

## **Environmental Information Regulations – Response - 24907**

*RE: Land at Westerfield - Extraction and Processing of Sand and Gravel*

*1. I herewith submit an FOI request for correspondence between Major Projects and Planning (Andy Rutter) and XXXXX XXXXX on behalf of XXXXX XXXXX.*

*In particular, please provide SCC's written responses to two pre-application advice requests dated 22 April 2022 and 23 December 2023: these requests were made by either XXXXX XXXXX or by XXXXX XXXXX.*

*My FOI request also includes any internal memos, consultations, strategy and planning records relating to the proposal: and to your letter SCC/0004/22C/PreApp sent to XXXXX XXXXX (date unknown).*

The information requested is being withheld under regulation 12(4)(b) manifestly unreasonable of the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR). Regulation 12(4)(b) allows public authorities to withhold information when it would take an unreasonable amount of time and diversion of resources to respond to a request.

In order to capture all of the information requested, we would have to contact the relevant teams who would have been involved with the Land at Westerfield in our Growth, Highways and Infrastructure directorate and ask the individual employees to carry out searches for the information they hold across their emails and file folders to ensure we captured all of the correspondence, internal memos etc that we hold. Once located, we would have to review the documents to see whether any of the information needed to be exempt from disclosure and then make the necessary redactions.

We estimate that it will take us more than 25 hours to determine appropriate material and locate, retrieve and extract the information in reference to your request making the total cost in excess of  $25 \times £25 = £625$ .

R.12(4)(b) is a qualified exception and as such, Suffolk County Council must take into consideration the public interest test before withholding the information from release.

However, whilst we are unable to provide all the information you have requested due to the burden and diversion of resources it would cause, we would be able to provide you with the following documents that you have specifically mentioned in your request:

- SCC's written responses to the pre-application advice requests dated 22 April 2022 and 23 December 2023.

If you are content for your request to be narrowed down to these documents, please confirm and we will get them sent to you as soon as possible.

### **Factors in favour of disclosure:**

- Further understanding of, and participation in, the debate of issues of the day.
- Facilitate the accountability and transparency of Suffolk County Council's decisions.
- Facilitate openness and transparency in Suffolk County Council's affairs.

**Factors in favour of withholding:**

- The cost of responding to this one request is prohibitive and not the best use of the council's limited resources.
- To provide all the information captured within the boundaries of the request would cause a disproportionate burden and an unjustified level of disruption and irritation in complying due to the amount of work that would be needed.
- Searching for, locating and preparing the information would put a strain on our resources by taking staff away from delivering mainstream services and answering other FOI/EIR requests.
- We have provided advice and assistance on how we can make the request manageable and provide the documents specifically mentioned in the request.
- The council does not believe that the value of releasing this information into the public domain is greater than the cost it will incur to locate, identify, and provide it.

Accordingly, we have determined that it is not in the interest of the Council to release the information. Therefore, this information is withheld under r.12(4)(b) of the EIR.