

Freedom of Information request reference number: 8996.1

Date of response: 30/09/2024

Request:

Blueprints for stations

I am writing to ask for the floorplans and elevations for the following stations and any buildings within the station grounds - to aid in virtual recreations:

- New Malden
- Tottenham
- Lambeth River
- Lambeth
- Bethnal Green
- Clapham
- Stratford
- Bromley
- Dowgate
- North Kensington
- West Norwood

Response:

Thank you for your freedom of information request for floorplans of our fire stations.

I am aware that many floorplans for our fire stations are publicly available where those stations have undergone a recent planning application. That is because fire stations are subject to the Town and Country Planning laws. This has historically always been the case.

You will however be aware of how world security has changed and that the risk to the emergency services has changed and increased. For that reason, we are trying to align ourselves with the guidance of the National Protective Security Authority (NPSA) and in particular their guidance for [security considerations in the planning process](#).

Whilst we make no suggestion that you would use this information for anything other than your own interest, disclosure of this information to you has to be regarded as a disclosure to 'the public at large'. This information could potentially be obtained and utilised by individuals with malicious intent to cause disruption and subsequent economic damage to our stations and could adversely affect the safety and security of LFB employees and members of the general public.

It is our view that fire stations are an important part of the response to a range of threats that face Londoners (and the public nationally) and that our response could be compromised by those who have a detailed knowledge of the layout and functional purpose of those stations. We are taking steps to have future planning applications for fire stations considered under the same guidance that exists for crown premises and other buildings that are part of the critical national infrastructure which would see that sensitive information is kept separately from the main

planning register (as [this guidance](#) suggests). Until that time, we are unwilling to make the plans we hold, which are not already otherwise accessible, available under the freedom of information provisions.

This being the case, we consider the plans we hold to be exempt from [FOIA under Section 24 – National security](#). Section 24(1) allows a public authority not to disclose information where they consider that releasing the information would make the UK or its citizens more vulnerable to a national security threat. As the NPSA's guidance notes "*The positioning of buildings relative to their environs, and the layout and design of the space in and around them, can make these places less vulnerable to terrorist attack and, should an attack take place, better protect people from its impact*". We therefore take the view that the Section 24 (1) exemption applies on the basis that withholding the information is "*required for the purposes of safeguarding national security*". Required is taken to mean that the use of the exemption is reasonably necessary.

As Section 24 is a qualified and prejudice-based exemption we are required to consider the public interest in any refusal. The ICO defines the public interest here to mean the public good, it is not what is of interest to the public, or the private interests of a requester. We recognise the need for openness and transparency by public authorities, but in this instance, we feel that ensuring the protection of our staff, property, equipment and the public at large puts the balance in favour of withholding the information.

We have dealt with your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. For more information about this process please see the guidance we publish about making a request on our website: <https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/about-us/transparency/request-information-from-us/>