Dear

Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/20/126)

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (FOI) request dated 6 March 2020, reference K/20/126.

Your request read:

“Please could I obtain a copy of all documentation relating to the design, setup, installation and monitoring of fire detection and alarm systems for university buildings including procedures followed by university response staff (such as security/reception teams), interlinking between buildings & blocks (if fitted) and procedures/methodology for call-outs to local fire and rescue authorities including (if fitted) automatic systems.

In the event that this request exceeds the cost limit of £450 please could this request be refined to exclude details about design, setup and installation and instead focus on procedures, monitoring and call-outs.”

The University of Leeds holds this information.

However, we are withholding this information under section 38(1) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 38(1) sets out that information is exempt information if its disclosure would, or would be likely to endanger the physical or mental health, or the safety of any individual.

We consider that releasing this information could make it easier for individuals with nefarious motives, wishing to interfere with (disable, change or otherwise restrict) the alarm systems, to target the University and to circumvent detection systems. This would clearly endanger the health and safety of our students, staff and visitors, by not only increasing the threat of arson or other attack, but also limiting our ability to quickly and safely alert people to an active fire, and take the necessary response actions.

We are therefore satisfied that the release of this information would endanger individuals.

Section 38(1) is a qualified exemption. This means that the University of Leeds is required to consider whether the public interest in releasing the information exceeds the public interest in maintaining the exemption.

There is a general public interest inherent in the FOI Act which supports the disclosure of information on an open and transparent basis. We also consider there to be a general interest in understanding how the University operates, and in providing assurance to the public that our health and safety procedures (including those regarding fire systems) are robust.

However, we consider that the public interest in protecting the health and safety of our students, staff, and others who may be on campus to be overwhelming. There is
also a very strong public interest in ensuring that fire and rescue service resources are not diverted inappropriately (in the case of false alarms). We therefore conclude that the public interest is strongly in favour of withholding this information.

We hope this information is helpful. If you have any questions about this email, however, please do not hesitate to contact us on foi@leeds.ac.uk

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request and wish to make a complaint or request a review of our decision, you can request an Internal Review. Requests for Internal Review should be made in writing using the following contact information:

Post: Mr D Wardle  
Deputy Secretary  
The University of Leeds  
Leeds  
LS2 9JT  

Email: foi@leeds.ac.uk

Requests for Internal Review should be submitted within 40 working days of receiving the University’s response to your request. Further information about how the University manages Freedom of Information requests and about our complaints procedure is also available on our website (www.leeds.ac.uk).

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the review/complaints procedure provided by the University. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner’s Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Kind regards

Chloe Wilkins  
Freedom of Information Officer  

Secretariat  
University of Leeds