

## **North Essex Garden Communities** **Freedom Of Information Policy**

### **1. Introduction**

The Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000 provides public access to information held by public authorities.

The Act covers any recorded information that is held by a public authority in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and by UK-wide public authorities based in Scotland. Public authorities include government departments, local authorities, the NHS, state schools and police forces.

Recorded information includes printed documents, computer files, letters, emails, photographs, and sound or video recordings.

For more information visit <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-freedom-of-information/>

### **2. Submitting an FOI**

As a publicly-owned company, North Essex Garden Communities Ltd (NEGC) is covered by the Freedom of Information Act.

To submit an FOI you can contact NEGC via [info@ne-gc.co.uk](mailto:info@ne-gc.co.uk). You will receive a response within 20 working days.

To be valid it must:

- Be in writing. This could be a letter or email or via social media channels
- Include the requester's real name.
- Include an address for correspondence, this can be a postal address, email or twitter handle.
- Describe the information requested.

A request will only need to be dealt with specifically under the FOI Act if it falls outside the scope of normal business and may take some time to answer because of the volume or nature of information requested.

### **3. Requests falling under the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR)**

EIR Requests do not need to be made in writing. Requests for information relating to the natural or the built environment will be governed by the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR). This will include a substantial proportion of information related to planning matters as any new construction or infrastructure may affect the natural and the built environment.

For more information on EIRs visit <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-the-environmental-information-regulations/what-are-the-eir/>

#### 4. Responding to FOI requests

Once submitted, NEGC will determine if the FOI:

- Relates to information which is held by NEGC or whether it is held by one of the four partner Councils. If this is the case the requester will be contacted to ask their permission to forward on their request.
- Relates to information already published or intended to be published.
- Will take more than 18 hours to gather so will exceed the cost limit.
- Falls within any of the exemptions set down within the Freedom of Information Act or, in the case of Environmental Information, the exceptions within the EIR. <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-freedom-of-information/refusing-a-request/>
- Is clear, or if further clarification is required from the requester.