

### Public Interest Test – 8995/19

#### Applicable Exemptions:

Section 31(1)(a)(b) - Law enforcement  
Section 38(1)(b) - Health and safety

#### Evidence of Harm

The Police Service is charged with enforcing the law, the prevention and detection of crime and protecting the public. While there is a public interest in the transparency of policing operations and providing assurance that the police service is appropriately and effectively enforcing the law, there is a strong public interest in safeguarding the safety of the public and police capability / operations.

Disclosing details of the specific locations and location addresses used for firearms training would provide a person who may be intent on criminal activities with invaluable information as to the capability / tactical position and highlight that the force operates in certain locations, thus allowing them to adjust their own tactics accordingly.

#### Section 31 Considerations Favouring Disclosure

West Midlands Police are accountable to the public for providing efficient resources, training and for budgeting for specialist units and departments, in order that the public can be assured that the force is fulfilling its responsibility to protect and serve our communities.

Police Forces need to be properly equipped in order to meet the demands placed upon them and this information could go some way towards reassuring the public that West Midlands Police is adequately prepared in all areas. The Force is responsible for public money and therefore there is a strong public interest in disclosing how and what the money is spent on.

#### Section 38 Considerations Favouring Disclosure

This information could go some way towards reassuring the public that the West Midlands Police Force is adequately prepared in all areas.

The public is entitled to know what areas of criminal activity the police service allocate public funds to, which would lead to a better informed public and would assist communities in becoming more aware of the level of protection afforded to them.

#### Section 31 Considerations Favouring Non-Disclosure

By releasing all of the locations that are used for firearms training into the public domain, WMP would be inadvertently furnishing criminals with the knowledge of specific facilities, buildings and organisations that are fundamental to providing operational support to the Force. This would not only hinder the Force's ability to operate in a covert capacity, but the disclosed information could be used to target the force, and place the Force and its employees at increased risk.

These locations could be targeted purely because they have intelligence, even if they are not used for this purpose, which would in turn reduce the effectiveness of the Force's capability with regard to protecting the public.

The public interest will favour non-disclosure when the current or future law enforcement role of the force may be compromised by the release of information.

**Section 38 Considerations Favouring non-Disclosure**

The risk to public safety cannot be ignored and West Midlands Police has a responsibility to ensure the safety of the public. The disclosure of specific location addresses used for firearms training could endanger not only the physical safety of WMP employees, but it could also make any organisations / individuals that operate the facilities more vulnerable due to their connection to the police.

Revealing details with regard to highly sensitive training and departments could potentially expose this area of the Force and consequently put individuals at risk within local communities as areas / locations could be targeted with multiple incidents exposing a risk to officer's safety.

**Balancing Test**

We recognise that the public interest in being open and transparent is of great importance to all and release of information may assist in the public being more aware of the work that the police are carrying out. However, while the public interest considerations favouring disclosure are noted, this must be balanced with the impact any release would have on the operational capability tactical approach of the police.

Whilst there is a public interest in the transparency of policing operations and in this case providing assurance that the police service has a presence within the community through disclosure of the facilities / buildings they utilise. There is a very strong public interest in safeguarding both national security and the integrity of police development and operations in these highly sensitive areas.

Any information identifying the focus of specific policing activity, such as details of the locations within this FOI request, could be used to the advantage of criminal organisations. Information that undermines the operational integrity of these activities will adversely affect public safety, and have a negative impact on law enforcement.

Therefore, the safety of the public could be compromised and inappropriate release could cause damage to the service and the community.