

**Application by Envision Housing  
Ltd**

**for Planning Permission for the**

**Use of the property as 8 self contained  
supported living flats and 1 flat for a  
Support Worker with Communal Living  
Space**

**in respect of**

**Watson House  
209-211 St Annes Road,  
Blackpool.  
FY4 2BL**

**Planning and Law Limited**

The Old Office  
Grange Farm  
Grange Road  
Singleton  
Poulton-le-Fylde  
Lancashire  
FY6 8LP

## **Introduction**

1. Planning and Law Ltd is instructed by Envision Housing Ltd to submit an application in respect of an existing property at Watson House, 209-211 St Annes Road, Blackpool FY4 2BL The application description is as follows:

*“Use of the property as 8 self contained supported living flats and 1 flat for a Support Worker with communal living space”*

2. Envision Housing Ltd is currently in the process of purchasing the application property.
3. The application is constituted in the following documents:
  - application form dated 25/04/22
  - Site Location Plan with red line
  - Floorplans – Existing Survey A021/240/S/01
  - this Supporting Statement
  - Supporting Statement Appendix 1 – Community Leaflet
  - Supporting Statement Appendix 2 – Management Plan

## **Background**

4. As noted above, Envision Housing Ltd, the applicant, is in the process of acquiring the application property.
5. The management company for the property will be MySpace, and the support service will be provided by Independence Support Ltd.
6. MySpace are a Registered Provider of social housing with a well-established presence in Blackpool.
7. Independence Support Ltd currently operate an existing site in Blackpool (Burlington Court) which supports 8 individuals with mental health support needs.
8. Burlington Court has operated since 2017. However, that property will not be able to provide the service beyond 25/05/2022 because Section 21 notices have been served by the landlord. The notices were issued on 25/03/22 and require tenants to vacate their accommodation at Burlington Court by 25/05/22.
9. This is self-evidently an undesirable situation for people with complex mental health needs, and could cause the Council to have to make arrangements for emergency accommodation. It could also mean that tenants may have to be admitted to hospital because they have been pushed into mental health crisis. The tenants have indicated a clear wish to be housed together. A Community Leaflet from the tenants is attached as Appendix 1. The leaflet clearly sets out in their own words the desire of the tenants to remain together, if possible at Watson House
10. Watson House has been identified as a property that can provide a replacement for the service required. Blackpool Adult Social Care Commissioners are in

support of this proposal, and we understand that they set out their support in the context of the previous, now withdrawn, application (reference 22/0056).

11. It is proposed in the context of this application that eight of the existing flats would be used for supporting eight tenants with supported living packages, but the ninth flat would be used for accommodating an ISL member of staff to provide on-site support, and for this flat to also provide some communal facilities for the residents.

### **Recent Planning History**

12. Application was previously made on 23 August 2021 for:

*"Use of the premises as 9 self contained supported living flats".*

13. The application was refused by notice dated 04 November 2021.
14. A further planning application for that development was made on 02 March 2022, but this was withdrawn on 30/03/22 to allow further information to be submitted.
15. Application for a Certificate of Lawfulness was submitted on 26 March 2022, but refused by notice dated 03 March 2022.
16. An examination of the online planning records does not reveal any other relevant recent planning history of any significance.
17. The Council have alleged, in the context of the application for the Certificate of Lawfulness, that the property has been used, at least in part, as holiday accommodation, and that the property may therefore have a "null" use. Without prejudice as to whether that is the case in law, it is not directly relevant to this application because, if granted, a consent would then exist for use as supported living accommodation as applied for in this application.

### **Application Property**

18. As noted above, accompanying the application are floorplans for the property as existing. These show the property is set out as 9 self contained flats. In detail the accommodation is 5 x 2 bed and 4 x 1 bed flats.

### **The Application**

The application is for the use of the property as *"Use of the property as 8 self contained supported living flats and 1 flat for a Support Worker with communal living space"*

19. Watson House is set out and used as 9 self contained flats, and it is intended to use eight of these flats for tenants who require some level of support in the community. As noted above the ninth flat would be used for the accommodation of an ISL Support Worker with some communal use.

20. It is not proposed to carry out any external alterations, and in addition there are no works of major physical alteration to the internal layout of the property as a result of the proposed use. Essentially, the property overall will therefore continue to function in very much the same way as it does as 9 self contained flats
21. Nevertheless, there will be a significant investment (circa £240,000) in the property, with the consequent beneficial effect on the local economy where local tradesmen will be used for the refurbishment. Overall, a generally tired building will be brought back to a very high physical standard to provide a facility for a vulnerable community.
22. It is difficult to see how the proposed use would have any significantly different effect on the surrounding properties and land uses than the existing use. The only difference between the current use and the proposed use is that individual residents would also be receiving the relevant level of support that they require.. The occupation of the individual flats would, however, have the same essential character as at present.
23. The property includes hardstanding and parking around the flats, but it is not anticipated that there will in fact be a significant demand for car parking in the proposed use. This is because the residents are unlikely to own or operate a car, and this in turn means that traffic generation would be negligible.
24. In terms of amenity, the application property is a large building set in its own curtilage. In the context of the previous refusal it was accepted by the Council that the adjacent properties are in use as permanent flats and in this sense the proposed change of use would have no significant impact on the residential character or appearance in the area, and no detrimental impact on the amenity of the neighbouring properties.

### **Previous Reasons for Refusal**

25. As noted above, application 21/0761 for supported living accommodation was refused. This was for two reasons individually dealt with below.
26. **Reason 1** - The first reason was an allegation that the applicant had failed to demonstrate a locally generated demand for additional supported living accommodation for adults with mental health issues within the Waterloo area, and the wider Borough in general. It was alleged that this could lead to residents being placed from outside the Borough which could result in disproportionate strain on local public services and be detrimental to the Council's ongoing efforts to establish more balanced and healthy local communities.
27. In this case the eight residents are already in supported living accommodation elsewhere the Borough. It cannot therefore, as a matter of simple logic, add to the strain on public services etc which is alleged. Whatever demands they may or may not make upon public services, they are already doing this. Granting permission for these residents in the application property would therefore have a neutral effect in this regard.
28. It is possible that, if there were to be a change in residents, those residents could come from outside the Borough, but the applicants are prepared to execute a section 106 obligation to deal with this situation.

29. **The restriction in the section 106 obligation would be that the operator would not allow the property to be occupied by any person other than a person nominated by the Council for placement in the property, or nominated by a local authority not being the Council for placement in the property provided that prior to occupation the operator is in receipt of written agreement with the Council that this could take place.**
30. This has been a mechanism that has been successfully used elsewhere in the Borough, and it is suggested that it would work as a mechanism in this case, with the effect that the first reason for refusal of the previous application would be overcome.
31. There has been some suggestion that if the eight residents of Burlington Court were to move to Watson House this would then "free up" Burlington Court which could then provide accommodation for other individuals referred from outside the Borough. That could not be controlled by the current applicants via the control of the section 106 obligation because the applicants do not own the property (Burlington Court).
32. However, there has been no indication, including to enquiries from Adult Services, from the owners of Burlington Court that they intend to use the property for supported living accommodation.
33. If they did, they would presumably have the right, in planning terms, to use the accommodation for residents from outside the Blackpool Council area without any further planning consent. In other words this right exists irrespective of the use of Watson House, and there would be no net increase in the use of premises to house tenants from outside the area.
34. So, there would be no net increase in the housing of tenants from outside the area as a result of this proposal, although there would be an increase in the total number of supported living flats available in the Blackpool area (by 8).
35. However, as noted below, the view of Adult Services is to the effect that this would be acceptable if the eight existing tenants from Burlington Court could be kept together.
36. There is also a general allegation in the first reason for refusal of the refused application that there is insufficient evidence of need for the supported living accommodation proposed.
37. However, ISL have liaised extensively with Kate Aldridge, Head of Commissioning, and it has been confirmed by her that in response to consultation from the Planning Department in respect of the previous application, now withdrawn, a response was supplied. That response included the following:
- *"ISL have advised commissioners that they have not been able to find appropriate alternative accommodation that can support the community of tenants together in the local area that already has the appropriate permissions in place, and they believe that Watson House will provide an improved quality of accommodation for the people that are currently supported by Burlington Court"*
  - *"Although there are some vacancies in other supported living schemes, it is the case that we would not be able to support a move into existing"*

*accommodation provision which would allow all of the current tenants to stay together in one service."*

- *We have sought the views of the teams working with tenants at Burlington, they describe the service as one which has been supportive of tenants in preventing periods of crisis and helping them to maintain a stable tenancy."*
- *"Relationships between staff and people who live at Burlington appear positive. For some tenants a change of provider as well as accommodation, which might be necessitated if new accommodation cannot be secured, may be significantly disruptive and have a negative impact on their health and well-being"*
- *"As the future of the supported accommodation scheme at Burlington Court has not been confirmed by the current owner there is a risk that this will duplicate the provision of supported living, but weighed against the welfare of the residents because we have been unable to secure clarity from the owner of their intentions, **we would not object to the small increase in provision that this scheme brings to the market" (our emphasis)***

38. It is quite clear that it is considered desirable by all relevant parties that the current tenants from Burlington House should be kept together if at all possible. Although it may be possible that if they were split up they could be accommodated in existing accommodation provision, there is no such provision for the tenants to stay together. There is uncertainty as to the intentions of the owners of Burlington Court, and against that background, weighing the factors in the round, it would appear that Adult Services "... **would not object to the small increase in provision under this scheme brings to the market"** .
39. Furthermore, it should also be remembered that Burlington Court has been operated by ISL, which has all the necessary registrations and accreditations to operate supported living accommodation. There is no evidence that the owners of Burlington Court have, or would be likely to have, in the future, the relevant permissions, partners or support to operate as supported living accommodation, and as a consequence there may in any event be no overall increase in provision.
40. **Reason 2** - The second reason for refusal is to the effect that the application property is within 400 m of an existing specialist care facility falling within use class C2 and meeting similar needs. This is a difficult issue for the applicants/owners and intended operator's to deal with because they do not know, except generally, where this other property is.
41. In any event, there are in this case special circumstances which apply.
42. The intended occupants are already resident within the Borough, and this will merely be to re house them in a suitable property. They are not intending to move for their own reasons, but rather because they must leave because they must quit the existing property (Burlington Court) These existing residents have expressed a desire to live in close proximity to each other (see the leaflet reproduced at Appendix 1 and the views of Adult Services), but there is not a plentiful supply of suitable properties to allow this to take place. The applicants therefore suggest that there are special circumstances that apply, and planning permission should be granted to avoid the prospect that these existing Blackpool residents find themselves without suitable accommodation and support. That would be to unnecessarily create a problem which could otherwise be avoided.

## **Management Plan**

43. Policy BH 24 of the Blackpool Local Plan 2001-2016 requires a Management Plan to be produced in respect of applications for care facilities. Such a Plan is reproduced as Appendix 2 to this Statement.

## **Summary and Conclusions**

44. The application is made in respect of 9 existing flats. It is proposed to use the property as 8 self contained flats and a flat for a supported living worker.

45. Accordingly planning permission is requested for:

*“Use of the property as 8 self contained supported living flats and 1 flat for a Support Worker with communal living space”*