

TREVOR REIDY
22 Burgess Hill
London NW2 2DA



26 August 2024

Miriam Baptist
Planning Department
London Borough of Camden
Camden Town Hall Extension
Argyle Street
London WC1H 8EQ

Dear Ms Baptist,

RE: Planning Application 2024/3069/P 24 Burgess Hill London NW2 2DA

I am writing to **OBJECT** to certain aspects of the above application on planning grounds, in relation to the proposed basement development, as follows:

1. Recent history of subsidence to our property
2. History of subsidence in the area
3. The raised location and shared retainer wall are high risk factors
4. The method of excavation is inappropriate
5. Drainage and flooding, together with the hill topography, pose a high risk
6. Objection to the bulk and mass of the proposed basement

1. Because of pre-existing subsidence to our property, we object to this proposed basement development

Our property has recently suffered from subsidence, both internally and externally. We have had to have the property monitored for eighteen months. As we are immediate neighbours of the applicant and our buildings are very close together, the proposed development proposes a high risk of further instability to already vulnerable property.

2. The history of subsidence in the area, and the further risk of instability that is posed by the proposed development

The civil engineering firm's Basement Impact Assessment (BIA) accompanying the Planning Application has clearly failed to investigate subsidence in the area. We object on the basis that there is a potential risk that our property will be harmed by this basement development, due to the fact that the stability of the structure of our property has already been weakened by the pre-existing subsidence. Therefore, the structural stability of our building will be put at risk.

Although the BIM states that “The Groundsure data identifies a moderate risk for the presence of shrink swell clays beneath this site” (page iv). I would refute the description “moderate risk”, based on the fact that both the immediate neighbour, our property at number 22, and another neighbour three houses along on the same side of the road have, recently experienced subsidence. This highlights the fact that the immediate area is particularly prone to subsidence.

3.The raised location of the properties in the location of the proposed development and the shared retainer wall is a high risk-factor

The houses at the western end of Burgess Hill lie at the top of a steep hill, the five properties from numbers 26 to 18 all share a vertical retainer wall at the end of the gardens, which drops considerably to the garden of 6 Ranulf Road, some 3-4 meters below. The retaining wall forms an integral part of the foundational strength of these houses and gardens. As the gardens are not particularly deep, the properties are very close to the retaining wall, making any excavation to any property a potential risk to the retaining wall. The BIM fails to address the impact of the risks posed by the excavation and the groundwater flow to the retainer wall. The unique feature of this deep, vertical retainer wall is that it stretches across and supports the gardens of five properties. Any excavation poses an additional stability risk to this structurally critical wall.

4.We object to the method of excavation

The use of the standard method of excavation, ie mechanical equipment, would be unsuitable in this development. In order to maintain the integrity of our property, it is our strong opinion that hand-held digging tools only should be used for excavation in this basement development, rather than undertaking mechanical digging, as the vibrations could harm our property, and weaken an already vulnerable building.

5. The BIM drainage assessment does not acknowledge the fact that this part of Burgess Hill lies at the top of a steep hill. The proposed development has the potential to divert or displace groundwater and cause flooding. The area has a history of this problem.

Although Section 6.6.4 of the BIA states that the development will not significantly affect the groundwater flow on site or in the surrounding area, we are aware of a recent basement development in the nearby vicinity at 77 West Heath Road NW3 that has caused flooding to adjacent properties. Another example of nearby flooding caused by excavation works is the building site at the end of Burgess Hill, located at the former Texaco Petrol Station at the corner of Finchley Road and Burgess Hill. The developers experienced problems with ground water and sewage, to such an extent that mechanical drainage vehicles extracting water and effluence from a manhole to prevent the entire street from being flooded was a regular weekly occurrence during the development. Thus, there is evidence of nearby developments affecting groundwater flow, with calamitous results. We are concerned that this basement development could significantly affect the groundwater flows in this area too.

6. Due to the close proximity of our property to that of the applicant, we object to the bulk and mass of the proposed basement design. The footprint is very large and of great depth.

In the proposed plan, the footprint of the basement is concentrated to the right side of the property, and we believe it is unnecessarily too close to our property. We object to the layout because the playroom in particular lies a mere 1.5 metres from our property. The neighbouring properties on both sides would be better protected from the risks of harm from cracking and subsidence if the proposed basement were centred in the middle of the house, rather than predominantly on the right-hand side of the house as proposed.

In conclusion, we do not object in principle to our neighbours improving and developing their property. However, we object to the method of excavation and the scope of the basement footprint. This is largely due to the pre-existing subsidence in our property, as well as the risk of the stability of the shared retainer wall, together with the high risk of subsidence in the general area. Due to these pre-existing conditions, the scale of the proposed basement will inevitably cause movement in the immediate locale. We are also concerned about the history of groundwater flow problems locally and in the immediate vicinity, which is compounded by the hill top location of our properties. All of which would put the structural stability of our property, and the properties of other neighbours, at risk.

Please find attached images of numbers 22 and 24, showing the close proximity between the two houses, together with images of the vertical retainer wall shared by the group of properties.

Yours sincerely,

Trevor Reidy

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