



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND TRANSPARENCY POLICY

January 2025

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FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND TRANSPARENCY POLICY OF GORAM HOMES LIMITED

1. Introduction

Goram Homes (the Company) recognises that as public money has been used to establish Goram Homes Limited, it has a duty to manage the public sector financial investment as efficiently and transparently as possible, within the constraints of Goram Homes being active within the commercial marketplace.

Goram Homes will publish performance information on a range of subjects including details of our financial performance.

The performance information will assist citizens to understand how Goram Homes has performed in relation to the investment of public money and key performance indicators and enable citizens to assess value for money.

To assist this process and as part of our commitment to transparency, Goram Homes starts with a presumption that our information should be made publicly available, unless there are legitimate reasons why not - for example, disproportionate cost, personal data, commercially sensitive data, information which could harm our ability to trade or information that would impact on our ability to maximise the value of the public sector investment.

This Freedom of Information and Transparency Policy will be reviewed annually at the Company Audit and Risk Committee.

Our Public Statement

Openness and transparency are reflected in the way we operate. It strengthens our relationships with customers and stakeholders and raises awareness of how we can work with citizens, communities and businesses to improve our services, enabling us to be innovative and drive business efficiency.

Being open and accountable

- contributes to better decision making;
- improves and maintains our reputation;
- demonstrates delivery of value for money;
- provides the necessary assurance and confidence that the business group is being properly conducted and managed.

2. Freedom of Information Act

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) provides public access to information held by public authorities in two ways:

- public authorities are obliged to publish certain information about their activities; and
- members of the public are entitled to request information from public authorities.

Public authorities include local authorities. Companies which are wholly owned by the public sector are subject to the Act. This legislation therefore applies to Goram Homes.

Goram Homes has a legal obligation to provide information through an approved publication scheme and in response to requests (which it must respond to within 20 working days). This document includes Goram Homes's policy for meeting its requirements under the FOIA and other transparency requirements.

Paragraph 7 onwards of this policy document sets out the procedures in relation to FOIA and where possible the same processes (if applicable) shall be applied to any request, disclosure or publication of information except where there is specific reason to do otherwise.

3. The Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR)

Goram Homes is obliged to deal with requests for information that are covered by the Environmental Information Regulations 2004(EIR).

The Regulations gives members of the public the right to access 'environmental information' held by a public authority.

Goram Homes must respond to a request within 20 working days and will treat these requests in line with the guidance provided by the Information Commissioner. An EIR request can also be made verbally, over the telephone or in person. Goram Homes would prefer that requests are made in writing to ensure that the information provided is comprehensive and accurate but we cannot insist on a written application.

4. Companies Act 2006

Goram Homes is also governed by the Companies Act 2006 and related legislation. This means that Goram Homes will comply with disclosure and other obligations under the Companies Act, such as notifying Companies House of relevant matters and by maintaining their statutory registers. Information about Group Companies will therefore be available and accessible to the public and others in the same way as is the case with other private companies limited by shares or guarantee.

Any requests for information and documents that are available from Companies House will not normally be provided by the Company.

5. Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

Article 15 of the GDPR and Part 3, Chapter 3, Section 45 of the Data Protection Act 2018 (the 'Act') give individuals the right to access their personal data (subject access data). Individuals can make a subject access request verbally or in writing and, in most circumstances, no fee for providing the data can be charged.

By making a written or verbal request, an individual is entitled to:

- know whether an organisation holds personal data about them;
- why the data is being collected;
- how the data is being used;
- know who receives the data, and which country or organisation they are part of;
- know how long the data will be stored;
- see a copy of the personal data about them which is held (and be informed how they can request to see a copy);
- ask for the data to be altered or erased or stop any further processing;
- know how they can make a complaint about our data processing;
- know where the data has come from (if not from one of Goram Homes it may be third party data); and
- know whether data has been processed through an automated process.

Such requests are known as "Subject Access Requests". Goram Homes will be required to respond to the individual making such a request (even if only to confirm that we do not hold any personal data about them). Goram Homes must respond to any requests within one month (using the corresponding calendar date in the next month. If this is not possible because the following month is shorter and there is no corresponding calendar date, the date for response is the last day of the following month.). The time limit usually runs from the date of receiving the request unless it has been necessary to request additional information to enable us to deal with the request (for example to check the identity of the person making the request). In this case we will inform the enquirer of the revised date.

6. The Local Authority Transparency Code

The Local Authority Transparency Code sets out the minimum data that local authorities should be publishing, the frequency it should be published and how it should be published. It requires publication of various financial information including: Council expenditure above £500 in transactions with external suppliers; details of Government Procurement Card Transactions; and information about senior salaries.

Goram Homes does not come within the definition of 'Local Authorities' for the purposes of the legislation referred to as the 'Transparency Code' and therefore this Code does not apply to it.

7. Disclosure under The Local Authorities (Companies) Order 1995

Goram Homes is governed by the Local Authorities (Companies) Order 1995 that applies to companies which are subject to the influence or control of a local authority. Goram Homes will therefore provide relevant information about it as required:

- to a member of the Council for the proper discharge of his/her duties;
- to the local authority auditor for the purposes of the audit of the local authority's accounts; and
- a copy of the minutes of any general meeting of the company to the public for a period of 4 years from the date of the meeting.

There is a restriction on publishing material of a political nature particularly that which would give support to a political party.

8. Publication Scheme

Please see Appendix 1 (Publication Scheme) based on the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) guidance which has been adopted by Goram Homes for a range of examples where Goram Homes will be publishing its information.

The Freedom of Information Act requires every public authority to adopt and maintain a publication scheme, which sets out the types of information the organisation must routinely publish.

Goram Homes's Publication Scheme will be provided on Goram Homes's website. Both are based on the Model Publication Scheme for wholly owned companies as defined by the Information Commissioner's Office. The scheme sets out the classes of information that Goram Homes publishes or intends to publish, the manner in which this information will be published and whether the information is available free of charge or on payment. The information listed in the scheme is available free of charge unless otherwise stated.

9. Making a request

Requests should be made in writing via email to the relevant company website or via post for Goram Homes:

Darren Hartley

Governance Manager
Goram Homes Limited
Ashton Court Estate Ashton Court,
Long Ashton, Bristol,
England, BS41 9JN

Please note that requests for information should state clearly which body or company the request relates to. Also, note that Bristol City Council will be unable to respond in any meaningful way if a request is made to Bristol City Council for information about and held by any other company wholly owned by Bristol City Council as this request should have been sent to Goram Homes.

10. Response to the Request

Goram Homes will respond to a request within 20 working days.

An applicant is entitled:

- to be informed in writing as to whether the information described in the request is held by Goram Homes; and
- to have the information communicated to them (by providing a copy, inspection of the document or by a summary).

However, some information may be exempt from disclosure under one of the exemptions of the FOIA or EIR (more information below) and therefore the information may be withheld.

Goram Homes can ask the applicant to clarify the request if it needs further details to identify and locate the information. The 20 working day compliance period commences from the date clarification is received.

The applicant must in every case be told that they:

- have the right to appeal;
- have a right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office; and
- do not necessarily have the right to re-use the information given to them.

11. Copyright and re-use

Information which is generated by Goram Homes and is included in either publication scheme or obtained through a request for information may be reproduced for the enquirer's own personal use and for non-commercial purposes only. Permission to reproduce information in the publication scheme obtained through a request for information does not extend to any material which is identified as being the copyright of a third party.

Authorisation to reproduce such material must be obtained from the copyright holders concerned.

12. Appropriate limits

Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act, 'Exemption where cost of compliance exceeds appropriate limit' allows Goram Homes to refuse a request for information if it estimates that meeting the request would exceed the appropriate cost limit.

The appropriate cost limit for FOIA is set out in regulations and where (unusually) a charge can be made for responding to a subject access request under data protection legislation it must be no more than is reasonable.

13. Fees notices

Section 9 of the Freedom of Information Act requires that a public authority intending to charge a fee for providing information in response to a request must issue a fees notice to the applicant. In the event of a fees notice being issued, Goram Homes will begin to provide information on receipt of the fees. The 20 working day compliance period is placed 'on hold' from the date of issue until the Fee is received.

14. Disbursement costs

Limited "disbursement costs" – for example photocopying or postage – may be reclaimed if the cost of provision exceeds £25.

15. Formats

When possible, the information will be provided in the format specified by the applicant. Most responses will be provided via email with attachments where necessary.

16. Duty to provide advice and assistance

Section 16 of the Freedom of Information Act requires Goram Homes to 'assist and advise' applicants in order to provide them with the information they require. Examples of advice and assistance include:

- in requesting clarification around a request, Goram Homes will provide details about information held and options for providing it;

- in providing a response, Goram Homes will, where possible, provide contextual information, links or documents to complement the information requested.

17. Vexatious or repeated requests

Section 14 (1) of the Freedom of Information Act states that a public authority does not have to comply with vexatious requests. Similarly, under the data protection legislation a fee to cover reasonable administrative costs may be permissible if the costs of complying with the request would be manifestly unfounded or excessive; or an individual requests further copies of their data following a previous request. Goram Homes will assess vexatious requests in line with the guidance provided by the Information Commissioner.

18. Refusing a request

Goram Homes can refuse a request for the following reasons:-

- an exemption applies (see below);
- further information is reasonably required by the public authority to deal with the request (if there is no response to a request for clarification);
- the request is vexatious (not just difficult to comply with nor because it is unclear why the applicant requires access to the information);
- the same request by the same applicant has already been dealt with recently;
- the cost of complying with the request would exceed an appropriate limit (as prescribed).

The Applicant must be provided with a notice as to why access will not be given. This must be done within the normal time limit for responding to a request (unless a relevant extension applies or is agreed). There are, however, exemptions to the requirement to provide a notice, such as when a vexatious request is being investigated.

There is no standard format for refusing a request, but Goram Homes will outline the reason for refusal including:

- the exemption being relied upon for non-disclosure;
- why it applies in the particular circumstances;
- if the public interest has been considered;
- options for appealing the decision;
- the right to apply to the Information Commissioner;
- reference to our complaints procedure.

19. Complaints

If an Applicant is dissatisfied with the response they have received from Goram Homes they may appeal using the Freedom of Information or data protection complaints procedure which aligns with the Information Commissioner's guidelines on internal reviews and appeals. This procedure is separate from Goram Homes's standard complaints procedure.

20. Exemptions

Goram Homes may sometimes decline to disclose and publish certain information but only where the circumstances justify a number of specific exemptions which are in some cases subject to a further public interest test.

The FOIA and the data protection legislation provides a list of 'exemptions' when disclosure may be declined. Goram Homes will apply exemptions in line with the guidance provided by the Information Commissioner. The most common exemptions likely to be used by Goram Homes include:

- information accessible to applicant by other means (e.g. through Companies House);
- information intended for future publication;
- information which, if disclosed, could endanger the health and safety of any individual;
- personal information about individuals other than the requester;
- personal information about the requester should be refused under FOIA and considered as a Subject Access Request under the data protection legislation;
- information provided to Goram Homes in confidence;
- information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in Court proceedings;
- information which constitutes a trade secret or which, if disclosed, would prejudice commercial interests;
- information whose disclosure is prohibited by any other Act or legislation.

21. Public Interest Test

Some exemptions have to be weighed up against a 'public interest test', which determines whether there is a stronger public interest in releasing or withholding the information. Where applicable if the public interest in disclosing the information outweighs the public interest in protecting the information, the information can be legitimately disclosed (with a qualified exemption). Examples of where there is likely to be a public interest in disclosure include where the disclosure is made to expose wrongdoing, to raise issues of public concern and to prevent the public from being misled.

In exceptional circumstances Goram Homes will, in considering the public interest test, extend the time of a request to 40 working days.

22. The Information Commissioner

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) is the UK's independent authority set up to uphold information rights in the public interest, promoting openness by public bodies and data privacy for individuals. The ICO rules on eligible complaints, gives guidance to individuals and organisations, and has powers to take enforcement action when the law is broken. An applicant who has completed Goram Homes' Freedom of Information complaints procedure but is still not satisfied with the handling or outcome of their request may write to the Information Commissioner directly.

23. Records management

Section 46 of the Freedom of Information Act requires Goram Homes to follow the guidelines set down in the Lord Chancellor's *Code of Practice on the management of records issued under section 46 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000*. Goram Homes will develop a records management policy and associated procedures and guidance to ensure that it manages its records effectively. In respect of other records Goram Homes will seek to follow best practice for record retention.

24. The responsibilities of Goram Homes staff

Goram Homes support the responsibility of all colleagues to help respond to Freedom of Information and data protection legislation requests. Staff training will be provided where necessary by Goram Homes including appropriate guidance to all colleagues.

Appendix 1

Goram Homes Publication Scheme

Goram Homes Limited is committed to the Model Publication Scheme as defined by the Information Commissioner's Office and this document clearly sets out the information and the frequency (if appropriate) which will be published along with the mechanism by which the information can be obtained.

<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/foi/publication-schemes-a-guide/definition-documents/>

Guidance specifically on wholly owned companies can be accessed here:

<https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/definition-documents-2021/4018898/dd-wholly-owned-companies-20211029.pdf>

The ICO has a list of recommended categories of information which it expects will be published under the Model Publication Scheme, as set out below. Goram Homes will follow that recommended approach.

- **Who we are and what we do:** Covering organisational information, locations and contacts, constitutional and legal governance.
- **What we spend and how we spend it:** Covering financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, tendering, procurement and contracts.
- **What our priorities are and how we are doing:** Covering strategy and performance, plans, assessments, inspections and reviews.
- **How we make decisions:** decision making processes, internal criteria and procedures, consultations.
- **Our policies and procedures:** Covering current written protocols for delivering our functions and responsibilities.
- **Lists and registers:** Covering information held in registers required by law and other lists and registers.
- **The Services we offer:** Covering advice and guidance, booklets and leaflets, transactions and media releases and a description of the services offered.

In addition to the above the ICO also set out classes of information that will not generally be included these are;

- Information the disclosure of which is prevented by law

- Information exempt under the Freedom of Information Act
- Information otherwise properly considered to be protected from disclosure
- Information in draft form
- Information that is no longer readily available as it is contained in files that have been placed in archive storage or is difficult to access for similar reasons.

Through this document Goram Homes will clearly indicate to the public what information is covered by this scheme and how it can be obtained.

Where it is within the capability of Goram Homes information will be provided on a website. Where it is impracticable to make information available on a website or when an individual does not wish to or cannot access the information via a website, Goram Homes will indicate how information can be obtained by other means.

In exceptional circumstances some information may be available only by viewing in person. Where this manner is specified, contact details will be provided. An appointment to view the information may be arranged within a reasonable timescale.

Information will be provided in the language in which it is held or in such other language (if any) as is legally required. Where Goram Homes is legally required to translate any information, it will provide an appropriate translation.

Charges

If there are any charges to be applied for the provision of the information then these will be in accordance with those set out in the Freedom of Information and Transparency Policy of Goram Homes, or as prescribed or restricted under relevant legislation such as the Companies Act 2006.

Withheld Documents

Where there is a statement in this document to the effect that information or a document is being withheld from publication or disclosure there is a general and preliminary statement of how this information has been assessed for the purposes of this document.

On receipt of a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request or similar request for disclosure the relevant company shall deal with the request on a case by case basis and apply the FOIA or other relevant requirements to each request for that information, regardless of the statement in this document.

Other information which we have chosen to make routinely available:

- Environmental information made available in accordance with your obligations under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (the EIR)
- Information which we are required to publish or make available for inspection under another enactment;
- Information which we are permitted to publish or make available under another enactment, but for which we make a charge.

Where appropriate, we may supply redacted or summarised versions of documents which would otherwise be exempt from disclosure or publication.

On the following pages please see the approach that Goram Homes is taking to each of the proposed ICO categories.

Who we are and what we do - Information about the Company its role and responsibilities including any relationship with Bristol City Council (the Council) and details of its structure and origin.

INFORMATION TO BE PUBLISHED	ACCESS TO INFORMATION	REVIEW
<p>Name and registered office Memorandum and Articles of Association Company number Date of incorporation Company type Nature of business Shareholder Board Directors</p> <p>Names and contact details and basis of their appointment including biographical details.</p> <p>Please note that personal data of the directors such as their date of birth and home addresses shall not be published.</p>	<p>A. https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/companieshttps://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/companies-house</p> <p>B. Relevant company website or in hardcopy by post from:</p> <p>Darren Hartley Governance Manager Goram Homes Limited Ashton Court Estate Ashton Court, Long Ashton, Bristol, England, BS41 9JN</p> <p>C. By giving notice and attending personally at a given time between 9 am to 3 pm at the company's registered office address</p>	<p>Annually</p>

What we spend and how we spend it - Financial Information related to projected and actual income and expenditure, procurement, contracts and financial audit for current and previous financial year		
INFORMATION TO BE PUBLISHED	ACCESS TO INFORMATION	REVIEW
Annual Financial Statements Confirmation Statement and returns Annual Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shall be in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act and other relevant legislation. 	Annually
Summary Business Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company website, • writing to the Company Secretary • personal attendance at the registered office address. 	Annually
Financing and funding of the Company –share issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Available from Companies House website. 	
Disclosure of Board Directors pay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shall be in accordance with the disclosure requirements of the Companies Act and other relevant legislation. 	Annually
Pay policy for Executive and Senior staff as agreed by the Remuneration Committee in each year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company website, • writing to the Company Secretary • personal attendance at the offices 	

What our priorities are and how we are doing - Strategy and performance information, plans, assessments, inspections, and reviews.

INFORMATION TO BE PUBLISHED	ACCESS TO INFORMATION	REVIEW
Annual Report	Shall be in accordance with the disclosure requirements of the Companies Act and other relevant legislation	Annually
External reports or other overseeing body as per regulatory guidance via the appropriate regulators website.		

How we make decisions - Decision making processes and records of decisions

INFORMATION TO BE PUBLISHED	ACCESS TO INFORMATION	REVIEW
Details of company Boards and names of Board Committees involved in the decision-making process.	<p>A. Relevant company Website</p> <p>B. or in hardcopy by post from:</p> <p>Darren Hartley Governance Manager Goram Homes Limited Ashton Court Estate Ashton Court, Long Ashton, Bristol, England, BS41 9JN</p> <p>C. By giving notice and attending personally at a given time between 9 am to 3 pm at the company's registered office</p>	

Our policies and procedures - Current written protocols, policies and procedures for delivering our business, services and responsibilities.

INFORMATION TO BE PUBLISHED	ACCESS TO INFORMATION	REVIEW
<p>There are a range of policies across Goram Homes:</p> <p>Health and Safety Disciplinary Procedures Grievance Procedures Recruitment Data Protection & GDPR Equality and diversity Whistleblowing Anti - Fraud, Bribery And Corruption Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking Anti-Money Laundering</p>	<p>A. Relevant company website</p> <p>B. or in hardcopy by post from:</p> <p>Darren Hartley Governance Manager Goram Homes Limited Ashton Court Estate Ashton Court, Long Ashton, Bristol, England, BS41 9JN</p> <p>C. By giving notice and attending personally at a given time between 9 am to 3 pm at the company's registered office</p>	<p>Annually</p>
<p>Further information concerning the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Data Protection Act 2018 and the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information</p>	<p>Ministry of Justice www.justice.gov.uk/index.htm Information Commissioner's Office www.ico.gov.uk/ Office of Public Sector Information www.opsi.gov.uk/</p>	

Lists and Registers - Currently maintained lists and registers only		
INFORMATION TO BE PUBLISHED	ACCESS TO INFORMATION	REVIEW
Statutory registers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shall be in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act and other relevant legislation 	Annually or more frequently if appropriate
Register of Interests and conflicts of interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shall be in accordance with the disclosure requirements of the Companies Act and other applicable legislation 	Annually or more frequently if appropriate
Register of gifts and hospitality provided to Board members and staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shall be in accordance with relevant legislation and • recommended best practice 	Annually or more frequently if appropriate

The Services we offer - Information about the services we offer, including leaflets, guidance and newsletters produced for the public and businesses

INFORMATION TO BE PUBLISHED	ACCESS TO INFORMATION	REVIEW
Details of company services	<p>A. Relevant company website or in hardcopy by post from:</p> <p>Darren Hartley Governance Manager Goram Homes Limited Ashton Court Estate Ashton Court, Long Ashton, Bristol, England, BS41 9JN</p> <p>B. By giving notice and attending personally at a given time between 9 am to 3 pm at the company's registered office</p>	
Services for which the Company is entitled to charge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company website, • writing to the Company Secretary • personal attendance at the company's registered office 	
Leaflets, booklets and newsletters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company website, • writing to the Company Secretary • personal attendance at the company's registered office 	
Corporate communications and media releases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company website, • writing to the Company Secretary • personal attendance at the company's registered office 	