

WILTSHIRE POLICE



XXX

Sent via email: XXX

**Force Disclosure Unit
Police Headquarters**

London Road
DEVIZES
Wiltshire
SN10 2DN

Date: 06/07/26

Our Ref: FOI 2026-459

Dear XXX

I write in connection with your request for information dated 18/05/26 concerning Cannabis Farms and Brothels.

I am required by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to handle all requests in a manner that is blind as to the identity and motives of the requestor. Any information released as a response to a request is regarded as being published and therefore in the public domain without caveat.

Your request for information has now been considered, and I am able to respond as follows.

You wrote:

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, please provide the following information for the period 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2025:

The number of recorded offences, investigations, or incidents relating to:

- a) cannabis cultivation, cannabis production, cannabis farms, or cannabis factories.
- b) keeping or managing a brothel (Home Office offence code 024/19).

Where possible, please state whether the premises relating to the offences/investigations/incidents were classified as residential or commercial; the property type (e.g. private dwelling, flat, HMO, social housing, industrial unit, retail premises, hotel, short-term let); whether the premises were owner-occupied, privately rented, socially rented, or of unknown tenure.

I am not requesting addresses, names, full postcodes, or any information capable of identifying individuals.

E.g. "In 2022, there were 100 investigations relating to cannabis cultivation. Of those, 40 related to privately-rented properties."

Please provide the information in spreadsheet or CSV format where possible.

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Our response:

I have considered your request, and I am able to provide a partial response. The information relevant to this request is exempt by virtue of the following: -

Section 12(1) – Where cost of compliance exceeds appropriate limit

Section 31(1)(a)(b) – Law Enforcement

Section 38(1) – Health and Safety.

Wiltshire Police record crime in accordance with current Home Office Crime Counting guidance.

There are currently no specific offences dedicated solely to the running or managing of a cannabis farm/factory per-se. The nearest offence where offences of this nature is likely to be held is under the following HO Code: -

- 092/21 Production or being concerned in the production of a controlled drug

(Class B – Cannabis and cannabis resin)

Whilst our crime recording system(s) are sophisticated and contain several designated fields in which certain specific details related to a crime are recorded (such as victim name, suspect date of birth, etc.) we do not have defined fields in which we record the following: -

- a) Whether a crime or incident is related to a cannabis farm or cannabis production
- b) Whether a building is residential / business etc
- c) Whether a property or building (domestic or otherwise) is linked in any way to cannabis production/supply

If held, the data above would be held either in the narrative of the occurrence log, within the body of the call log related to a crime, in supporting other documentation such as interviews, records of interview, seizure paperwork and so on or would need to be found via open-source searches of the internet (in regard to building type). Indeed, it might well be the case that some of the information you require will not have been recorded anyway.

Given the number of offences recorded under HO Code 092/21 for the period you require over 200+ records and allowing a very conservative 5 minutes per record to locate and record the information you require (if it is held at all). I estimate that it would take in the region of 18.5 hours to locate the information you are requesting, on top of the time already spent on this request.

Under the circumstances I am confident that to locate, retrieve and extract the information you seek would by far exceed the time obligations upon this authority to comply, and in so doing would exceed the fees limits. This is set at £450 calculated at a flat rate of £25 per hour for those work activities comprising of confirming the information is held, locating it, retrieving it and extracting it.

Please also note that if one part of the request engages in a Section 12 response, the whole request will engage in a Section 12 response. The reason being is because locating, retrieving and extracting any further information would only add to the already exceeded time obligations.

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The information you are requesting is also exempt under sections 31 and 38 of The Act.

Section 31 and section 38 are both qualified prejudice-based exemptions and therefore require Wiltshire Police to establish the harm in disclosure, along with the public interest favouring and against disclosure.

Harm Test

A disclosure under Freedom of Information is a disclosure to the world, not just the individual requesting the information. Disclosing information into the public domain – specifically the measures the force is taking to combat the use of cannabis farms and brothels by OCG's (effectively the force's site procedures) – would undermine the core principles of policing; namely to prevent and detect crime. Disclosure of this information could cause substantial harm to planned policing operations, and all individuals involved i.e. police employees and the community. If Wiltshire Police were to place this information into the public domain, this would prejudice our ability to prevent and detect crime, and to apprehend or prosecute offenders; providing offenders with the information they would need to evade detection and therefore effecting the force's ability to protect the community. In addition, disclosing this procedure would put the health and safety of officers attending potential cannabis and brothel sites at risk.

Section 31 - Factors favouring disclosure

Placing this information into the public domain would lead to an increased public awareness of these issues and how we as a force handle suspected cannabis and brothel sites. This in turn may lead to a reduction in crime or more information being supplied by the public and would also allow the public to better protect themselves against crime. Disclosure would also ensure that Wiltshire Police can be held accountable for the actions taken and show the Force as being as open and transparent with the public as possible.

Section 31 - Factors against disclosure

Releasing operational information of this nature would hinder the prevention and detection of crime. It would detail how the force identifies the existence of these sites, the types of equipment used in such sites and actions taken by officers once a site is discovered. This would result in investigations being compromised, as offenders would be able to gain valuable information that would assist them in evading capture. By offenders evading capture, the public will be put at a greater risk resulting in trust in the Force diminishing and increase of crime being seen. Disclosure of information sensitive to operations and tactic used would severely impact on the force's resources, also assisting offenders to evade capture.

Section 38 - Factors favouring disclosure

Placing this information into the public domain would lead to an increased public awareness regarding how Wiltshire Police are approaching suspected cannabis and brothel sites. Additionally, disclosure would demonstrate Wiltshire Police as being as open and transparent with the public as possible.

Section 38 - Factors against disclosure

If this information were to be disclosed, the health and safety of officers attending suspected cannabis and brothel sites would be put at risk. Disclosing the contents of the procedure would provide criminals with additional information regarding the potential risks faced by officers when attending these sites. This would put the health and safety of these officers at risk.

Balance Test

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Whilst there is a public interest in transparency and openness between the force and the public, in addition to the public seeing how the force are engaging with the threat from criminals, there is a stronger interest in ensuring the public are protected from the threat of criminals, and that the enforcement of the law and the prevention and detection of crime is upheld. To disclose information which is likely to assist offenders would seriously undermine the effective delivery of operational law enforcement. There is also a strong public interest in ensuring the safety of individuals is upheld and Wiltshire Police will not divulge any information if doing so would cause harm to these individuals.

For these reasons, the public interest lies in favour of non-disclosure of this information.

Ordinarily under our section 16 duty to provide advice and assistance, we would advise you how to refine your request in respect of questions 1,2, and 3 to a more manageable level. However, due to the difficulties outlined above, I cannot see how this can be achieved in this case.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires the Constabulary, when refusing to provide information (because the information is exempt) to provide you the applicant with a notice which: (a) states that fact, (b) specifies the exemption in question and (c) states (if that would not otherwise be apparent) why the exemption applies.

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 this letter acts as a Refusal Notice for those aspects of your request.

Exemptions applied:

- Section 12(1) – Cost exceeds appropriate limit
- Section 31(1)(a)(b) – Law Enforcement
- Section 38(1) – Health and Safety

I am satisfied that all the relevant information has been passed to me and been considered in the light of your request within the time constraints applicable under the legislation.

Wiltshire Police would like to thank you for the interest that you have shown in the Force.

Yours sincerely,

Force Disclosure Decision Maker

Wiltshire Police offers a re-examination of your case under its review procedure.



Force Disclosure Unit

Wiltshire Police HQ, London Road, Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 2DN



Freedom of Information Request Appeals Procedure

1. Who Can Ask for a Review

Any person who has requested information from Wiltshire Police, which has been dealt with under the Freedom of Information Act, is entitled to complain and request an internal review, if they are dissatisfied with the response they received.

2. How to Request a Review

Requests for review of a Freedom of Information request must be made in writing to the:

Force Disclosure Unit
Wiltshire Police Headquarters,
London Road, Devizes,
Wiltshire,
SN10 2DN

Email at disclosure@wiltshire.police.uk.

The reference number, date of the request and details of why the review is being requested must be included. Requests for review should be brought to the attention of the Force Disclosure Unit within 20 working days of the Force's response to the original Fol request.

3. Review Procedure

Receipt of a request for review will be acknowledged in writing to include confirmation of the reasons for the review. The review will be conducted by another Decision Maker, who is independent from the original Decision Maker. The Force Disclosure Unit will set a target date for a response. The response will be made as soon as is practicable with the intention to complete the review within twenty working days. In more complex cases the review may take up to 40 working days.

The Independent Decision Maker will conduct a review of the handling of the request for information and of decisions taken, including decisions taken about where the public interest lies in respect of exempt information where applicable. The review enables a re-evaluation of the case, taking into account the matters raised by the complaint.

4. Conclusion of the Appeal

On completion of the review the Independent Decision Maker will reply to the complainant with the result of the review. If the complainant is still dissatisfied following the review they should contact the Information Commissioner to make an appeal. The Information Commissioner can be contacted via the following details:

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

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Tel: 01625 545 700
Fax: 01625 524 510
Email: mail@ico.gsi.gov.uk

Please note that the ICO's offices will be closed for the foreseeable future and are therefore unable to receive correspondence via post.

If you should wish to contact them, please visit <https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/>