

# Mixed reaction on donation of 'troublesome' property to BCM

**DA digs heels in over public works of gifts of buildings and land**

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A total of 48 properties, including land and buildings, owned by the national department of public works, is to become part of Buffalo City Metro's portfolio.

The council has now resolved to accept the "troublesome and burdensome" properties as a donation from the department.

The properties are in East London, Berlin and King William's Town.

The gift, however, was not unanimously welcomed. While the African National Council councillors were happy to accept the donation, their counterparts in the Democratic Alliance (DA) demanded to know more about the condition and



**UNDER SCRUTINY:** Houses in King William's Town that belong to Public Works have now been handed over to BCM. Picture: MICHAEL PINYANA

location of the properties before taking them on and dis-sented when the donation was approved by the council.

Spatial planning and development portfolio head Phumla Nazo-Makatala said the city had asked the department to donate the properties for development purposes.

City manager Andile Sihlahla said in a report to council that eight East London vacant land parcels, 24 Berlin vacant land parcels and 16 King William's Town buildings had been identified for donation. He said the East London properties could be used for "government, authority usage or business zone

1", while the Berlin and King William's Town properties could be used for residential purposes. The King William's Town buildings and houses are in Durban Street.

Arguing in support of the donation, deputy mayor Zoliswa Matana said the council had long been asking the de-



partment for the properties. She agreed that the council should be informed on the condition of the properties, but said this should not stop councillors from approving the donation.

Matana said publicising the location of the vacant plots would invite land grabs.

Several of the buildings had

over the years become havens for criminals, she added. "We can deal with these issues when the properties belong to us.

"To defer the report and request to know the condition first will not assist us.

"The problems we are encountering will remain as long as we are unable to resolve

these issues.

When they are donated to us, we will be in a position to deal with them," Matana said.

DA councillors warned that it could be costly for the city to accept the properties without knowing their current state. The party's caucus chief whip, Damersh Dhaya, said they

thought that simply accepting the donation was "procedurally wrong".

"We should not approve something first and only get the supporting information later. As a councillor, I should be privy to all information," Dhaya said.

Public works spokesperson Thami Mchunu said: "BCM has submitted a request for the donation of a number of properties to the city.

The department is still in the process of considering the request and an investment decision about the future of the property is pending.

"A final decision about the possible release of the property will be made once a feasibility study and investment decision about the future use of the property have been concluded. A market valuation of the property forms part of the exercise. This process has not yet been finalised," Mchunu said.