

From: Cllr Andrew Wood cllrandrewwood@gmail.com
Subject: FOI request Westferry Printworks planning application APP/E5900/W/19/3225474
Date: 1 July 2020 at 15:34
To: Despatch Box mhclgcorrespondence@communities.gov.uk



Dear MHCLG,

Following your release of documents last week and the debate in the House of Commons last Wednesday plus new information in the Sunday Times.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/westferry-printworks-letters-to-hclg-select-committee>

I have the following additional FOI requests;

1. Confirmation that documents MHCLG shared with the Cabinet Secretary about this matter were not subsequently released publicly last Wednesday night. I am not asking for those documents, I just wish to know that they exist. That some documents were not released.
2. Copies of communications to Robert Jenrick MP or his SPADs or his private office about Westferry Printworks between his appointment in July 2019 and the 20th November 2019 - what detail was included as by that point he was aware of a number of facts about the Printworks application and I wish to ascertain from where he got that information.
3. Same question as Q2 but about the new LBTH Local Plan 2031 or the new Community Infrastructure Levy changes at LBTH then in consultation for implementation in January 2020 as the Minister said he was aware of the Local Plan on the 18th November 2019 (people now are mixing up the CIL and Local Plan despite being two separate processes)
4. Confirmation that there is no written document / email / communication from the Minister / his SPADs / Private Office confirming his attendance at the Savoy fundraising dinner on the 18th November or who he met at the dinner before or after the dinner or what was discussed at the dinner. As none were released last week.
5. 13th January 2020 meeting at 2 Marsham Street described by this Sunday Times article, see relevant section below in Italics;

Can I have copies of the email invitation/agenda/notes from this meeting. Also copies of the WhatsApp conversation described in the article.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/were-going-ahead-with-this-jenrick-has-made-his-mind-up-lets-get-this-sorted-2rskbwhnf>

Those present on the fourth floor of 2 Marsham Street, a government building in Westminster, included Steve Quartermain, England's most senior planner, planning officials and civil service lawyers. None was aware of Jenrick's potential conflicts of interest.

On the afternoon of January 13 they huddled in a breakout area on the fourth floor of 2 Marsham Street, the glass building in Westminster that is home to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, which Jenrick heads.

Jenrick's aide quickly got to the point. The secretary of state wanted to issue a decision letter the next day approving the Westferry scheme on the Isle of Dogs.

According to a civil servant at the meeting, his aide was texting to Jenrick on WhatsApp as the meeting unfolded. The source, who has come forward to detail the minister's "disregard for due process and accountability", said that officials were left in no doubt that their views were not welcome.

The aide is claimed to have said: "We're going ahead with this. It's the secretary of state's decision. It's final."

Those gathered around a table near the fourth-floor atrium included Steve Quartermain, England's most senior planning official, communications advisers and government lawyers.

The civil service source is insistent that key officials on the case were not informed of Jenrick's contacts with Desmond. They also allege that Quartermain and Richard Watson, head of the national planning casework unit, practically "begged" him to think again about the decision. Both are said to have been met with indifference.

At the meeting, Quartermain, a moustachioed Durham University graduate who has since left the civil service after several decades, raised his objections one last time. "Look," he is said to have remarked. "The visual impact of it is terrible. There are policies around tall buildings in that particular area. It's too big. It's too tall. It's too dense." One of the lawyers weighed in, too, saying the scheme did not comply with affordable housing rules and warning there was a "70% to 80%" chance of a judicial review.

Others expressed concern that Jenrick wanted to blame the delays in Westferry on the London mayor, Sadiq Khan, and Tower Hamlets, while touting his approval as a victory for the Conservative government's housebuilding programme. His aide then delivered the coup de grâce. "Look, guys," she said. "The secretary of state has made his mind up . . . Let's get this letter sorted out." The source recalled: "We all sort of went away."

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