

1 or 2 bedrooms available in South Belfast

1. I would like to know what 1 or 2 bed properties are available in south Belfast from the housing executive at the minute.

Due to the small number of properties relating to your request the Housing Executive considers that the requested information is not disclosable to you as disclosure would be likely to prejudice the prevention or detection of crime. The relevant exemption is section 31 (1) (a) of the FOI Act 2000 (Prevention or detection of crime).

We are limited in the information that we can provide due to the use of Section 31 of the Freedom of Information Act (explained in full below)

Public Interest Test

Section 31 is a 'qualified' exemption and I must now go on to consider if the public interest is in favour of maintaining the exemption or vice versa. On weighing the factors for and against disclosure I have concluded that the public interest lies in not disclosing the information at this time. I have set out below the factors which I have taken into account when reaching my conclusion.

Factors in favour of disclosure

- There is public interest in transparency and accountability
- Disclosure may promote public understanding
- There is public interest in good decision-making by public bodies.
- Public interest in bringing empty properties back into use.

Factors in favour of maintaining the exemption

- The disclosure of these addresses could likely lead to squatting and other criminal activity in and/or around these properties.
- In addition to the best use of stock, the NIHE has a public interest to protect its property and to avoid the considerable public expense that would be incurred dealing with crimes with empty or vacant properties.
- It is believed that the public interest lies in preventing the distress that is caused to victims of crimes of this nature. Residents who live in close

proximity to such addresses would also be affected by crime committed within the vicinity and they would have a reasonable expectation of feeling secure in their homes.

Outcome of public interest test

- Although there is strong public interest in bringing properties back into use, the immediate concern is the protection of property and the well-being of residents.
- We have reached the view that, on balance the public interest is better served by withholding the information relating to these addresses of vacant properties under Section 31(1) (a) of the Act at this time.