



Date
3 February 2025

Post Office
100 Wood Street
London EC2V 9ER

Your Ref:

Classification:
Public

Dear [REDACTED],

Freedom of Information Request – FOI2024/01564

We are writing in response to your email received by Post Office Limited (**"Post Office"**) on 3 December, which has been dealt with under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (**"FOIA"**).

In your email, you have requested the information shown verbatim in bold below:

"This Freedom of Information request is a follow up to one I submitted earlier in 2024, Your Ref FOI2024/00333. You provided a response document, file name ICO2024 01270 DN Amendments Redacted.pdf .

The information I request is referenced on ICO2024 01270 DN Amendments Redacted.pdf, on an E mail from [REDACTED] from page 5. The E mail is dated 20th October 2023, title RE:NCT16025 - Post Office Limited - Billingham - TS23 2ND - Temporary Closure.

In it, [REDACTED] states "NDA have reviewed the plan for the area, the advert to reopen as a main has been removed and the intention now is to advertise for 2 locals North & South of the town centre area"

With reference to the above statement, please provide the following information:

1. The current or most up to date plan for the area that "NDA" were quoted as reviewing.
2. The advertisements for what were quoted as the "2 locals".

3. If no adverts were never published for the 2 locals, all information relating to why the adverts were not published."

We can confirm that Post Office does hold some of the information you have requested. We have provided your questions in bold, and our answers below.

The current or most up to date plan for the area that "NDA" were quoted as reviewing.

We can confirm that the information you requested is being withheld as it falls under the exemption in section 43(2) of the FOIA, which relates to information which would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the public authority holding it). In applying this exemption, we have had to balance the public interest in withholding the information against the public interest in disclosure.

We recognise that there is a public interest in disclosure of information concerning details of plans or consultations about new Post Office branches, including within the Billingham area in this instance, as this helps promote transparency in Post Office business and reassurance about the way public money is being spent.

However, there is a strong public interest in withholding the information as it would, if disclosed, prejudice the commercial interests of Post Office. This is because disclosing information about Post Office strategy when dealing with the movement of branches in its network, would give an unfair advantage to competitors in understanding which location and format, as well as specific retailers, it intends to engage with. If this information were released, then competitors would potentially be able to understand its replacement strategy across the whole network. The information would also reveal predicted footfall data showing data on how many customers use the branch, thus, allowing competitors to use this additional data from Post Office to identify and target with similar products, those areas that are potentially more profitable, thereby reducing the commercial viability of Post Office. It would not be in the public interest to disclose information if Post Office would be unable to operate in a fair marketplace regarding the competitive dialogue procedure and are commercially damaged by the release of the information.

The advertisements for what were quoted as the "2 locals".

If no adverts were never published for the 2 locals, all information relating to why the adverts were not published.

We can confirm the advertisements for Neasham Avenue was submitted in November 2022; and Billingham was submitted in December 2023. However, we no longer have access to these advertisements, as they were only advertised online for a period of 3 months on the run a post office website. This information is, therefore, not held.

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of this response, you do have a right to request an internal review. You can do this by writing to the address above within 40 working days of receipt of this response stating your reasons for your internal review request or alternatively, by emailing information.rights@postoffice.co.uk.

If, having requested an internal review by Post Office, you are still not satisfied with our response you also have a right of appeal to the Information Commissioner at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF

Telephone: 0303 123 1113
www.ico.org.uk/foicomplaints

Yours sincerely,

Information Rights Team
information.rights@postoffice.co.uk
<https://corporate.postoffice.co.uk/en/governance/access-to-information/access-to-information/>

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