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Ref. FOI 2016/00845

04 February 2016

Dear

Thank you for your email of 19 January 2016 requesting the following information:

"I wish to enquire about the status of a patch of land at the former Chatham Dockyard, which now sites the new Asda Superstore. I noticed there is a patch of land that has not been developed and remains fenced off, the perimeter still appears to have the original MOD signage and fencing but has been reinforced with new fencing.

I wish to ask under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 the following:

- 1 - Is this patch of land owned by the MOD or the local authority (Medway Council)?*
- 2 - Why was this patch of land not developed, when that part of the dockyard was deveopled?*
- 3 - I noticed in the fenced off area there is scaffold structure that over looks the lake/pond - What is the purpose of this structure and the basin?*
- 4 - Is this land and basin contaminated with nuclear or posions from the former Chatham Dockyard era?*
- 5 - How deep is this basin?*
- 6 - What is the status off the land and are the plans for future development?*
- 7 - Please could you send me any papers regarding the site i.e. A plan of this land, papers regarding its former usage, its status and present in and any pictures - I would like these in a PDF format."*

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 (MOD), and I can confirm that some information in scope of your request is held.

The information you have requested can be found enclosed below, but some of the information in response to question 7 falls entirely within the scope of the absolute exemptions provided for at sections 21 (Information reasonably accessible to the applicant by other means) and has therefore 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 access information in regards to question 7 of your FOI request on the National Archives as follows; www.nationalarchives.gov.uk where you will find a further 30 plans of Chatham Dockyard in the National Archives in the MPH class, and around 160 items in ADM with the keywords "Chatham Dockyard plans" in the title. You may also find it helpful to note that at its peak Chatham Dockyard covered 400 acres. The Naval Historical Branch has 30-40 plans ranging from 1850-1950 from all different areas within the yard. The Naval Historical Branch holds the charts under the Lord Chancellors Instrument on behalf of the National Archive at Portsmouth, if you would like the opportunity to view these charts please do feel free to book an appointment by calling the Reading Room on 02392 725297.

Please find some of the information you have requested below:

1 - Is this patch of land owned by the MOD or the local authority (Medway Council)?

The patch of land is owned by the MOD.

2 - Why was this patch of land not developed, when that part of the dockyard was deveopled?

Historically a low level of radiation was identified on this patch of land and it was retained for MOD use. More recently the environmental agency has expressed its satisfaction that the level of radioactivity has now sufficiently reduced to support current development.

3 - I noticed in the fenced off area there is scaffold structure that over looks the lake/pond - What is the purpose of this structure and the basin?

The scaffold structure and basin support land quality sampling activities.

4 - Is this land and basin contaminated with nuclear or posions from the former Chatham Dockyard era?

Low level contamination was present when HM Dockyard was operational and remained after closure under Environmental Permitting Regulations.

5 - How deep is this basin?

Information not held.

6 - What is the status off the land and are the plans for future development?

The land surplus to MOD requirements and is being disposed of.

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, <http://www.ico.org.uk>.

Yours sincerely,

DIO Secretariat