



**LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT**

Southside  
105 Victoria Street  
London SW1E 6QT  
DX 117000

Telephone: 020 – 7210 1231  
Facsimile: 020 – 7210 1269  
Deepa.Patel@lcdhq.gsi.gov.uk

[www.lcd.gov.uk](http://www.lcd.gov.uk)

Mr A Baron  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Our reference

C.02/223/5

Date

13 August 2002

Dear Mr Baron,

**Libel Law**

Thank-you for your letter to the Lord Chancellor dated 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2002. I am replying as my branch has responsibility for this policy area.

You say that you understand that the Government is planning to reform the law of libel, particularly to make it more difficult or impossible to bring an action in defamation against a bookshop. The Government has no current plans to change the law in this area.

I understand that in raising this concern, you may perhaps be referring to the Law Commission's recently published scoping study on 'Aspects of Defamation Procedure'. A copy of the scoping study is available on the Law Commission website at [www.lawcom.gov.uk](http://www.lawcom.gov.uk). For your information, I have enclosed a copy of the press notice released by this department on the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2002 asking the Law Commission to undertake the scoping study. I have also enclosed the press notice that the Law Commission issued once the study was completed.

In response to the Law Commission's recommendation, we have said that we will give careful consideration to the balance of interests represented by the "innocent dissemination" defence in section 1 of the 1996 Defamation Act. We will do this once the Law Commission has published the second stage of its scoping study on issues arising from publication on the internet, by the end of the year.

I will keep your details on our file in the event of any public consultation on the issues of defamation procedure as a result of the Law Commission scoping study.

I hope this information is useful.

Yours sincerely

**Deepa Patel**  
Civil Law Development Division