



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

**Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local  
Government**

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Cllr Andrew Wood  
Via email

Date: **27 July 2020**

Dear ###,

### **Environmental Information Regulations 2004 - 8045816**

Thank you for your request for information which was received on 29 May 2020.

You requested:

*1. Can you please disclose all correspondence (whether by letter or by email) between MHCLG as well as Robert Jenrick MP, or any current or former MHCLG Minister or SPAD and the developer of this site (Northern & Shell, Richard Desmond, Mace or any related party like a PR company, for example Thorncliffe) from 1st January 2018 to todays date about this site and any related planning application. In part this is to find out whether there had been any discussions before the revised planning application was submitted in July 2018.*

*2. Where there any meetings (on any subject) between MHCLG as well as Robert Jenrick MP or any other MHCLG Minister (current or former) or civil servant including SPADs and the developer of this site (Northern & Shell, Richard Desmond & Mace or any PR employed by them, for example Thorncliffe) from 1st January 2018 to todays date? not including the inspectors public planning enquiry? I include Mace as they are developing the site for Northern & Shell and most correspondence with the developer includes people from both companies.*

*My Question 5 is now moot as I have now seen the Consent Order making clear the timing of the decision was deliberately done to avoid the decision by LBTH on the 15th January 2020 for a new Local Plan and new CIL rates. (the new Local Plan was supportive of a tall development on this site so I have to assume it was the new CIL rates that prompted the timing of this decision.*

*New Question 5 based on Point 4 of the Consent Order Schedule signed by the Government Legal Department which admits that the decision was timed to avoid the decision on the 15th January.*

*What was the reason for deliberately making the decision before a new Local Plan and CIL schedule were adopted by LBTH on the 15th January 2020?"*

This request has been considered under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

The department has published relevant information relating to the called-in planning application at the former Westferry Printworks site, including correspondence along with other documents and communications associated with the Secretary of State's decision.

This focuses on the key time period between the date of closure of the inquiry on 9 September 2019 and the date of the communication of the decision notice on 14 January 2020.

This was published on 24 June 2020 and can be accessed here:

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

Your request is broad and covers an extensive time period. Considerable time would be needed to locate and review documents in order to determine whether we hold information in scope of your request.

In line with guidance published by the Information Commissioner's Office, we therefore consider your request engages the exception at regulation 12(4)(b) of the Environmental Information Regulations; the request is considered to be "manifestly unreasonable". The exception at 12(4)(b) requires consideration of the public interest in application.

We acknowledge that there will always be some public interest in disclosure to promote transparency and accountability of public authorities and greater public awareness and understanding of planning matters, a free exchange of views, and more effective public participation in decision making, all of which ultimately contribute to a better environment.

We also acknowledge the interest in the Westferry Printworks application and the public interest in disclosure, which is why the department has already published relevant information it holds.

Because of the broad scope of this request, and the considerable time that would be needed to locate, review and redact documents, alongside information already published, it is our view that complying with the request would place a disproportionate burden upon the department.

We therefore consider that in these circumstances the public interest in maintaining the exception outweighs the public interest of disclosure. We have considered ways in which you can scope down your request, but given the circumstances of this case and the fact that it is a live planning application, it is difficult to suggest a way to narrow your request at this stage.

## **Complaints procedure**

If you are unhappy with this response, we will review it and report back to you. (This is called an internal review.) If you want us to do this, let us know by return email within two months of receiving this response. You can also ask by letter addressed to:

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government  
Knowledge and Information Access Team  
4th Floor SE, Fry Building  
2 Marsham Street  
London, SW1P 4DF

If you are unhappy with the outcome of this internal review, you can ask the independent Information Commissioner to investigate. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at email address [casework@ico.org.uk](mailto:casework@ico.org.uk) or use their online form at [ico.org.uk/concerns](https://ico.org.uk/concerns) or call them on 0303 123 1113.

Yours sincerely

MHCLG FOIA Team