

EMPTY

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Our Ref:

Your Ref:

29 July 2008

RECEIVED 31 JUL 2008

John Briggs,

Clerk and Chief Executive

Rating Policy Division
Department of Finance and personnel
Room D12
Rathgael House
Balloo Road
BANGOR
BT19 7NA

Dear Sir/Madam

The Rating of Empty Homes Public Consultation Document

Armagh City and District Council welcomes this opportunity to comment on the proposals to rate empty domestic property.

The Council broadly supports the proposal however some concerns were raised:

- The payment of rates may trigger the sale of some properties and the concern was raised that these additional properties on the market at a time of uncertainty in the housing sector may have an adverse effect on confidence in the economy.
- The construction sector of the economy is currently in recession, the release of additional properties on to the market may further reduce the demand for new homes.
- The Council welcomes the effect that this will have on making unfit properties habitable but considers that some assistance should be made to these home owners.
- Concerns were raised that unfit homes may be released on to the private rented sector and that there should be adequate safeguards put in place for tenants.
- Concerns were raised that some owners may deliberately make houses unfit for habitation to avoid rates and at a subsequent date the property may come back on the markets, some controls may need to be put in place.
- Concern was also raised that the NIHE may face increased financial costs and this may affect its housing provision.
- The Council welcomes the exclusions that are being granted.



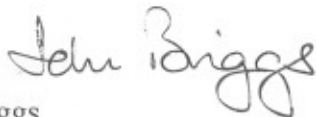
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I trust that you will take on board these comments.

The Council wishes to be kept informed of developments. It would be helpful if your response could be e-mailed to jennifer.mcaneney@armagh.gov.uk.

Yours faithfully



W J Briggs

Clerk and Chief Executive

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