

Mr & Mrs J Young
19 Cressy Road
London NW3 2NB

Camden Regeneration and Planning
Development Management
London Borough of Camden
Town Hall
Judd Street
London WC1H 8ND

2nd May 2014

Dear Ms Scarisbrick,

Your Ref: 2014/2553/P – 21-23 Cressy Road, London NW3 2NB
Proposed excavation and development of new basement.

I write in reference to your letter, dated 15th April 2014 and received on 1st May 2014.

I would like to raise a number of issues I have with the new proposals for the development of 21-23 Cressy Road, for which new planning permission has been sought.

My concerns are, broadly, as follows:

1. As you are no doubt aware, the excavation of basements in older housing has a significant potential impact on neighbouring properties, as it raises the risk of dangerous subsidence and possible flooding. This is particularly true of the area in which Cressy Road stands, since this area has been built over the ancient Fleet River – currently, the Victorian brick-built Fleet sewer.

According to a 2013 governmental study, conducted by the geologist Dr Michael De Freitas, any basement excavation requires, “ **advanced knowledge of the ground based on good facts, sophisticated design and meticulous supervision**”.

As De Freitas notes, moving soil beneath existing houses has effects elsewhere; he says that, “**It is not possible to excavate a hole without the ground responding and the key issue is the extent of its magnitude**”. He makes it clear in his report that “**damage to neighbouring properties arising from basement excavation is often a price the neighbours pay for owners not investing sufficiently in the work they commission to increase the value of their estate.**”

The concerns identified by De Freitas here (and indeed many other experts in his field) apply to all basement excavations. However, the risk of damage to neighbouring properties in the case of any underground excavation of 21-23 Cressy Road is far

greater than elsewhere, since, like many properties in this area, it has been built upon the remains of an underwater river bed.

As you will be aware, the presence of water beneath these houses is the reason why very few of the properties in the Mansfield Conservation Area were built with basements beneath them when they were first constructed.

2. It is unclear from your letter whether the planning permission request received by Camden includes details of the measures that would be necessary to ensure the long-term safety of the project – e.g. the measuring of ground water levels, a full good quality ground investigation and a commitment to long-term monitoring of water levels and their response to rainfall.

This is of particular importance since, as you will be aware, many of the problems that may arise from basement construction will only become apparent after the work has been completed. The ground beneath 21-23 Cressy Road and neighbouring properties will continue to respond, long after the basement work has been completed. This movement may be small but will not be uniform, meaning that neighbouring properties such as mine may become damaged over time.

3. Finally, there is already a history of slight structural movement in the terrace on Cressy Road. This specifically concerns properties from 21-23 Cressy Road down to the bottom of the street, with Number 11 at the end of the row of terraces.

As you can see from the attached image of number 11 Cressy Road, it has already been necessary to heavily reinforce number 11 at the end of the terrace, using steel rods. There is a genuine concern that the movement of significant amounts of ground from beneath the house at the TOP of this terrace, 21-23, will exacerbate this movement, which could affect some 5 family homes.

It is for these reasons that I am strongly objecting to the proposed excavation and development of a basement in number 21-23 Cressy Road.

I would of course be happy to discuss this further with you as necessary.

Yours faithfully,

Mr J Young

Photo Attachment: (see below)



