

Timber Frame - Series of House Fires in Bray

A series of house fires, which took place within 50 metres of each other in the Oldcourt estate, Bray Co. Wicklow, has given rise to concerns as to the fire safety of lightweight timber framed homes in the area. The local fire brigade was forced to return to the scene of the original fire in No. 75 Oldcourt Drive, when a second fire took hold in the course of reconstruction work on the fire damaged house.

The second fire started when flames from a soldering torch which was being used to install new pipes under a sink in the bathroom, entered the timber cavity

and ignited. A fire consultant who arrived at the scene shortly afterwards said that frantic efforts by the plumber to break the plasterboard and throw water into the timber cavity, failed to quench the fire which spread rapidly to the roof. Within minutes flames from within the roof area of No. 47 passed over the party walls to the adjoining properties on either side, breaching the fire stopping at the top of the party walls.

In a separate incidence, a fire took place within 50 metres of the fire at

number 47 bringing the total number of houses affected by fire on Oldcourt Drive to 4 – over a two month period. The recent incidents follows the tragic death of a mother and her young son in a house fire on the same estate in February 2001. Following that incident a meeting took place between a representative group of local residents and Council officials at which residents called for an examination of all the houses to demand that the local authority provide a full time fire service for the town.



Second Fire During Refurbishment
Oldcourt Bray



Original Fire - Oldcourt Bray

Fire Spreads Over Party Walls to Adjoining Properties



Second Fire During Refurbishment

A local newspaper reported the recent fire incident at No. 47 Oldcourt, Bray in March 2005 as follows:

Blaze at Oldcourt causes concern over fire safety

Behan calls for full investigation into latest incident at Council estate

‘There was smoke billowing out of everywhere – you could see it coming out of the ventilation systems of neighbouring houses.

A blaze which gutted a house at the Oldcourt estate has raised fresh concerns about fire safety at the Bray estate. A young mum and her toddler son were lucky to escape from their home without injury, following the fire which swept through 75 Oldcourt Drive last Wednesday afternoon.

Local Fianna Fáil councillor Joe Behan has called for a full investigation into the incident, and voiced renewed concern about the issue of fire breaks in the terraced houses at the Oldcourt estate.

I witnessed the scale of the fire and I am deeply concerned at the huge amount of smoke which billowed from the vents and meter boxes in three surrounding houses, he said.

I have asked that the Town Council receives a full report at the next Council meeting.

This report should explain why smoke could travel with such ease from one house to the next and to outline what measures need to be taken to ensure effective fire barriers are constructed urgently.

A number of eye witnesses backed up Cllr. Behan’s claims that smoke had spread to the attics of the neighbouring properties. Local resident Margaret Cahill, whose sister Teresa and her baby son Chris were tragically killed when fire destroyed their Oldcourt home four years ago and who has campaigned since then for a full time fire service for the town, said that the householders were lucky to escape.



‘There was smoke billowing out of everywhere – you could see it coming out of the ventilation systems of neighbouring houses.

‘It was something like 4 hours before the fire brigade had it under control. It was just lucky that the fire happened during the day, otherwise things could have been much worse.’

The people of Oldcourt Estate were constantly living on their nerves, added Cahill, since the tragic deaths of her sister and nephew and the deaths of five members of the Cassidy family on the same estate eleven years ago.

Mum tells of her family’s fire horror.

‘I think that those houses are fires waiting to happen. There just the old White City houses just covered up with concrete. You can still see that cardboard. The fire could have spread to other houses.’

The young Bray mum whose home was destroyed in a fire was this week counting the cost of the disaster. Evonne Melia was lucky to escape with her toddler son after the blaze broke out in the living room of their Oldcourt Drive home last Wednesday afternoon.

Evonne told how they had gone upstairs to use the bathroom when her two year old son Adam came up the stairs and said his blanket was on fire. ‘I panicked and just picked him up and ran out of the house. I had my mobile with me so I rang the fire brigade. I just had to stand there and watch while everything went up in flames’ said Evonne.

Evonne lost many valuable items, including irreplaceable ones like family photos.

Evonne, Adam and her second son, who was at school at the time of the fire, have been temporarily re-housed by the local authority in Árd Na Gréine. But it will be a long time before the memories of the fire have receded. Since the blaze, two year old Adam has been suffering nightmares.

‘My little son is waking up every night screaming. He just can’t calm down. If we hadn’t got out when we did, we wouldn’t have got out at all’, she reflected. ‘I think that those houses are fires waiting to happen. There just the old White City houses just covered up with concrete. You can still see that cardboard. The fire could have spread to other houses’.