

Corporate Management
Our ref: MGLA120116-2706

Date: 9 February 2016

Dear [REDACTED],

Freedom of Information requests regarding Land Disposals

Thank you for your email of 12th January 2016. You raise a number of points in response to our email of the 8th January 2016 which we sent in response to your requests of the 8th, 15th and 21st December 2015.

"I would be grateful if you would advise me how you hold data on public land disposed of for residential and mixed use between May 5th 2008 to April 1st 2012 and in what form is that data held. I assume that the GLA Land and Housing Directorate does retain a list of the public land it has sold or leased in this time period for financial reasons as well as public accountability.

I would be grateful if you would advise me what detail in this list is retained in terms of the site name, address, date of sale or development agreement, name of purchaser and amount of affordable housing agreed for the development.

Would you please also provide a breakdown in as much detail as possible an estimate for the length of time it will take to collate the data that is available, specifying what type of data that is so I can be clear what records are accessible and I can comfortably send a request knowing it will not breach the "appropriate limit" of £450 set by the Freedom of Information Regulations 2004"

The GLA only acquired the bulk of its property portfolio in April 2012, transferred to the GLA Land & Property from the London Development Agency (LDA), London Thames Gateway Development Corporation and the London part of the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) under the Localism Act 2011.

The simple answer to your question would therefore be that the GLA itself did not dispose of any property assets during the period 5th May 2008 to 1st April 2012.

I can also confirm that the GLA does not hold or maintain a list of any such disposals over this period that could be used to directly answer your question.

The records that were passed to the GLA by these above bodies in 2012 are, for the most part, archived records – i.e. records in long term storage and not in active use. Without the names of the relevant land and sites, we are not able to identify the relevant boxes and files that would need to be retrieved from our archives in order to be able to construct a list to answer your questions.

The GLA retains thousands of archives boxes containing records that were transferred to the GLA by the LDA and HCA. The majority of these archived records were transferred to the GLA with accompanying schedules that "name" each box – i.e. providing a very brief description of the contents.

We are therefore only able to search for (and subsequently retrieve) these archived records based on the name, or description, of that box. These descriptions are very broad and general in nature and would reference the name of a site, for example, rather than including specifics such as "the sale of..."

Therefore, because the GLA does not hold a list detailing any land that was sold or disposed of by these agencies, we do not have the necessary information to allow us to search our archived records in order to retrieve and review the contents of those boxes to collate the information you have requested.

Conducting an all-out search of these archives to create a list for you would clearly exceed the 18 hour limit under FoIA, and would also arguably constitute the creation of new information in order to answer your request. As you may already be aware, the FoI Act only covers information held at the time a request is received, and does not require public authorities to create new information in order to answer that request.

Our initial response provided advice and assistance in regards to all three requests of your request because we had aggregate the cost of complying with all three as per the FoI Fees Regulations.

In regards to the request which referred specifically to Land Disposals, if you were able to provide some details about particular sites that you might be interested in, we would be able to conduct more specific searches of our archives to try and locate some of the specific details that you had requested – for example, the date of disposal, details of the developer or purchaser, and so on.

However, I appreciate that if you do not already know the names of sites or land that you would want information about, we may have regrettably hit an impasse on this matter, to the extent that neither of us know the necessary details that would be required to conduct a search for the records which might be able to answer your request.

I sincerely apologise if this letter sounds like we are being deliberately unhelpful, but I would ardently assure you that we are not trying to obfuscate this matter, or to obstruct or impede your access to information under this Act. In this case, we simply do not hold any additional information that we can provide you under our duty to advise and assist that might help refine this request any further.

If you have any further questions relating to this matter, please contact me, ensuring that you quote the reference at the top of this letter, and I will be happy to help.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'I. Lister', written in a cursive style.

Ian Lister
Information Governance Manager

If you are unhappy with the way the GLA has handled your request, you may complain using the complaints procedure, available at: <http://www.london.gov.uk/about-us/greater-london-authority-gla/sharing-our-information/freedom-information>