

5 May 2026

FOI Ref 22811

Request - You asked Staffordshire Police (SP) the following:

I am writing to request information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

I would like to request data held by the force relating to recorded theft offences from construction/building sites and from builders' merchants (including timber merchants), for the period 1st of January 2020 to 31st of December 2025 (inclusive).

Definitions

Construction/building sites should be interpreted broadly to include active construction sites, building sites, demolition sites, infrastructure projects, redevelopment sites, and other similar locations where construction, demolition, civil engineering, or related works are being undertaken.

Builders' merchants should be interpreted broadly to include builders' merchants, timber merchants, roofing suppliers, aggregate and building material suppliers, landscaping and fencing suppliers, and other similar trade suppliers primarily engaged in the sale, storage, or distribution of construction-related materials, products, or equipment.

Below is the specific information I would like to request:

Construction/Building Sites:

The number of recorded theft offences involving items taken from construction/building sites.

A breakdown of the type of items or materials stolen (e.g., tools, bricks, wood/timber, etc.) from construction/building sites where recorded.

The number of any charges and/or arrests made in connection with thefts at construction/building sites.

Builders' Merchants:

The number of recorded thefts involving items taken from builders' merchant sites. This can also include timber merchants.

A breakdown of the type of items or materials stolen (e.g. tools, bricks, wood/timber, etc.) from builders' merchants where recorded.

The number of charges and/or arrests made in connection with thefts from builders' merchants.

Please provide the data as a yearly breakdown. I would like the information to be provided in an electronic format. Please provide the information in one of these preferred spreadsheet formats:

.CSV
.xlsx

If any part of this request exceeds the appropriate cost limit under the Act, please advise how it may be refined so that the information can be provided.

SP received your request on 28/04/2026 and have processed this under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

SP's response to your enquiry is as follows:

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

The following exemption has been applied:

- Section 12(1) where the cost of compliance exceeds the appropriate limit.
- Section 12(1) does not oblige a public authority to comply with a request for information if the authority estimates that the cost of complying with the request would exceed the prescribed limit'.

The above information has been withheld for the following reasons:

There is no method by which SP can readily retrieve information from our crime recording system to answer this request. This system has no mandatory field within which a specified location type is recorded, this being recorded as the street address at which the offence took place; furthermore, this system also has no mandatory field within which details of stolen items are recorded. This information would routinely be recorded as free text within any number of fields across the crime record. For the period requested, there have been more than 100,000 offences of theft and to ascertain whether the theft offence related to Construction/ Building Sites or Builders Merchants, the record for each offence would require a manual review. Once identified, further manual research would then be required in order to determine the type of items stolen.

To extract this data would therefore require a very labour-intensive manual trawl through each record.

From dip sampling, it has been estimated that it would take approximately 5 minutes to review each record to answer this request, this would equate to over 8,300 hours. To achieve this task would therefore exceed the 18-hour time and cost threshold of the Freedom of Information Act by a considerable margin.

Advice and assistance

Section 16 of the Act places an obligation upon the Authority to provide advice and assistance, to comply with this obligation please see below.

Unfortunately, SP cannot suggest a way in which your request could be simplified or pared down to bring it within the confines of the time and cost threshold.

Please be advised that all Freedom of Information request responses are published on the SP website although personal details are not included.



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE

Freedom of Information Request Appeals Procedure

1. Who Can Ask for a Review

Any person who has requested information from SP, which has been dealt with under the Freedom of Information Act, is entitled to complain and request an internal review, if they are dissatisfied with the response they received.

2. How to Request a Review

Requests for review of a Freedom of Information request must be made in writing within two months of the date of receipt of this email, and should be addressed to:

IAT@staffordshire.police.uk

Or by Post to:

Information Access Team
Staffordshire Police HQ
PO Box 3167
Stafford
ST16 9JZ

The reference number, date of the request and details of why the review is being requested must be included. Requests for review should be brought to the attention of the Information Access Team within two months of the Force's response to the original FOI request.

3. Review Procedure

Receipt of a request for review will be acknowledged in writing. The review will be conducted by a supervisor who is independent from the original Decision Maker. The Information Access Team will set a target date for a response. The response will be made as soon as is practicable with the intention to complete the review within 20 working days. In more complex cases the review may take up to 40 working days.

The independent Supervisor will conduct a review of the handling of the request for information and of decisions taken, including decisions taken about where the public interest lies in respect of exempt information where applicable. The review enables a re-evaluation of the case, considering the matters raised by the complaint.

4. Conclusion of the Appeal

On completion of the review the Independent Supervisor will reply to the appellant with the result of the review. If the appellant is still dissatisfied following the review they should contact the Information Commissioner to make an appeal. The Information Commissioner can be contacted via the following link:
<https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/foi-and-eir-complaints/foi-and-eir-complaints/>

Freedom of Information
Information Access Team