



Date: 27th November 2009

Your Ref: JH/LP

Our Ref: FOI/11254

Liam Steele
Head of Committee and Members' Services
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast BT1 5GS

Divisional Planning Office

Bedford House
16-22 Bedford Street
Belfast
BT2 7FD
Tel. (028) 9025 2800
Fax (028) 9025 2828

COMMITTEE AND MEMBERS' SERVICES			
30 NOV 2009			
H & ES			TP
P & R	PERS	FIN	P & PR
MEM.	C. DIV	CONTRACT	HOUSING
CLIENT	C & L	P & A	WHB
DEVEL.	E. DEV	ARTS	T & PROM
REFERENCE:	43144		
REFERRED TO:			

Dear Mr Steele

Flat conversions in areas of Houses in Multiple Occupation

I refer to your letter of 4th November 2009 to the Minister of the Environment, Edwin Poots. The Minister has asked Belfast Divisional Planning Office to reply directly to your letter.

Your letter raises the general issue of flat conversions in areas where there is already a high incidence of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) and also refers specifically to current planning applications for 73 Malone Avenue.

Firstly, as regards 73 Malone Avenue, the Department is currently processing 2 applications for this property for the demolition of 2 HMO flats with retention of front façade and erection of 5 flats including 3-storey rear return (refs Z/2009/0659/F and Z/2009/0651/DCA). The Department consulted Belfast City Council's Town Planning Committee on 17th September and 8th October 2009 with opinions to approve the applications.

The Department is aware of the HMO Subject Plan which was published in December 2008 and which identifies the Eglantine area (including Malone Avenue) as an HMO Policy Area where the number of HMO dwelling units should not exceed 30%. At present both Eglantine and Malone Avenue are well in excess of this figure. The current proposal, however, is for use as flats, which is not covered by the HMO Subject Plan.

The property is located within the Inner Malone Flat Conversion Area as identified in Development Guidance Note 4d and has a previous permission for change of use to 3 flats (Z/2006/1643/F). Taking into account the existing character of the area and other recent approvals for flat conversions, Belfast Division took the view that the proposal for 5 flats was acceptable.

As you will be aware the Town Planning Committee referred the applications to the Planning Service Management Board. The applications are still being considered by the Management Board.

On the more general point about approving flats in HMO areas I would point out that any such approvals would not permit HMO use. If the dwelling units are subsequently used for unauthorised HMO use then this would be a matter for the Division's Enforcement Section to investigate and, if necessary, take appropriate action.

I hope this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely



N Dunlop
Divisional Planning Manager