

**PROPOSED MEGA PRISON AT GRENDON UNDERWOOD**  
**INFORMATION SHEET 1 ON AMENITY IMPACTS**

**1. Objection Details**

*Describe the main objections to the proposal in relation to the subject. Make sure that, where possible, the objections are backed by factual information and or data.*

**Relevant details from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – this is to help people understand what this heading means and what factors are relevant under this heading.**

*180. Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. In doing so they should:*

- a) Mitigate and reduce to a minimum potential adverse impacts resulting from noise from new development – and avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life;*
- b) Identify and protect tranquil areas which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason; and*
- c) Limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.*

**If the new mega prison went ahead the impact on amenities would be irreversible and significant on a number of fronts. For example:**

**Main site where the prisoners would be housed and other buildings would be situated.**

- The buildings would be located on top of the hill and due to their scale and height they would be visible from most directions from some distance away. This would be particularly so from Edgcott but also from the northern side of main street in Grendon Underwood. The light pollution from the proposed new mega prison would be irreversible and highly significant, on the main site where the buildings would be located. The current prisons are lit up like a small town at night and the new prison site would be significantly larger than those and hence the light pollution in the whole locality would increase significantly. This would be particularly so for the nearby locations of Edgcott, the Springhill housing estate and the northern side of Main Street in Grendon Underwood. In addition the light pollution would also be visible from a much wider panorama, especially as the landscape is one of rolling countryside with several hills at for example Brill, Waddesdon, Charndon and Quainton.
- Some properties in Edgcott e.g. Lawn House, those in Lawn House Lane and in Grendon Road are within about 200 metres of the proposed car park and some of the closest new prison buildings are not much further away. The boundary road and barriers would be located nearby so the impact on these properties would be particularly significant, in terms of visual aspects and both noise and light pollution. In addition the properties in Buckingham Road, Lawn Hill/Quainton Road and close to the Church would also suffer from significant light pollution as would properties in Grendon Underwood on the northern side of Main Street.

- Noise from the current prisons can be heard some distance away as the buildings are situated on top of a hill allowing the sound to travel a long distance. The level of noise pollution would increase by a significant amount if the much larger, 'mega' prison was built, both during the construction phase and during operation. The current noise pollution is particularly bad when the prisoners are playing football on the pitch in its current location, and the noise and bad language can be heard across all of Edgcott and most of the Springhill housing estate. If the football field is relocated to where it is now proposed, the noise pollution harm for the Springhill housing estate will be significantly increased due to it being located within 20-30 metres of the nearest houses. The impact of noise pollution on Willow Lodge will also be significant. The mitigation to noise pollution is to erect an acoustic, 2m high close boarded fence between the football pitch and Springhill Road. This is simply a gesture. It may have some effect in reducing the noise but to make a significant reduction to the noise levels the acoustic fencing would need to be more like 5m high and surround the whole football pitch. Of course this is not being proposed as it would be an eyesore and have a huge and highly significant impact on the local visual aspect of the field and the landscape as a whole. This is just another example of a poor mitigation attempt to solve a problem associated with the selection of an inappropriate site for a new 'mega' prison.
- The planned location of the football pitch would also cause stress to residents by locating prisoners so close to their accommodation. Furthermore what happens when the ball is kicked some distance away from the field and potentially into residents' gardens or into the road which runs past the nearest properties to the field? The proposed location is also close to the new road entrance to the site of the new prison; another potential risk with stray balls flying into the new site road.
- One of the features of the green field space on the prison site, both the field opposite the Springhill housing estate and that in the northern part of the site, is that there are public footpaths which allow the public to enjoy country walks in these areas. One of these walks passes in front of the historically important Grade II listed Grendon Hall and then heads towards and through the prison ecological area. The latter consists of many ancient trees, many fitted with bird boxes and the pond which has many special areas for encouraging wildlife. Having passed through this area the path leads onto the very large open field beyond the ecology area, and along the hedge until a stile is reached where the path leads into the adjacent fields. These fields enjoy a wonderful view across the agricultural landscape and valley towards the northern part of Edgcott and the listed buildings and the Church of St Michael located on the opposite hill. This footpath only exposes the public to a distant and fairly well screened view of the existing prisons. The only place in which the footpath runs close to the prisons is where a stile is close to the very edge of HMP Springhill but this is only for a very short distance and is over shadowed by the view of the ecology area with the tall and magnificent trees located there. If the new prison is built the public view would change from that described above to a large, tarmacked car park and a mass of large, urban like buildings and security fencing as well as the boundary road. The impact on the public amenity space would be both irreversible and cause significant harm as the sense of countryside peace and tranquillity would be lost forever.
- If the new mega prison was built on the large field to the north of the ecology area the footpath is shown in the outline plans to follow the same path in that region of the site. However, the experience for the public would be significantly impacted and would involve walking past and

viewing a large car park and a large scale site of urban like and tall buildings, a perimeter fence and road instead of a wide open green field space giving a sense of countryside peace and tranquillity. The experience walking alongside the new prison would be more like an unpleasant urban walk than one in the open countryside.

- The current footpath that runs close to Grendon Hall passes the area where the new road into the main part of the construction site would be and longer term when the prison is operational this entrance would be used by hundreds of staff and visitors each day. Hence the public would initially be exposed to a large number of construction vehicles and subsequently a large footfall of prison staff and visitors rather than a peaceful and tranquil walk in the countryside.
- Local residents currently enjoy the space and public footpaths for simple pleasures like walking their dogs, taking walks with family and friends as this is an important part of country life. To take this pleasure away through the destruction of major parts of the landscape and surrounding green field space and replace it with an urban sprawl of large scale buildings and car park will cause significant harm to the mental health and wellbeing of local residents. They deserve better than this.
- The current footpath that runs close to Grendon Hall does pass close to HMP Springhill open prison at one point and sometimes one or two prisoners can be seen walking around some of the buildings and occasionally around the ecology area. However, due to the category of this prison there is no feeling of danger. Anyone who does feel unsafe in that environment would choose not to walk along the prison site footpaths.
- The proposed mega prison would be Category C with high security fencing and a road around the perimeter. Even with the levels of security installed how could members of the public walking very close to the prison feel safe compared to walking in the open countryside?

#### **New Site Entrance and Road plus Football Pitch**

- The new site entrance and road to the planned site of the new 'mega' prison is to be located in the field opposite the Springhill housing estate and just north of Willow Lodge. In addition the relocated football pitch is going to be located on the southern side of this field and close to housing in the Springhill housing estate plus Willow Lodge. In the outline planning documentation it is claimed that the football pitch has been moved from the location suggested in the Consultation Document so that it is further away from housing. This is purely a gesture. The planned location of the football pitch in the Consultation Document was the worst possible site that could have been selected. It was close to housing, close to the current main road into the existing prisons and housing estate, adjacent to the staff and visitors car park, would have involved removing a long stretch of hedging and trees, was situated on top of one of the current foul waste drains and on the steepest part of the slope leading up to Grendon Hall and the current prison entrance. It is clear that the football pitch was never going to be located there, it was placed there in the Consultation Document as they needed to put it somewhere (they even forgot to include it in the first Consultation Document that was issued).

The modified position shown for the football pitch is still close to housing, still close to the current main road into the existing prisons and housing estate, still located on top of one of the current foul waste drains, much closer to Willow Lodge than before. The location proposed would shift the noise pollution generated by the games of football (very loud with much foul language) to be more dominant

and harmful in the southern-most part of Edgcott (all of Grendon Road), Lawn House Lane, Springhill housing estate, Willow Lodge, Hall Cottages and parts of Grendon Underwood.

- In addition to relocating the football pitch for prisoners in HMP Springhill to the field adjacent to Willow Lodge, this field is also to become the recreational area for prisoners. The area the inmates currently use for exercise and recreation is of course going to be the location of a large part of the new 'mega' prison and hence this aspect of their well-being also needed to be relocated. This means that inmates from HMP Springhill will, on a regular basis, use the field for general exercise as well as playing football. The inmates need to have access to open spaces but this will inevitably have a harmful impact on the amenity aspects for local residents as many will feel more vulnerable with the close proximity of inmates. As a result, many residents may choose not to use the public right of way that runs past Grendon Hall into the ecology area.
- Another serious impact of this change of exercise and recreational location for the inmates of HMP Springhill is the potential for a significant increase in drug and other 'drop offs' in this part of the site. This area is very close to a concentrated area of housing, i.e. the Springhill housing estate, with the highest number of children in one area in the locality. This is not something that MoJ consultants think or even care about when sat in their comfortable offices designing away our future.
- In addition to noise and traffic pollution the siting of a main site entrance and road to the new 'mega' prison as well as adding the relocated football pitch in this area would irreversibly destroy the remaining section of ridge and furrow which is present in that field.
- Recent research has shown that the field where the new site road and football pitch are to be located was part of the Park and Historical Pleasure Gardens of Grendon Hall (Ref: *The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust Research & Recording Project, Grendon Hall March 2021, Revised June 2021*). The field contains historical ridge and furrow which was once part of a much more extensive area of historical landscape. Much of the park has been lost to sporadic development over many years but siting the main entrance and road into the new prison site would cause irreversible and significant harm to this area of landscape. In addition siting the football field in the lower part of this field would destroy a large section of the ridge and furrow as well as causing significant and irreversible harm to both the landscape and amenity space that is so much treasured by locals.
- This change of use for the field where the new proposed site entrance and road would be located would result in the loss of a significant area of green space which is a much admired outlook for many residents and is used by residents of Springhill estate as well as other locals due to the public footpaths that are located there. Hence the change of use would represent a significant and irreversible loss of amenity value to local residents.
- The use of the new site entrance and road to both construction traffic and subsequently operational traffic would cause landscape and noise issues. Both of these matters would result in harm to the amenity aspect of this part of the locality.
- The noise pollution from the relocation of the football pitch would increase by an unimaginable level to the residents living nearby in the Springhill estate, those living in Grendon Road, Edgcott,

Hall Cottages, parts of Grendon Underwood and all the staff working at Grendon Hall. The Springhill estate has the highest density of young children in the locality and the football pitch, as indicated on the indicative plans, would be within 20-30 metres of the nearest houses. The young children would be exposed both to noise pollution plus the foul and aggressive language that would be expressed during games of football; hardly a good example for young children and not something they should be exposed to.

- The proposed plans include building a 2 m high acoustic fence between the football pitch and the Springhill housing estate. This is simply a gesture. It may have some effect in reducing the noise but to make a significant reduction to the noise levels the acoustic fencing would need to be more like 5m high and surround the whole football pitch. Of course this is not being proposed as it would be an eyesore and have a huge and highly significant impact on the local visual aspect of the field and the landscape as a whole. This is just another example of a poor mitigation attempt to solve a problem associated with the selection of an inappropriate site for a new 'mega' prison.
- The current footpath that runs across close to Grendon Hall currently takes the public through an area with a variety of old trees and close to the western part of Grendon Hall and the historic gardens in that area. To the west looking towards Grendon Road the public are exposed to a delightful view of a hedge with associated trees and beyond that a panoramic view of open country side and the ancient ridge and furrow in the field below. This view is part of the historical park and Pleasure Gardens associated with Grendon Hall (Ref: *The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust Research & Recording Project, Grendon Hall March 2021, and Revised June 2021*). If the proposed plan goes ahead the view in that direction would be one of a fence around a football pitch which would be located within close sight of the footpath. The end result would be a significant and irreversible loss of public amenity space and landscape.
- The current football pitch, presumably used by just the prisoners from HMP Springhill the open prison, is located on the north eastern side of the field beyond the ecology area. Although the local residents suffer from noise pollution from the matches that take place there, there is no feeling of danger amongst residents as the football pitch is located some distance from local houses, even from Lawn House which is one of the closest properties to HMP Springhill. However, if the football pitch is located to the lower part of the field adjacent to Willow Lodge and close to the Springhill housing estate it will be very close to both the public footpath and local housing. This would include housing on Springhill estate, Willow Lodge, Hall Cottages and Grendon Road, Edgcott. This proposed location will inevitably lead to harmful anxiety and concerns for the safety of residents and in particular the children located in that area.
- The proximity of the two public footpaths to the football field would significantly and irreversibly impact on the amenity aspect of the currently available walk in peaceful and open countryside. It would result in a situation where residents would avoid the walk in case of being exposed to prisoners playing football or walking to or from the football pitch. Hence this would severely impact on the use of this much valued amenity benefit.

#### **Footpath along Grendon Road**

- The footpath along Grendon Road runs from the centre of Edgcott, past the current prison entrance and leads to Grendon Underwood. Although dangerously narrow and in poor condition in many places, it is the only public means of walking along this part of the locality. The new

entrance to the new mega prison site would be located between the current prison entrance and the road narrowing at the southern edge of Edgcott. There is currently a stile leading to the public footpath in the field where the new prison car park would be located and the new entrance is due to be located near this stile. The current public view walking past the stile, or passing over the stile and into the field, is one of open countryside leading up a slope towards Grendon Hall. The ridge and furrow in the field is very noticeable and a reminder of the historical agricultural practices that took place in this location, our location and the countryside we chose to live in. To turn this green field space and the ridge and furrow into a new site entrance, a road up the whole length to the proposed new 'mega' prison and to locate the football pitch there would have an irreversible impact and cause severe harm to the local landscape and visual impact thus effecting the local amenity value. In addition it would be an insult to the nature of the local countryside and the ancestors who worked these fields.

- Due to the topography of this part of the site, i.e. the slope leading up to Grendon Hall, it would be impossible to screen the new road and hence all the traffic or the football pitch from the local footpath or the public right of way which crosses this part of the site from Grendon Road.
- In addition to the vast number of staff and visitor cars passing in and out of the site on a daily basis, there would also be numerous vehicles making deliveries to the prison site. All of this traffic would add to the pressure on the local roads which are already busy with local traffic and construction HGVs for other infrastructure projects like HS2 and EWR as well as other residential developments in the area. Many of these projects are long term and hence building a new 'mega' prison will add to the road traffic burden and further impact on the quality of life for local residents, particularly in Edgcott and the Springhill housing estate. Just having a quiet walk in the village of Edgcott is already somewhat challenging due to the volume of traffic passing through the village. In addition, as some of the footpaths are directly next to the highway in many parts of the village and along the footpath towards Grendon Underwood, and are less than a metre wide, it is already a danger to the public walking along the footpath. An irreversible uplift in traffic volume is going to further increase the danger to the public and the cumulative impact of yet another project is not welcome.

### **Public Protection**

- Drugs are well known and a common problem across the whole prison estate. Due to the close proximity of the open prison, HMP Springhill, food, clothing and drug 'drops' are frequent events in both the fields and wooded area of Lawn House and the surrounding area. The wire fencing along the prison/Lawn House boundary is also frequently damaged by friends or family of prisoners 'dropping' off goods and by prisoners climbing over to retrieve the goods. Prison officers can be seen regularly patrolling the footpaths in the locality looking for 'drop offs'. Although the proposed new mega prison would be a Category C, residents will be concerned of both more drug and other 'drop offs' but also more episodes of prisoners escaping/absconding.

### **Current Prisoners at HMP Springhill**

- The current inmates at HMP Springhill use both the ecology area close to their accommodation and the green field space adjacent to the ecology area for recreational and exercise purposes. They also maintain both of these areas. What is going to happen to these inmates if most of this space is turned first into a construction site and later a new 'mega' much higher security prison?

What consideration has been given to their amenity impact and welfare over both their short and long term?

## **2. Any Other Points**

*Include any other relevant information or sources that might help in making the objection.*

**For your objection consider impacts on:**

- Residential aspects
- Light and noise pollution
- Public protection
- Loss of green space
- Lawn House and houses down Lawn House Lane and other properties in that region of the village, noise from visitors using the car park and also delivery vehicles going right up to the main part of the prison
- Light pollution around the whole area. Current prison lit up like a small town at night and that is a much smaller site than the proposed new site. Light would be visible for miles in all directions.
- Public protection – concern about increased risk even if the new prison is high security plus location of the football pitch
- Loss of peace and quiet, impact on well-being plus mental health
- Increased risk on the roads and footpaths plus cyclists as quite a few cycling clubs use the route through Edgcott at weekends