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To: cathycurran21@hotmail.com
Subject: To Let sign boards
Date: Thu, 7 Mar 2013 12:42:37 +0000

Catherine

I carried out another survey/audit of properties in the four streets (Malone/Eglantine/Wellesley, Avenue, Wellington Park and the cross streets) on the 20th February 2013 (attached) after the department stated that their investigation was closed and resolved. Despite this there still remains in excess of 60 to let signs. A number of for sale signs are installed on properties but I have not included in the table those that appear to be legitimate.

I contacted all agents/landlords displaying telephone numbers on the board (late Feb), posing as a prospective tenant, and was advised by more than 90% of agents/landlords that the advertised properties are not available until July/Aug/Sept. I have included availability in the table where advised.

There is legislation stating that signs must be removed 14 days after contracts have been signed/agreed, but agents/landlords will argue that these signs are advertising property to let 6 and sometimes 8 months in advance, whilst working within the current planning guidelines, they are permitted to advertise properties year round, yet it is merely cheap advertisement for their services.

I recently got in contact with my local residents association; Lower Malone Residents' Association and attended one of their committee meetings last night. At the meeting I presented the problems and alternative proposals to combat the to let blight in the area that have been put in place in other city councils in Leeds and Nottingham, with Newcastle in the process for putting forward a scheme for their area.

The schemes come under 'Area of Special Advertisement Control' and focus on areas of high rental demand, particularly around university campuses.

The key areas of the Code for letting boards are as follows

-Only one 'To Let' board per building will be permitted

-Each board will conform to the following layout: 34cm x 48cm or 48cm x 34cm

-a) The board shall be mounted flush to the wall above/around the front door, or if that is not possible, it shall be mounted flush to the wall on the street frontage elevation. In either instance, no part of the board shall be higher than first-floor window sill level.

or,

b) Alternatively the board shall be displayed internally in a ground floor window facing the street frontage, but not in addition to a board displayed externally.

- The board shall have a white background with black text. Up to 20% of the board may be occupied by a logo (which may be in colour).

- One board shall be permitted per landlord/agent per street. However, if a landlord/agent specifies on the board, the number of bedrooms in the advertised property, one board shall be permitted per type of property, up to a maximum of three per street.

- There shall be no 'Let By' signs.

- 'To Let' boards shall be removed not later than 14 days after the granting of a tenancy for the room,

house or flat in question.

- All 'To Let' boards shall be removed by 1st November each year with no new boards being erected until 1st December.

With Newcastle opting for a zero tolerance approach with a complete ban on to let sign boards, however this is currently going through the process of approval and the outcome is not yet known.

The residents association agree the problem is chronic and severely affecting the visual quality of the area and are very keen to implement such a scheme in the area.

For such a scheme to move forward we would need to get a good level of support from local residents and Councillors.

Although the letting boards are a big issue in my area, it is also a scheme that would be most beneficial in the Stranmillis Village area, the Holyland and Botanic area and indeed the streets off the Lisburn Road.

We would really appreciate your support and would like to invite you to attend a committee meeting of the Lower Malone Residents Association to highlight the problems these letting boards cause and how to move forward with the issue. We would hope to have other representatives from Resident Associations in neighboring areas, also affected by to let boarding in attendance.

I recently emailed the Belfast Telegraph comments section and I have included a link below.

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/letters/to-let-signs-a-blight-on-the-malone-area-29094004.html>

I look forward to hearing from you, I have included my mobile number below

Conor Doyle

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