

Environmental Information Regulations – Response - 27903

I request the following information about emergency shelters

1. The total number of official emergency shelters currently designated for public use

As of 08/09/26 154 designated rest centres recorded across Suffolk (*designated meaning a member of JEPU has accessed the building to ensure it is fit to be a rest centre and capture key details of the site*)

2. The total number of members of the public those shelters can accommodate

Numbers range depending on if sleeping or just temporary holding and depending on the chosen shelter but ranging from approx. 30 to 1200 people.

3. The types of emergency for which those shelters are designated (e.g. flooding, heat, power outage, other)

Rest centres are for not designated specific risks and can be used for any emergency. We do consider if the building is in a flood zone and if it has a generators etc which would be additional detail to inform decision making at the time of an incident.

4. The types of buildings used (e.g. public buildings like libraries or schools, sports centres, or dedicated shelters).

Various. Predominately village halls and sport centres. We avoid schools as not to disrupt education settings.

5. Whether these buildings are publicly or privately owned and if the latter, then by whom.

Suffolk County Council (SCC) can confirm that the buildings are a mix of both publicly and privately owned however, we are withholding the names of the owners under r.12(5)(a) of the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR) as disclosing this information would adversely affect public safety.

The buildings within the scope of this request are emergency shelters. Disclosure of information identifying whether individual shelters are privately owned and, where applicable, the identity of the owner, would increase the likelihood of the shelters becoming identifiable and locatable. The Council considers that this would create a real risk of these facilities being targeted, disrupted, damaged or otherwise interfered with, thereby reducing their effectiveness as emergency shelter locations and adversely affecting public safety.

The Information Commissioners Office (ICO) recognises that information relating to infrastructure and facilities may engage Regulation 12(5)(a) where disclosure could create security risks or increase the potential for those intent on causing harm to identify and target locations.

Regulation 12(5)(a) is subject to the public interest test.

Factors favouring disclosure

- Promoting openness and transparency regarding the ownership of buildings used for emergency shelter purposes.
- Increasing public understanding of arrangements relating to emergency shelter provision.
- Supporting accountability for decisions concerning the use of such premises.

Factors favouring maintaining the exception

- Protecting the security and operational effectiveness of emergency shelter facilities.
- Reducing the risk that the shelters could be identified and targeted by individuals seeking to disrupt, damage or interfere with them.
- Safeguarding the Council's ability and the ability of partner organisations to provide emergency shelter accommodation when required.
- Protecting public safety by limiting the disclosure of information that could increase risks to facilities intended for use during emergency situations.

Having considered the public interest test and applying the presumption in favour of disclosure required by Regulation 12(2), SCC has concluded that the public interest in maintaining the exception outweighs the public interest in disclosure. Accordingly, the information has been withheld under Regulation 12(5)(a) of the EIR.

6. How members of the public are informed of the location of emergency shelters (e.g. website, app, signage, media)

Some communities have community emergency planning groups (CEPGs). Those which have designated a location in their community (e.g., the local village hall) share these details in their local emergency plan, often circulated in parish newsletters etc. In times of emergencies details would be shared by Police or LA officers at the time of an evacuation.

7. If any further shelters are planned and the timeline for opening

This is an ongoing review with new centres being identified continuously, designated rest centres are reassessed every 3 years and the number can fluctuate based on availability.

Where information is held centrally by the Local Resilience Forum secretariat rather than directly by your authority, I would be grateful if you could either include it in your response or advise me of the appropriate body to approach.

All evacuation detail is held by JEPU not the LRF

I am not requesting information that would identify specific security vulnerabilities or the precise locations of infrastructure that could present a security risk. If you consider any element of this request to fall within such an exemption, I would be grateful if you would respond to the remainder of the request and identify clearly which element has been withheld and under which exemption.

