

OBJECTION TO CAMDEN PLANNING APPLICATION 2025/0524/P

(28 PARLIAMENT HILL, LONDON NW3 2TN)

Objection: Planning application 2025/0524/P poses a significant risk to the structure and fabric of the adjacent property at 30 Parliament Hill.

Planning application 2025/0524/P proposes the removal of at least 66 cubic metres of London Clay soil for the construction of an indoor swimming pool below lower ground floor level at 28 Parliament Hill. No 30 Parliament Hill is the semi-detached twin of No 28, and the two properties share a common party wall. As the swimming pool project requires the creation of a basement below lower ground floor level, Camden requires the developers to provide a Basement Impact Assessment (BIA) to be submitted as part of the planning application. The BIA undertaken by **Green Structural Engineering** and dated November 2023 (with revisions in 2024) concludes that the swimming pool project ***“can be undertaken without harm to the property and adjacent buildings.”*** The paragraphs below suggest that the text of the BIA shows that this conclusion is unsustainable:

- **Risk of harm highlighted by the Campbell Reith Audit:** The BIA clearly acknowledges the risk of structural damage to No 30 when it refers to the problem of maintaining lateral support during the excavation as a ***“major challenge and risk to adjoining properties.”*** The **Campbell Reith Audit** commissioned by the Council in June 2024 draws attention to this statement and points out that the BIA provides **no justification** for the claim that the project can be undertaken without harm to adjacent buildings.
- **False claim of a site visit to No 30:** The Executive Summary of the BIA states that ***“a site visit has been carried out to inspect the existing property and those in the vicinity which will be affected by the proposed works, and this has enabled an appraisal of the existing properties for any sign of historic or ongoing movement to be made.”*** The Directors of 30 Parliament Hill Management Company Ltd can confirm that **no such site visit has taken place.**
- **History of subsidence at No 28:** In response to a question concerning the presence of subsidence in the local area, the developers offer the following answer: ***“There are no known relevant historical data or any indication of shrink swell subsidence effects in the local area.”*** The **Campbell Reith Audit** casts doubt on this claim, stating that ***“Laboratory testing undertaken with the ground investigation indicates that the London Clay Formation soils are of high-volume change potential.”*** To owners of properties in the Parliament Hill area with **long histories of shrink swell subsidence**, the claim that subsidence is unknown truly is quite ludicrous. If the local area has no history of subsidence, the question arises as to why previous owners at No 28 felt it necessary in 1997 to underpin the foundations of the entire property to a depth of six metres.
- **History of subsidence at No 30:** As regards the vulnerability of the foundations to the proposed excavations at No 28, visual and archival evidence shows that **No 30 suffered serious subsidence in the mid-1980s.** Some **partial underpinning** was carried out, but its extent is not known. What is known is that No 30 did not participate in the deep underpinning operation undertaken in 1997 by No 28. Additionally, an **insurance claim for subsidence at the front of No 30** was settled in 2018. This involved partial underpinning and reconstruction at a cost to insurers of £133,000.
- **Refusal of building insurance cover at No 30:** While the consultants of Green Structural Engineering profess total ignorance of shrink swell subsidence effects in the local area, the same cannot be said of the **UK insurance industry.** In April 2024, an insurance broker acting on behalf 30 Parliament Hill Management Company Ltd reported that no fewer than **eight major insurers refused to provide a quote for building insurance** on grounds of subsidence risk in the local area.

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Appendix H of the Building Impact Assessment includes a report on potential ground movements commissioned in 2023 by Fabiana Fedeli, the owner of the property at 28 Parliament Hill. The report, entitled “**Geotechnical Ground Investigation and Ground Movement Report**” was produced by consultants **AVZGeoEng Ltd**. The findings of the report include the following points :

- The ground movement investigation confirms that the underlying soil is **London Clay**, a “**shrinkable soil**” with **very high plasticity** and “**high-volume change potential**.”
- The AVZ report tells us that “*The excavation for the swimming pool and subsequent building construction will be accompanied by a sequence of ground movements, including immediate elastic and longer term swelling heave....*”
- The AVZ report refers to “**likely damage to adjacent properties**” from the excavation and confirms that “**a rigorous assessment of the potential damage**” is **not possible** in the absence of detailed knowledge of the stability of adjacent structures.
- While recommending that “*the proposed construction should aim to limit damage to all buildings to a maximum of Category 1*” on the Burland Scale, the AVZ report acknowledges the **possibility of much more serious damage** when it urges the activation of contingency measures “**if movements of adjacent structures exceed predefined trigger levels.**” The report accepts as a factual matter that the proposed swimming pool project subjects adjacent structures to “**the risk of ground loss/ground collapse beneath the neighbouring footings.**”
- In addition to highlighting the likelihood of immediate damage, the AVZ report notes that ground movement generated by the proposed works will involve “**long term swelling/settlement that will continue for a number of years.... about 50% of the movements are likely to occur immediately as functional loads are applied, leaving the remaining 50% to occur as long-term heave/settlement.**”

Conclusions:

A key criterion for the granting of planning permissions for basement developments appears in the document “**Camden Planning Guidance: Basements**” (2021). Camden’s planning guide states categorically that “**Basement developments must not cause harm to neighbouring properties.**” It is the strong view of the owners of 30 Parliament Hill that the large-scale excavation and construction of an indoor swimming pool proposed by Planning Application 2025/2054/P does not satisfy this most basic of planning conditions. As pointed out by **Campbell Reith** consultants, the text of the Building Impact Assessment prepared by **Green Structural Engineering** fails to justify the opinion that the swimming pool project will not cause harm to the adjoining No 30. The ground movement assessment carried out by **AVZGeoEng** warns that the proposed project will inevitably cause damage to No 30 in both the short and the long run, the extent of which cannot be predetermined.

In view of the warnings contained in the abovementioned expert reports and the longstanding history of subsidence in the local area, the leasehold owners at No 30 believe that they have a **well-grounded case** to support their objection to Planning Application 2025/2054/P. The Directors of 30 Parliament Hill Management Company Ltd urge the Council to reject this application and to refuse all further applications for permission to construct an indoor swimming pool at No 28 Parliament Hill.

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