

Ground Floor Flat,  
73 Fordwych Road,  
London NW2 3TL.

26<sup>th</sup> August 2015

To:  
Camden Council,  
Planning Department.

Objection to Planning Application 2015/2802/P – 81 Fordwych Road.

I am writing to register serious objection to the Planning Application to construct a large basement at 81 Fordwych Road.

My objections are as follows:

**1) Inaccuracies in the introductory report:**

- The house was built around 1892/4 and not 1800 as stated in the report
- The photograph depicting a hedge and green frontage to the property is of the property before the current owners purchased it – currently there is wooden hoarding surrounding the front and all greenery has been removed – the front is now covered in mud (part of the illegal removal of earth from the rear garden)
- It is not certain that there are not trees in the back of the garden but certainly there are a number of trees nearby in adjacent properties – the roots of these may be affected by the proposed development.
- There is indeed a recent history of flooding of the property to which 81 is adjoined as a semi – related to the cellar in No 83. Therefore the likelihood of flooding in No 81 must be a material factor. A report was produced by Camden when a number of cellars in this stretch of Fordwych Road flooded in 2013. This report should be accessible to those wishing to research this type of development. The application could be considered either negligently or deliberately misleading in not referencing this.
- Any reference to an existing partial basement is in fact a coal cellar which is not designed for habitation but does form an important part of the structure of both houses.

**2) Concern for the structural integrity of both 81 and 83 Fordwych Road.**

The properties in this part of Fordwych Rd have a history of subsidence as is it on a slope. Our own property (73) and our adjoining semi at 75 were the subject of extensive subsidence repair work in 1996/97, which included substantial underpinning surrounding both properties. We were also advised following the works, that we should not dig down lower than the existing depth of the cellar as this may compromise the works undertaken. I was led to believe that No 81 had either not been underpinned at all, or if so, this was only partially done and would probably not meet today's requirements. If this is the case, any digging to remove the existing cellar walls and earth before further underpinning to a suitable depth was undertaken, could have serious implications for the structural foundations.

Whilst I am not an expert, it would appear that the planning application aims to excavate the whole area under the property and create a whole new floor. Given the size and nature of the existing property, total removal of the earth and cellar walls underneath the property must be considered dangerous and seriously threaten the structure of both 81 and 83. It is unclear exactly how deep the final proposed basement would be.

It would also seem there is an old drain running under the cellars along this stretch of Fordwych Rd - discovered at No 71 which insurance investigators revealed after explorations to identify the cause of repeated flooding in the 71's cellar. This could well continue under both 81 and 83 and if severed could possibly lead to more flooding problems. This should be investigated before any work to the cellar floor or below ground elsewhere under the property is undertaken.

My property at No 73 was subject to serious flooding in 2013 – along with those of 71, 75 and later at No 83. I believe that there was flooding at other properties following this. However, since then the ground in our garden has also been subject to change – in dry weather it was subject to serious cracks appearing, but more recently it has appeared to be “saturated” in the winter with extensive puddles lying on the surface as it could not be absorbed by the ground underneath. All this points to a possible shift in the water table which could possibly cause pressure on any new or existing structure over time. This indicates that this stretch of Fordwych should not be recommended for development of this nature given the unpredictable status of ground underneath the gardens.

I am unclear as to the extent of the planned excavations in the existing garden – but this does seem to indicate that this would be of equivalent area to the existing ground floor, but within the 50% (?) allowed by Camden. Again, actual measurements may well reveal this exceeds the amount of space allowed and must be subject to rigorous inspection before this application is considered as recent development of this property has not been honest and open.

### **3) Deliberate disregard for planning law, regulations or procedure**

There has been deliberate disregard for regulations and planning law related to this property since late Autumn 2014, when the new owner of the property totally removed the roof, and possibly made a start on an extension of some sort without any planning application being submitted. This was only stopped at the intervention of Camden shortly before Christmas (to my recollection). A retrospective planning application was then applied for and it would appear that what would amount to a whole new floor has been added to the roof level of the property. It is not known how well this was inspected for meeting requirements.

It is now revealed that extensive covert ground excavations have been taking place, although how they managed to get a digging machine into the rear garden is not known – but we could hear the machine going for some time before they were stopped. Indeed, myself and another neighbour witnessed illegal removal of soil one Saturday night – 19<sup>th</sup> July – when a huge lorry arrived at 6.30pm and started to load up a considerable amount of soil. I do have photos of this, including the number of the lorry - and am aware that such building works are supposed to stop at around 1pm on Saturdays until Monday morning unless there is specific exemption applied for. The lorry must have damaged the pavement as the weight was excessive when he drove off the front pathway – there are some cracks in the pavement to the driveway.

This, together with the obviously illegal excavations are all indicative of an extreme disregard both for any planning or building regulations and also the local residents, including most importantly their adjoining neighbours at no 83.

The description of the basement appears to be for an office and “games room” but as there has been disregard for honesty previously, it could be highly likely that this will become a house of multiple occupation which will be seriously overcrowded. Indeed, as there will be at least 2 more floors to this property, fire regulations may require that a Fire Exit staircase is put in to meet fire safety requirements.

**4) Planning Precedent:**

I am extremely concerned that granting this application would set a very dangerous planning precedent for the area. Fordwych Road is already suffering from many properties becoming houses of multiple occupation, where there is insufficient capacity for the disposal of household rubbish and inevitable strain on infrastructure such as sewers. If there are to be additional toilets in this basement this would need serious consideration as the old sewer drains may not be able to cope and it would need a special pump to pump up the sewage which are often subject to failure.

If this applications were passed, it may by default be writing Camden's basement policy as if this sets a precedent it could be used by others and lead to some real problems of inappropriate development, loss of gardens and green environment, and give the green light to "dodgy developers" wishing to take advantage of such a precedent to the whole detriment of the area.

I seriously urge Camden to refuse this application on the above grounds and investigate the current site for works which might have already compromised the structural safety of both No 81 and 83.

Susan Measures,  
Owner of Ground Floor Flat at No 73 Fordwych Road.