

FOI 2026-441

I write in connection with your request dated 11th May 2026, concerning Cannabis Farms.

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

If possible, please provide annual totals in calendar years.

1. For the years 2020-25, please give annual totals for the number of cannabis farms your force has discovered.
2. Of these cannabis farms (1.) how many were found in residential properties? Again, please give annual totals for the years 2020-2025.
3. Can you put a total street value on the amount of cannabis plants discovered for each year?
4. Please include details of any measures the force is taking to tackle the use of cannabis farms by organised criminal networks, in particular the trend of repurposing people's homes to grow the drugs.

Response

I have considered your request, and I am able to provide a partial response to your request. Some of the information relevant to this request (questions 1-3) is exempt by virtue of the following :-

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

Whilst the remainder (question 4) is exempt by virtue of the following :-

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 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 fairly sophisticated and contain a number of 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:-

- The specific items involved in a theft / seizure
- The quantity or value of items listed in a
- Whether a crime or incident is related to a cannabis farm or cannabis production
- Whether a building is residential / business etc
- Whether a property or building (domestic or otherwise) is linked in any way to cannabis production or 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. It should also be noted that when it comes to potential street value, this would be very subjective and would be dependent on volume, quantity and current demand etc.

Given the number of offences recorded under HO Code 092/21 for the time period you require (222) 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 something in the region of 18.5 man hours to locate the information you are requesting, on top of the time already spent on this request.

Under the circumstances I am absolutely 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 a Section 12 response, the whole request will engage a Section 12 response. The reason being is due to the fact that locating, retrieving and extracting any further information would only add to the already exceeded time obligations.

Although excess cost removes the forces' obligations under the Freedom of Information Act, as a gesture of goodwill I have supplied information, relative to your request, retrieved or available before it was realised that the fees limit would be exceeded. I trust this is helpful, but it does not affect our legal right to rely on the fees regulations for the remainder of your request. What I am able to provide you are the answers documented below :-

Question 1

The number of crimes and distinct addresses recorded per year for offences recorded under HO Code 092/21 have been as follows :-

Year	Number of distinct addresses involved	Total Crimes Recorded
2020	52	52
2021	48	55
2022	33	33
2023	34	35
2024	23	24
2025	22	23
Grand Total	212	222

Question 4

The information you are requesting is 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 by OCG's (effectively the Force's cannabis site procedure) – 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 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 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 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 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

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 particular 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