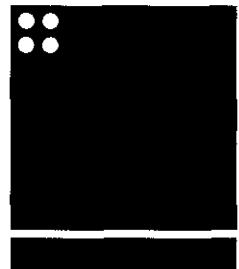
The average length of detention has increased over the last couple of years, largely due to administrative processes outside of the control of the Agency, but in response to this we are now proposing introducing workshops into Removal Centres as a means of expanding the range of purposeful activities

As you will be aware the existing buildings at Campsfield are fully occupied and there is no spare space within the existing complex of buildings to build a new unit.

The new unit will house multi-faith on the ground floor and workshops/education rooms on the first floor. The existing education unit housed in a very small portacabin was recently destroyed by fire during a detainee disturbance. This small portacabin was in any case inadequate for the education requirement and the new unit will provide a much larger facility which will allow for a greater range of activities. This small portacabin will be replaced in the short-term pending approval of this application, but would be removed as soon as the new facility is opened in order to provide more outside recreation space for the detainees

The average length of stay for detainees at Campsfield House is currently 53 days. However, a number of detainees are detained from between 3 and 12 months and the longest up to 17 months. It is often difficult to obtain agreement from the country of origin (or a third country) to return detainees, the paperwork can be very minimal and the appeal process sometimes very lengthy

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The proposed location of the new workshop/education building is within the existing 5.2m security fencing and it will hardly be visible from any public viewpoints

The Design and Access Statement includes a Landscape Statement which sets out a visual assessment together with some additional landscape proposals to strengthen the existing boundary planting

It is accepted that the whole of Campsfield House is within the Green Belt and that in terms of national and local Green Belt policy it is inappropriate development in the Green Belt

The adopted Cherwell Local Plan (November 1996) reiterates PPG2's five purposes for the green belt, namely

- i) *check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas,*
- ii) *prevent neighbouring towns from merging into another,*
- iii) *assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment,*
- iv) *preserve the setting and special character of historic towns, and*
- v) *assist urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land*

The proposal for an extension at Campsfield meets these five purposes of green belts. The Oxford Green Belt is controlling the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford. The proposed extension at Campsfield, sited within the existing high and dense security fence, will not lead to further sprawl of Oxford. This part of the green belt is not preventing neighbouring towns from merging together. The land upon which the extension is proposed is not open countryside, it is part of the existing Campsfield Removal Centre. This part of the green belt is not preserving the setting or special character of an historic town. If the extension did not take place at Campsfield it would not take place on a derelict site in an Oxford urban area since it is, by definition, an extension to an existing facility in the green belt which is generally well and appropriately located for its use as a secure Centre of detention.

Policy GB1 of the adopted plan sets out 3 more purposes specific to the Oxford Green Belt, namely

- vi) *protect the special character of Oxford and its landscape setting;*
- vii) *check the growth of Oxford and prevent ribbon development and urban sprawl, and*
- viii) *prevent the coalescence of settlements "*

The proposal will not affect the special character of Oxford. Comment on the aim to prevent urban sprawl of Oxford is made above as is the issue of coalescence of settlements.

This proposal is for an extension to the existing Immigration Removal Centre at Campsfield. The Removal Centre has operated at Campsfield House for over 10 years. It is strategically located and it forms an important part of the UK Border Agency Removal estate.

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The Campsfield House Removal Centre forms part of a larger Government institution at Campsfield. The other part of the comprises large hanger type buildings used by the Prison Service for riot training.

Not only does the Removal Centre form part of the larger institution, but it is also clearly part of a larger, generally built-up area around Oxford airport. The extent of built development in the area demonstrates yet further that the small extension to Campsfield will be insignificant when viewed in relation to this wider area.

Green Belt policy requires inappropriate development in the Green Belt to demonstrate that there are very special circumstances in existence which justify the proposal.

As explained above the proposal is for a new multi-faith/education/workshop unit which is urgently required at Campsfield in order to improve the purposeful activities for detainees, which is a deliberate strategy to keep them occupied and relieve any sense of boredom or frustration which can lead to disturbances. The existing complex of buildings are all fully utilised and there is no room for the new unit within one of the small courtyards. The existing small courtyards are in any case required for providing outside recreation space for the detainees.

The location chosen for the new unit is still within the existing 5.2m security fence, part of which is solid metal up to the eaves height. The security fence is a significant visual barrier to views of the new unit from outside the Centre.

The proposed building is 5725mm high to eaves and 8430mm to ridge. The existing accommodation block next to the proposed unit is approximately 6375mm high to the top of the parapet.

It is proposed that the materials will be light grey cladding at high level, blue grey brick at low level and soft red facing brickwork for the stairs.

The Landscape Statement analyses the visual impact of the proposed new unit and concludes that there will be no material impact on the Green Belt.

It is accepted that there is harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness; this harm is however clearly outweighed by the urgent need for the new unit.

The proposed facility has no impact on either staff or detainees numbers and consequently there will be no additional trip generation. All parking arrangements and access remain as existing.

The proposed new building is 831m<sup>2</sup> gross external (739m<sup>2</sup> gross internal). The site area is 2.79ha.

I enclose the following:-

- Red Line Site Plan (included in the Design and Access Statement).
- 4 copies of the site layout plan no A8098/001
- 4 copies of the ground floor plan and first floor plan, no A8098/002
- 4 copies of the elevations and cross sections, plan no A8098/003



- 4 copies of the Design and Access Statement, including the Landscape Statement
- 4 copies of the Application Forms
- An application fee of £3,712 Payable to Cherwell District Council

Yours sincerely



**Erica Mortimer**  
**Director**

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