

**A Report in Support of a Planning Resubmission  
For A 5 Bedroom House of Multiple Occupation  
at 22 Crown Street , Newport NP19 8FU .**

**By Ivan P Brindley BA Honours Dip Arch RIBA Pt I/II/III**

## **1 : Introduction and Planning History .**

The proposal is a Resubmission for a House of Multiple Occupation ( H M O ) at 22 Crown Street , Newport following the planning refusal of Application Reference 26 / 0284.

The resubmission further reduces the proposed occupancy level to 5 people and a range of alterations and remodelling incorporated in order to address issues and concerns raised in the previous application .

The planning history includes a previously approved scheme for a H M O albeit specified as student ( 4 number ) / Landlord Shared accomodation .

Work commenced on this project under Building Regulations Application Reference FP / 2009 / 0201 in March 2009 ; with Building Control Officer Terry Thomas carrying out 2 site visits in July and August 2009 in relation to demolition work ; removal of internal partitions and the casting of a new concrete slab .

Newport Planning Departments stance at the time of the last application was that " the nature and extent of those works were not sufficiently clear to determine whether they amounted to a material commencement of the development for the purpose of Section 56 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990".

Assuming this is accepted nevertheless 22 Crown Street was deemed acceptable for this conversion .

The current status based upon acceptance of the above would therefore revert back to its original one of a 3 Bedroom Dwelling House .

Of course with a large amount of remodelling already carried out the potential is there to add a further 2 or even 3 Bedrooms to the property and create a larger scale rental house .

## **2 : Proposed Changes .**

As mentioned above substantial and costly refurbishment and remodelling work has already been carried out ; including a complete electric rewire incorporating a totally interlinked fire alarm system ; and a fire sprinkler system throughout . Completely replastered and decorated ; new fire doors and joinery and new kitchens and shower rooms alongside completely reglazing with new windows .

A vast improvement on the property and also in relation to older existing H M O s .

Even though the Council Enviromental Health Department and Licencing Officer did not raise any objections to the scale and layoutof the property a number of issues and concerns were raised by the Planning Officer and also highlighted in local residents observations .

It is probably fair to say these issues mainly revolved around the quality of the communal spaces and also the impact of the First Floor patio area ( which is the subject of Section 3 ).

The first major change is the omission of the separate studio / bedsit room on the ground floor ( Bedroom 1 on the previous application ).

The kitchen fitted will be removed and the doorway to the shower room will be blocked up .

The wall separating this studio and the rear communal Kitchen will be removed .

This will have the effect of creating a large open plan Kitchen / Living / Dining Room .

This space will become a large interactive cohesive communal room and benefit from an outlook via the large front window together with good quality natural ventilation and daylight .

The window to the Kitchen and rear of the property will act to provide two way additional daylight.

In doing this the room previously highlighted as a communal lounge

will become an extension of the communal Kitchen not only providing additional space for storage but critically a large laundry area which will contain 2 washing machines ; 2 heat pump dryers ; and horizontal clothes drying lines thus eliminating the need for an external drying area and further freeing up the first floor patio area .

The shower room will have the shower unit removed and a new door opening formed off the Utility area forming a new communal toilette .

The shower room to the back of the Ground Floor corridor will become an ensuite solely for the use of Bedroom 2 ( previously Bedroom 3 ).

At First Floor level the patio doors off Bedroom 5 (previously Bedroom 6) will be removed and blocked up together with a new internal sound proof partition formed on the inside of the room ; consisting of a new timber studwork with Rockwool RW45 Sound Slab Insulation in between the studs and double boarded with 15mm Acoustic Plasterboard with staggered joints sealed at all joints and edges with acoustic mastic .

Access to the patio will be via the second communal Living Room through a single leaf double glazed UPVC door .

It is proposed that the creation of the large communal ground floor space together with the retention of a second communal lounge ; the creation of the large Utility Room ; and the reduction to 5 Occupants

will greatly reduce the potential of over use of the patio area . that these changes also address those issues of quality regarding any communal rooms together with that of the privacy and sound proofing of Bedroom 5 ( previously Bedroom 6 ).

### **3 : External Amenity Space**

It has already been highlighted in Section 2 above how the demand for use of the patio area has been alleviated and potentially reduced .

There is also now scope for further enhancing this space with modest outside wall planters and even potted shrubs or even herbs .

It has been accepted in point 8.3.10 that the 1.8 m high timber surround screen wall will afford privacy to the neighbouring properties .

And although it is not unlike the screen wall at high level to the end house on Crown Street ; which also is actually very similar in proportion to number 22 ( see photographs ) ; it is proposed to replace the cladding with a colour coded ( to match pale / dove grey ) horizontal composite cladding board ( see photograph ) .

Alongside privacy noise is a concern raised .

Firstly this is a fear of the unknown ; purely speculative .

Noise can emanate from any number of sources ; a late night barbecue with a family gathered in a garden either next to yours or even across the road .

A group of Students partying on a Saturday night into the early hours .

Even a sound system fitted to a car !

A sound system inside a Bedroom with the window open in Summer ..

It comes down to social responsibility and Not whether 22 is an H M O or a rented house or student accommodation .

In the case of a H M O it is fair to say( and referenced in reports) that one of the major governing factors is Management .

In this case the Applicant is an experienced Local Manager not an absentee landlord. One who already has a well established relationship with the Local Authority . Who actually have an ultimate sanction of revoking a H M O licence .

In the Welsh Government Document Houses in Multiple Occupation Review and Evidence Gathering ( April 2015 ) it states :

"that H M O s are occupied by a diverse range of people "

And"may often be occupied by young professionals and recent graduates at an early stage in their career who may be unable or reluctant to rent or buy self contained accommodation".

Maybe this reference to such a person will resonate with whoever is reading this report as they may well have a relative or a friend who has found themselves in such a situation and would be only too glad and grateful to move into a totally refurbished and up to date H M O fitted with the latest fire and safety features !

To conclude as stated at the beginning it is fear of the unknown ; it is also bias to assume that a proposed resident of number 22 would not simply sit on the patio reading a book ; smelling the evening flowers and having a quiet drink whether it be a fruit cider ; a G and T or a cup of apple tea .

## **4 : Anti Social Behaviour (A S B ).**

It is probably fair to say that virtually everyone will witness if not be affected by A S B in today's modern day cities in Britain .

Whether it is whilst waiting for a bus ; on a train ; in a shop ; or even simply walking down the street.

Yet in the six new powers that have been introduced according to the

Center for Public Data " no comprehensive national data has been published on how often these powers are used or who receives them ".

And that no authority is responsible for centrally collating and publishing them .

North Northamptonshire Council published :

"that we are not aware yet of any reliable evidence that demonstrates that A S B or crime is higher in H M O s than that which is reported within the general population across different tenures of housing .

Likewise :

Guildford Borough states that A S B is more likely to be linked to poor property management and the condition of the property itself rather than H M O s being inherently problematic.

It should be noted that this comment above is not exclusive to the private sector but equally evident in the variety of social housing; where as a point of interest carpets and floor coverings generally are not provided !

H M O floor coverings are monitored by the Enviromental Health Department and the responsibility of the Landlord as is the overall condition of the property.

On the other hand some reports point to high concentrations of H M O sin one area as possibly being a contributing factor to A S B ; but again this could equally apply to some Council Estates and Blocks of Flats .

In the case of 22 Crown Street in the previous Decision Notice within point 8.2 it is stated that this property is well within / under the requisite threshold for H M O s in this zone .

Point 8.2.6 goes further stating that after a site visit " there was no evidence to suggest that properties within the locality were in poor condition or not maintained to a reasonable standard ,which can sometimes be a sign of an overconcentration of H M O s or a general deterioration in social cohesion or civic pride giving rise to prejudicial effects on the character of an area ".

Also stated was that :

"it cannot be shown that the proposal would create an over concentration of houses in multiple occupation in the area which would change the character of the neighbourhood or create an imbalance in the housing stock and criterion (ii) of Policy H8 is Met .

To conclude this section . Taken from Evidence Base For the Introduction of Article 4 and Additional Licencing of Houses of Multiple Occupation by Telford and Wrekin Co-Operative Council ( Dec 25 ).

A section of this report highlights that in line with national trends and a growth in population together with the cost of living crisis , housing costs affecting home ownership leads to living in the rented sector as an only option .

That there is a high demand for rental properties and a shortage of supply in part due to a reducing supply of social housing rents have been driven up and this has lead to the subdivision of properties into houses of multiple occupation .

That H M Os have been the tenure of choice for students and transitional workers and are now an essential part of the housing market .

Well managed H M Os provide an excellent and affordable start for many into their housing journey .

## **5 : Highway Safety and Parking .**

Highway safety and parking has been fully covered and documented in Section 8.4 of the previous Planning Decision Report .

In this the Planning Inspectorate actually states that HMOs are less likely to have their own vehicles .

It is recognised that 22 Crown Street is directly accessible to a wide range of local amenities including a variety of shops .

It is accessible via local bus routes to the City center which boasts all the amenities expected of a City center including a main line train service linking Newport to both the capitals of England and Wales .

Of course as a 3 plus bedroom house vehicle ownership could well be considerably higher than as a HMO .

The Report into parking produced by KW Dorrington Architectural Services was accepted by the Planning Department and Highways Department and it was concluded that the proposal would not result in an unacceptable adverse impact on matters of highway safety or

local amenity and as such complies with Newport Local Development Plan 2011-2026 ( adopted January 2015 ).

Beyond this it should be noted the further reduction in occupancy level again having another positive impact on the proposal .

Finally in terms of cycle storage again the above statement is relevant .

There is a generous and accessible space allocated for cycle storage in a variety of options and this was also recognised in the previous Planning Decision Report .

## **6 : Refuse / Waste**

This was dealt with in point 8.7 of the previous Planning Decision Report.

There are clear separate storage areas for waste and recycling which are located in the former garage area of the property and separated from the Kitchen via the newly proposed Utility area and the Cycle Store with Blockwork walls and sealed Fire Doors separating them.

It is stated in the Report that " It seems practical to have an internal access to the store area which is more likely to encourage use rather than relying on pavement access only ".

And that " from a planning perspective , this arrangement is now considered to be adequate and complies with Policy W3 of the NLDP 2011-2026 ( adopted January 2015 ).

## **7 : Conclusion .**

It is proposed that the amended scheme addresses those issues highlighted in the previous planning refusal .

Newport Planning Department saw fit to previously approve 22 as a HMO albeit one of a Student Household .

Further consideration should be given to 22 Crown Street being used as a House of Multiple Occupation in light of its acceptable location ; its high standard of refurbishment and level of safety and the Applicant and how they will positively manage the property.

Unfair bias or speculation into the unknown should not be contributing factors into the decision making of this application .

Conversely an open mind should be brought to this application and to the issue of creating positive alternative forms of affordable accommodation which is clearly badly needed in today's society .

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