



Ministry of Defence

Secretariat
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Ref. FOI 2022/07594

Dear [REDACTED]

18 August 2022

Thank you for your email of 13 June 2022 requesting the following information:

"I would appreciate copies of the MOD commissioned preliminary studies as to how the Wethersfield site could be developed that you mention in your letter.

I understand some aspects may be redacted, but it will help to gain something of an overview given that there appears to be no Masterplan for the site at present."

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

A search for the information has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and I can confirm that all the information in scope of your request is held.

The information you have requested can be found enclosed at Annex A. However, I can advise that some of the information in scope of your request falls entirely within the scope of the exemption provided for at Sections 43 (Commercially Sensitive) and has been redacted.

Section 43 is a qualified exemption and is subject to public interest testing which means that the information requested can only be withheld if the public interest in doing so outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

Section 43 has been applied because some of the information has the potential to adversely affect relations with our allies. The balance of the public interest test concluded that whilst release would increase public understanding and confidence in the relation the United Kingdom has with other international states in its assistance with operations the balance of the public interest lay in withholding this information you desire. I have considered it necessary to apply the higher level of prejudice against release of the exempted information at the higher level of "would" rather than "would be likely to".

Section 43 has been applied because release of some of the information has the potential to prejudice future negotiations between the MOD and contractors. The outcome of the balance of the public interest test concluded that whilst release would promote openness, transparency and a further understanding of government processes in decision making in areas relating to matter of public spending and contractual arrangements. The public interest however lay in withholding some of the information you desire, as the MOD considers disclosure of this information could prejudice the MOD's commercial relationships and impact the Department's bargaining position in

the future. The interest in withholding the information therefore far outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.

Under Section 16 of the FOIA (Advice and Assistance), you may find it helpful to know that the information in this document concerning the proposed development of the Wethersfield site, was accurate at the time the report was completed, however part of this report is now obsolete.

If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter, please contact this office in the first instance.

If you wish to complain about the handling of your request, or the content of this response, you can request an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, Ground Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.gov.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review should be made in writing within 40 working days of the date of this response.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may raise your complaint directly to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not normally investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website at <https://ico.org.uk/>.

Yours sincerely

DIO Secretariat