



Ministry
of Defence



Defence Equipment and Support
Maple 0a, #2043
MOD Abbey Wood
Bristol
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DESSEC-FOI@mod.uk



Your Reference:

Our Reference:
FOI2015/03156
Date:
29th May 2015

Dear

Your correspondence dated 19th March 2015 is considered to be a request for information in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). You requested the following information:

"I wish to make a Freedom Of Information request regarding the removal of trees and shrubbery in the MoD Abbey Wood main car park for the proposed removal of curbing to allow an increase in the car park capacity.

Specifically I wish to be informed of:

- 1. The number of trees and shrubs removed.*
- 2. The additional number of car parking spaces the removal of curbed areas will create, showing numbers before and after removal.*
- 3. Projected cost of completion of project.*
- 4. Details of alternative solutions considered including promotion of increase use of public transport facilities by MoD Abbey Wood employees".*

In my letter to you of 20th April 2015, I informed you that under Section 43 (Commercial Interests) of the FOIA, we would be undertaking a Public Interest Test into the release of the information you requested. I can confirm that this process has now been completed and our response to your request is detailed below. I apologise for the delay in providing this final response.

- 1. The number of trees and shrubs removed.*
- 2. The additional number of car parking spaces the removal of curbed areas will create, showing numbers before and after removal.*

	Car Park A - NE	Car Park B - SW	Total
Trees removed	74	265	339
Shrubs removed	Across both car parks		>2000
Spaces created by removing curbs	55	285	340
Current number of spaces	1035	2256	3291
Projected final number of spaces	1090	2541	3631

The removal of trees and shrubs was carried out in accordance with the landscaping plan submitted and approved by the Local Authority.

3. Projected cost of completion of project.

I can confirm that the Department holds this information. However, the information you have requested falls entirely within the scope of the qualified exemptions provided for at Section 43 (Commercial Interests) of the FOIA and has been withheld.

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(2) has been applied to the projected cost of completion of the project as associated contractual negotiations are yet to be completed, and so the release of financial information relevant to the project has the potential to prejudice those negotiations. Having considered the balance of public interest, the Department's decision is therefore to withhold this information. I have set the level of prejudice against release of the exempted information as 'would be likely to'.

4. Details of alternative solutions considered including promotion of increase use of public transport facilities by MoD Abbey Wood employees.

Alternative options have been considered over a period of some years including use of off-site facilities at neighbouring sites, park and ride, and high level platforms for additional 'multi-story' parking. These options were either discounted due to lack of available real estate in the local area, or that development would be subject to Local Authority planning permission. The option taken forward was the reorientation of existing parking spaces within the same footprint. The application was approved by the Local Authority under permitted development on the basis that the additional spaces would be in line with the original allowance for parking when the site at Abbey Wood was first built. As you will be aware, there is insufficient car parking at Abbey Wood to cater for the number of people who currently drive to work. The policy is to manage this issue through imposing restrictions on car parking for those staff that live close to the Abbey Wood site. Increasing car parking capacity within our current footprint is a further way of managing the situation.

Work is also ongoing to promote the use of public transport and the benefits of cycling and walking to work as alternatives to using the car. New cycle racks have been installed and new lockers purchased to help assist staff who cycle to work. The DE&S Infrastructure team has a comprehensive "Parking at Abbey Wood" site on the Abbey Wood home page which is designed to provide staff with travel information and the site's transport policies. Links are provided to the BBC Bristol travel news, car share schemes, and announcements regarding the electrification of the rail network. Staff can also access bus and train timetables and services which serve the Abbey Wood and wider Filton area. The DE&S Infrastructure Environmental team work closely with the North Bristol Sustainable Community (also known as "SusCom") and the Bus and Train companies which serve the site. This work has helped to inform decisions regarding the improvement of local transport links.

Although there are no short-term solutions at present, DE&S has influenced future developments by running transport surveys and hosting 'green transport' events on site. Parking policy for the site has been improved by closing loopholes and introducing a robust contractor pass application process. This year, 2+ clinics have been set up to assist staff willing to share transport options, and negotiations have proved successful in obtaining free seats on the Kings Ferry bus link.

If you are not satisfied with this response or you wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of your request, then you should contact me in the first instance. If informal resolution is not possible and you are still dissatisfied then you may apply for an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, 1st Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review must be made within 40 working days of the date on which the attempt to reach informal resolution has come to an end.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may take your complaint to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website, <https://ico.org.uk/>.

Yours sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the sender.