



# Ministry of Defence

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Ref. FOI2015/06784

Dear

Thank you for your email of 29 July 2015 requesting the following information:

- *"Under the Freedom of Information Act please can you provide me with details of those farms on the Salisbury Plain Training Estate where you are selling property directly to the tenant farmers and what is your expected revenue from these sales?"*

*Please can you also inform me as to how the Department makes the decision as to disposals (i.e. what criteria are applied in the decision-making process) and who is involved in that decision-making process (if, for example, a Board has been appointed to consider the release of such properties, who sits on that Board)?*

*Finally, please can you inform me as to the intended use of Cliff End Cottage (recently renamed "The House in the Hedges") near Figheldean. As you will know, this property has been empty for around four years and was also on the Disposals List some considerable time ago, so if it was decided that it merits disposal what other factors now outweigh that decision and why therefore haven't you done so?"*

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

A search for the information has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence, and I can confirm that some information in scope of your request is held. The farms on the Salisbury Plain Training Estate sold or to be sold directly to the tenant farmers are as follows:

Agricultural land/paddocks, Milston
Linden Farmhouse and land, Lower Everleigh
Durrington Down Farm, Larkhill
Compton Farm, Enford
Ablington Farm, Ablington
Court Farm, Collingbourne Ducis

In terms of the financial information, Sections 22(1) (Intended for future publication) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 has been applied to some of the information and has been withheld. Section 22 (1) is a qualified exemption and is subject to a 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.

The outcome of the public interest test clarifies that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information as this information will in future be reasonably accessible by other means.

Some of the financial information falls entirely within the scope of the exemption provided for at Section 21 (Information Reasonably Accessible to the Applicant by Other Means) of the Act and has been withheld. Section 21 is an absolute exemption and there is therefore no requirement to consider the public interest in making a decision to withhold the information.

Under Section 16 of the Act (Advice and Assistance) you may find it helpful to note that you can obtain sale prices from the Land Registry.

A search for the information relating to parts two and three of your request has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence, and I can confirm that no recorded information in scope of your request is held.

Under Section 16 of the Act (Advice and Assistance) you may find it helpful to note it is formal written MOD policy (JSP 362) that the defence estate should be no larger than necessary for defence purposes, and that land and buildings and Service Families Accommodation, for which there is no longer a defence requirement, should be disposed of at the earliest opportunity. The disposal of such surplus land is undertaken in accordance with HM Treasury 'Managing Public Money' guidelines.

In addition, you may also find it helpful to note that Cliff End is now in the disposal programme having been vacated by the tenant and is due to be put to the market although a date has not yet been set.

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 DIO Secretariat 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, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail [CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk](mailto: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, <http://www.ico.org.uk>.

Yours sincerely,

DIO Secretariat