

Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR)

Decision notice

Date: 28 February 2022

Public Authority: Maldon District Council
Address: Council Offices
Princes Road
Maldon
Essex
CM9 5DL

Decision (including any steps ordered)

1. The complainant requested information from Maldon District Council ("the Council") relating to members of the public's responses to a specific planning application. By the date of this notice the Council had not issued a substantive response to this request.
2. The Commissioner's decision is that the Council has breached regulation 5(2) of the EIR in that it failed to provide a valid response to the request within the statutory time frame of 20 working days.
3. The Commissioner requires the Council to take the following step to ensure compliance with the legislation.
 - The Council must provide a substantive response to the request in accordance with its obligations under the EIR.
4. The Council must take this step within 35 calendar days of the date of this decision notice. Failure to comply may result in the Commissioner making written certification of this fact to the High Court pursuant to section 54 of the Act and may be dealt with as a contempt of court.

Request and response

5. On 4 June 2021, the complainant wrote to the Council and requested information in the following terms:

"Maldon District Council's Planning Portal states that there were 122 public responses received to application ref [reference redacted]. While the names of respondees and their comments are published on that portal, the additional details of their individual addresses in the district are not available on that portal. Could the Council please publish the full names and addresses provided for all of the public respondees to that application."

6. The Council wrote to the complainant on 4 June 2021 to acknowledge the request. By the date of this notice, the Council has not provided the complainant with a substantive response to their request.

Scope of the case

7. The complainant contacted the Commissioner on 4 February 2022 to complain about the Council's failure to respond to their request.
8. The Commissioner has considered whether the Council has complied with its obligations under regulation 5(2) of the EIR.

Reasons for decision

9. Regulation 5(1) of the EIR states that:

"a public authority that holds environmental information shall make it available on request."

10. Regulation 5(2) of the EIR states that:

"Information shall be made available under paragraph (1) as soon as possible and no later than 20 working days after the date of receipt of the request."

11. On 11 February 2022 the Commissioner wrote to the Council, reminding it of its responsibilities and asking it to provide a substantive response to the complainant's request within 10 working days.

12. Despite this intervention, the Council has failed to respond to the complainant.
13. From the evidence provided to the Commissioner in this case, it is clear that the Council did not deal with the request for information in accordance with the EIR. The Commissioner finds that the Council has breached regulation 5(2) by failing to respond to the request within 20 working days and it is now required to respond to the request in accordance with the EIR.

Right of appeal

14. Either party has the right to appeal against this decision notice to the First-tier Tribunal (Information Rights). Information about the appeals process may be obtained from:

First-tier Tribunal (Information Rights)
GRC & GRP Tribunals,
PO Box 9300,
LEICESTER,
LE1 8DJ

Tel: 0203 936 8963

Fax: 0870 739 5836

Email: grc@justice.gov.uk

Website: www.justice.gov.uk/tribunals/general-regulatory-chamber

15. If you wish to appeal against a decision notice, you can obtain information on how to appeal along with the relevant forms from the Information Tribunal website.
16. Any Notice of Appeal should be served on the Tribunal within 28 (calendar) days of the date on which this decision notice is sent.

Signed

Michael Lea
Team Manager
Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF