

5 August 2024

FOI Ref 16284

Request - You asked us the following:

1. The location of all buildings currently owned or occupied by your organisation.

We received your request on 12/12/2023 and have processed this under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

Please find below our response.

Staffordshire Police discloses/withholds the following information.

2. The location of all buildings currently owned or occupied by your organisation. – **Partial disclosure.**

The above information has been withheld for the following reasons: - Section 31

Several locations have been removed from the dataset provided as disclosure would undermine the general terms of duty of care supplied by policing and law enforcement would be harmful to the public at large. In brief, revealing data on structures that are not in the public domain and are used for sensitive purposes may reveal those places and/or resources. The revealing of specific sites for these uses may jeopardise the security and effectiveness of police operations and place both police personnel and members of the public at an increased risk of harm.

The following exemptions have been applied:

- Section 31 (1) (a) - Law Enforcement.

Information is exempt from disclosure under S31 (1) (a) (b) where the release of Information would, or would likely to, prejudice the prevention and detection of crime and/ or the apprehension or prosecution of offenders. This exemption is qualified and prejudice-based and, as such, we are required to evidence the harm in disclosure and apply the public interest test.

Factors favouring disclosure - Section 31

To disclose this information would adhere to the basic principle of being open and transparent, it would also lead to a better public awareness of the workings of the police force and the communications used with operations and during routine policing. Disclosure of the requested information would enable the public to assess whether the force has appropriately taken steps to help reduce crime and allow for greater public awareness and openness in the way Staffordshire Police employs its estate resources.

Factors favouring non-disclosure - Section 31

Releasing such data would give those individuals with the intent to do so, the intelligence required to disrupt police activity. This knowledge would allow those with ill intent to target their offending more effectively which would inevitably lead to an increased likelihood of criminal

activity and an increased danger to the public. Any disclosure of information which is likely to undermine the ability to serve the public in preventing and detecting crime or heighten endangerment of the public can only be considered as being. Disclosure also potentially provides valuable information to those with criminal intent, providing them with an overview of the Staffordshire police estate and therefore enable identification of sensitive unvisited sites.

If disclosed, these sites could then be surveilled and their use discerned and targeted accordingly. This would therefore increase the likelihood of offences being committed and impact upon the force's ability to detect and prevent crime, apprehend and prosecute offenders, protect victims of crime and administer justice would be degraded .

Balancing Test

When considering whether disclosure is appropriate, we must weigh the strongest reason for disclosure against the strongest reasons for non-disclosure. In this case, whilst the factors favouring disclosure are important in that it would adhere to the basic principle of being open and transparent, we believe when weighed against the risk of disclosure undermining our ability to prevent and detect crime and hindering our ability to protect the public with what is placed into the public domain.

Staffordshire police can neither confirm nor deny whether any further information is held in regard to this request for the following reasons

Confirmation or denial that any further information is held relevant to this request would enable a geographical picture to be drawn up at force level, as well as a national level, about whether there are joint operational locations utilised and embedded by other law enforcement personnel; whether or not operating in concert with police officers of the host Constabulary. This would be vital police intelligence to individuals, some of whom may be terrorists or terrorist organisations, who are intent on targeting locations specifically utilised by Law Enforcement. Confirmation or denial that any other information is held would leave forces open to disruption and compromise the effective delivery of operational law enforcement which in turn, is met by an increase of criminal offending.

The following exemptions have been applied:

In accordance with Section 17(1) of the Freedom of Information Act, this letter represents a refusal notice for this particular request.

Staffordshire Police can neither confirm nor deny that it holds any of the information you requested as it believes the duty in s1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the duty to confirm whether the public authority holds information of the specified description), does not apply, by virtue of the following exemptions:

- Section 23(5) – Information supplied by or concerning certain Security Bodies.
- Section 24(2) – National Security.

Section 23 is a class based absolute exemption and there is no requirement to consider the public interest in this case.

Sections 24 is a qualified exemption and as such there is a requirement to articulate the harm and conduct a test of the public interest in confirmation or denial.



Public Interest Test

Factors favouring disclosure - Section 24

To confirm whether any other information is held relating to this request would better inform the general public as to the existence of policing and law enforcement capabilities within specific geographical locations. In turn, this can increase public confidence with the likely effect of dissuading mal-actors from operating within specific areas or regions.

Factors favouring non-disclosure - Section 24

Taking into account the current security climate within the United Kingdom, no information which may aid a terrorist should be disclosed.

Security measures are put in place to protect the community that we serve. To confirm whether any other information is held relevant to this request would provide a detailed account of the tactical infrastructure of not only a force area but also the country as a whole. This would highlight to terrorists and individuals intent on carrying out criminal or terrorist activity any vulnerabilities within the localities of specific forces.

Confirmation, if held, would also allow inferences to be made about the nature and extent of national security related activities. This could enable terrorist groups to target sensitive police locations, and as such, confirmation or denial would be damaging to national security. This would lead to the compromise of ongoing or future operations to protect the security or infrastructure both within the UK and Internationally.

Irrespective as to whether any information is or isn't held, the public entrust the Police Service to make appropriate decisions with regard to their safety and protection and the only way of reducing risk is to be cautious with what is placed into the public domain.

Balance Test

On balance I have decided it is not appropriate to confirm or deny whether the information is or is not held. The public trust the Police Service to make appropriate decisions with regard to their safety and protection and the only way of reducing risk is to be cautious with what is placed into the public domain.

In this case, whilst the factors favouring disclosure are important in that it would adhere to the basic principle of being open and transparent, we believe when weighed against the risk of disclosure undermining our ability to prevent and detect crime and hindering our ability to protect the public with what is placed into the public domain.

Next steps

You can ask us to review our response.

If you would like us to carry out a review of our response, please let us know within two months of the date of receipt of this email, review requests should be addressed to:

foi@staffordshire.police.uk



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE

Or by Post to:

Central Disclosure Unit
Staffordshire Police HQ
PO Box 3167
Stafford
ST16 9JZ

Please remember to quote the reference number in any future communications.

Freedom of Information
Central Disclosure Unit