

Date: 17/11/2023
Our ref: 01/FOI/23/011608/I

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO: 01/FOI/23/011608/I

I write in connection with your request for information dated 03/11/2023, received by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) for the following information:

There is a red light camera situated on Barton Road (facing South) at the junction of Barton Road & Kingsway/Urmston Lane in Stretford M32

I would like to find out for the last 12 months, when the camera has been fully operational; and when it has not been operational due to being 'turned off'; broken; no film etc etc.

Additionally, would you provide the number of motorists caught running red lights in the same period.

Result of Searches

Following receipt of your request searches were conducted within Greater Manchester Police (GMP) to locate the requested information and I can confirm the information requested is held by GMP.

However, I am not obliged to provide the information requested as exemptions apply.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires GMP, when refusing to provide such 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. The information requested in relation to information about operational fixed/mobile safety cameras and their operational functions (other than measuring speed) have been exempt from disclosure by virtue of the following exemptions:

Section 31(1)(a)(b) Law Enforcement
Section 38(1)b Health and Safety

Sections 31(1)(a)(b) and Section 38 (1)b are prejudice based and qualified exemptions; there is a requirement to articulate the harm that would be caused in disclosing such information as well as carrying out a public interest test, which can be seen below.

Public Interest Test

Section 31– Harm

To disclose any operational functions of this camera will create misleading and potentially dangerous information into the public domain. This would create a perception that motorists may travel through a red light without fear of being caught. This may encourage individuals to travel more dangerously in this area. If individuals travel more dangerously, this will undoubtedly increase the risk of accidents to motorists and pedestrians. This would impact on the law enforcement capabilities of GMP in the prevention and detection of crime and the apprehension or prosecution of offenders.

Factors Favouring Disclosure

The disclosure details of any operational safety cameras and their operational functions would assist the populous in taking steps to better protect themselves. It would also show GMP's accountability in the use of public funds when policing.

Factors Favouring Non-Disclosure

Conversely to the factors in favour of disclosure, to publicly release information about operational safety cameras and their operational functions would impact on the law enforcement capabilities of GMP and would undermine the effectiveness of the cameras and our road safety enforcement. It would allow a perception and encouragement that motorists may travel dangerously through a red light without generating a fine/endorsement, which would impact of GMP's ability to prevent and detect crime and apprehend or prosecute offenders. Additionally, this would undoubtedly increase the risk of the health and safety of pedestrians and other motorists.

Section 38 –Harm

To disclose the operational functions and outcomes would encourage motorists to ignore the traffic lights and drive dangerously. This would undoubtedly increase the risk of the health and safety of pedestrians and other motorists.

Factors Favouring Disclosure

The disclosure operational functions and outcomes would encourage transparency between the Force and the public.

Factors Favouring Non-Disclosure

To divulge to the wider public the operational functions and outcomes, may encourage individuals to travel more dangerously and ignore the traffic lights in this area. The more dangerously individuals travel, the higher the risk of accidents to motorists and pedestrians. In addition, knowing operational functions and outcomes of safety cameras in the area could also encourage the public to drive dangerously and pay less attention to the road.

Balancing Test

When balancing the public interest test GMP has to consider whether the information should be released into the public domain, therefore arguments need to be weighed against each other.

The most persuasive reason for disclosing the information would be the fact that disclosure would encourage transparency, which needs to be weighed against the strongest reasons for non-disclosure, which in this case is the likelihood of individuals being put at risk. The safety of the communities GMP police is of paramount importance and the Force would not detrimentally impact on that safety by disclosing harmful information in response to a FOI request.

Therefore, having considered all the factors for and against disclosure it is the decision at this time to maintain the above exemptions and withhold the information requested.