

Section 40

5 March 1986

Thank you for your letter of 8 September. I do apologise for not writing to you sooner, but I can only say that yours 'slipped through the net'.

You may find it useful if I explain that the sole interest of the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence in reported sightings of Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs) is to establish whether they have any bearing on the defence of the country.

Since our interest in UFOs is limited to possible defence implications we have not carried out a study into the scientific significance of these phenomena. Unless there are defence implications we do not attempt to identify sightings and we cannot inform observers of the probable identity of the object seen. The Department could not justify the expenditure of public funds on investigations which go beyond the pure defence interests.

We have to recognise that there are many strange things to be seen in the sky, but we believe there are adequate explanations for them. They may be satellite debris re-entering the earth atmosphere, ball lightning, unusual cloud formations, meteorological balloons, aircraft lights, aircraft at unusual angles or many other things. Perhaps, as you yourself point out, the fact that the GLC Fireworks display was taking place answers your question.

I am sorry that I can do no more to assuage your curiosity.

Yours sincerely