

**Objection to the planning application to Camden Council for a basement excavation at 26 Denning Road, NW3 1SU, Ref: 2015/3593/P**

**From Sarah Wason and Dr Augustus Casely-Hayford, 28 Denning Road, NW3 1SU**

Whilst we are not anti-basements per se, we do wish to raise an objection to this particular scheme based on the expert advice that we have been given by the geologist, Dr Michael de Freitas, and the structural engineer and geotechnician, Michael Eldred. Their list of concerns are extensive (please refer to full reports sent to the Planning team) and on this basis we urge Camden Council to refuse the application. The concerns are as follows:

- 1) “the drawings submitted in support of the application contain technical errors, are self-conflicting as well as conflicting each other....They fail a fundamental requirement of any planning application; that of providing a clear, accurate and consistent description of any applicant’s intention. They also fail to satisfy the requirements of planning policy DP27 in that that it has not been demonstrated that the scheme proposed would avoid damage to other property” Michael Eldred (ME).
- 2) “In considering the BIA prepared.....I find that it makes no attempt to predict or discuss the matter of ground and related structural movement or the potential for structural damage in adjoining properties. It refers to a specification of work in this respect but it appears that the specification must have been uncritically copied from another project; it has no relevance to the scheme shown by the engineer’s drawings” (ME).
- 3) “I conclude that inward ground movement of the excavation might cause a horizontal strain of 0.16% in the adjoining buildings, which indicates a risk of 2 – 3 damage on the Burland Scale. Alternatively if the movement caused soil below the adjoin house to crack close to the footing, slope failure could take place leaving the party wall unsupported” (ME)
- 4) The BIA....fails in a number of significant ways to satisfy the requirements set by Camden and could be quite misleading to a contractor engaged to undertake the work” Michael de Freitas (Mdf)
- 5) The BIA requires the applicant to answer various questions in regard to ‘Subterranean (ground) water flow’, ‘Slope Stability’ and Surface flow and flooding’. Michael de Freitas considers that of these the applicant has answered five questions with the wrong answer and two questions the applicant has given the correct answer but the supporting evidence is misleading. For instance, “ The absence of water in the borehole is insufficient proof of the absence of ground water; there are good technical reasons for this”. He goes onto comment; “The description of the material penetrated by the borehole lacks detail” and concludes, “No information about the hydrology of this upper layer is possible with the instrumentation and monitoring is not correct for the purpose”. (Mdf).
- 6) In conclusion Michael de Freitas concludes; “The Auditor is asked to review the comments above as they form are evidence that the requirements of CGP4 and DP27 have not been met by the present application and that the BIA offers no confidence in the applicant’s ability to address them competently if planning permission is given (Mdf).

We have a number of additional concerns:

- 7) The CPG4 states in point 3.22 that 'Hydrogeological processes are subject to seasonal and longer-term cyclical influences. Measurements taken at one particular time may not include how conditions might be in one or six months from that time. Monitoring of ground water levels in areas where it is more likely to be present over a period of time is necessary". It appears that this gathering of measurements over an extended period of time has not happened and therefore we question whether the applicant has met the conditions of the CPG4 in this regard.
- 8) The proposal suggests the finished basement will sit within a certain distance of the party walls of No 24 and No 28; however, what this distance will be is unclear from the submitted drawings. The finished basement walls could come within 0.8 metres of the party walls, meaning that the excavated area during building would be closer than that. In effect, the applicant is proposing excavation works that come nearly up to the footprint of the entire house (including the extension at the back of the house), yet seems to suggest that the proposed works will not affect the existing party walls and their foundations
- 9) There does not appear to be an extensive construction management plan to accompany this application.
- 10) No information is given as to how the basement will be acoustically sound proofed.
- 11) There is a question as to the efficacy of allowing basement excavations in a terraced row of houses, on sloping hills, in areas in Hampstead where there are known wells and springs. A key risk as a result of the scheme is potential flooding as the terrace is situated at the bottom of a slope in an area known to be susceptible to surface flooding in wet periods as indicated in the Strategic Flood Assessment commissioned by Camden from URS in 2014. CPG4 expects applicants to show their design will not aggravate surface flooding but we can not see evidence of this having been provided.
- 12) The current refurbishment project at 26 Denning Road has not followed drawings approved by Camden Council and the balcony and dormer window at the back of the house have had to be re-built to meet Planning requirements. With this precedent we are concerned that any basement excavation that might gain Planning approval be realized according to the permission granted and executed in a such a way that it won't potentially damage adjoining properties.
- 13) Given the points outlined above, if Camden Council decided to approve this application we would request, at the very least, that the applicant be required to enter into an appropriate ESCROW agreement to fund any necessary repairs to adjacent properties; and also to have in place appropriate insurance to cover any damage to neighbours' properties caused by excavation.
- 14) The noise and disturbance of excavating the basement in such a narrow street as Denning Road would be considerable and would affect a large number of residents adversely as well as blocking traffic flow. Right adjacent to the proposed basement excavation live two elderly neighbours, one of whom is in his Nineties, and so the impact of drilling would have an even more deleterious effect on their health and well-being.