

Multiple Occupancy Houses in Belfast

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Environment Minister launches houses in multiple occupancy plan for Belfast

On 15 December 2008 Environment Minister Sammy Wilson launched a plan to manage the number of multiple occupancy houses in Belfast.

Article 75 of the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1992 defines a house in multiple occupation as a house occupied by more than 2 qualifying persons, being persons who are not all members of the same family.

The HMO Subject Plan for Belfast will set limits on the number of houses in areas across the city that will be used for multiple occupation.

The Minister explained that “the plan limits the number of houses that can be used for multiple occupation to 10% throughout most of the city and 30% in designated areas where such accommodation has already become concentrated.”

The HMO plan seeks to address concerns in Belfast about the increasing number of such properties and the adverse impact they could have on residential areas. The plan also aims to protect residential areas while accommodating the need for multiple occupations and contributing to regeneration.

Under the plan the Department for the Environment has identified 22 areas in Belfast where HMOs are concentrated. Within these designated areas, which include the Holylands and Stranmillis, planning permission will only be granted where the number of HMO dwelling units does not as a result exceed 30% of all dwelling units within the area.

However the Department has also identified areas, including Ann Street and the Dublin Road, where planning permission for HMOs will be granted.

It is also hoped that the subject plan will support the development of more purpose built student accommodation to ease the pressure on housing in the university area of the city.

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive runs a statutory registration scheme for HMOs in Northern Ireland. Every HMO, both existing and new, has now got a specified date for registration. A registered HMO is required to comply with all HMO standards, must be fit for human habitation and must be managed in accordance with the HMO management regulations.

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