Annex G

PUBLIC INTEREST TEST			
Request Ref:	DOF/2026-0600		
Request summary:	Request for the approved business case and associated information relating to the Ballymena Consolidation Project, including costs, valuations, options appraisal and proposed disposal of County Hall Ballymena.		
Information details:	Exemption applied	Disclosure	Non-disclosure
		(Please complete both columns to show all factors have been considered)	
Detailed project cost information, valuation information, disposal assumptions, financial appraisals, procurement information and commercially sensitive material contained within the Business Case and supporting appendices.	Section 43(2) Freedom of Information Act 2000 (Commercial Interests)	• To demonstrate compliance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 by disclosing information held by the Department as a public authority. • There is a general public interest in accountability, openness and transparency in government decision-making and public expenditure. • Disclosure would promote public understanding of the rationale for the Ballymena Consolidation Project and the selection of the preferred option. • There is a public interest in understanding how accommodation options were assessed and how decisions regarding the future use of public assets were reached. • Disclosure would contribute to openness regarding the implementation of the NICS Estate Strategy.	• The project remains in development and procurement activity is ongoing. Disclosure of detailed cost estimates, cost plans and commercial assumptions could prejudice the Department's ability to secure value for money through future procurement exercises. • Disclosure of detailed valuation information and disposal assumptions could prejudice the Department's commercial position in relation to any future disposal of County Hall and could adversely impact the achievement of best value for the public purse. • Release of detailed financial modelling, procurement strategy and pricing information could weaken the Department's position in future commercial negotiations. • Disclosure could place potential future suppliers and contractors at an advantage during procurement activity by revealing commercially sensitive project assumptions and cost information. • There is a significant public interest in protecting the Department's ability to conduct procurement exercises and property transactions on the most advantageous commercial terms.

PUBLIC INTEREST DECISION: After weighing up the competing public interest considerations, we consider it is reasonable in all the circumstances that the information held should be withheld from disclosure under Section 43(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (Commercial Interests) and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure.