

Basements Visual Evidence

Partial Review of the Core Strategy

February 2014



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA

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Background¹

1.1 There has been a growing trend to construct basements in the borough as a means of extending accommodation. Basements are also built as part of both new residential and commercial developments (however, this is not a new trend). Land values in this borough are very high and in some locations are the highest in the country. The built environment is largely historic with 70% of the borough designated conservation areas and about 4,000 listed buildings. The dense built environment coupled with its historic character limits the scope to extend properties above ground. This has led to a growing number of developments below ground and this document presents aerial photographs in relation to applications which have a basement element associated with them.

Purpose of this report

- 1.2 It is commonly understood that basements can be designed to be less visually intrusive given their location below ground. It is considered that the only external manifestations of basements are light wells, roof lights, railings etc and that the structure of the basement itself is largely hidden from view after completion, with the garden generally reinstated above.
- 1.3 The Council produced a report on basements visual evidence in July 2013. This report includes a greater number of basements granted permission over a longer period of time.
- 1.4 This report also presents a time series of aerial photographs of different sites/areas of the borough from 1999, 2004, 2008, 2012 and 2013. It is acknowledged that the aerial photography for 2013 is in a period when trees are not in leaf (early spring). However, data set for the summer of 2013 was not available when this report was compiled. This may give a more stark appearance to the gardens in 2013, however the time series of photos overall do present a reliable comparator. This comparison has been undertaken to understand the visual impact (if any) of basement development on the character of the gardens in the borough.

Methodology

- 1.5 The Council grants permissions for a large number of basements every year. A separate report presenting data on basement applications is also available. The applications range from small basement extensions such as lowering the floor level of coal vaults to make them more useable for modern living to very large basements comprising several storeys.
- 1.6 Due to the nature and resolution of aerial photography the visual changes are more visible where gardens are relatively large. Many sites in the densely built up borough don't have a garden and are entirely built up. These have been discounted as there will be no discernable visual change in the aerial photographs. The external manifestations of such sites would only be visible in close proximity. A wide selection of planning permissions has been included to capture the degree of visual changes in the character of more open garden areas which are commonly green and leafy.
- 1.7 The trend for basement development is relatively recent with only 46 applications in 2000 compared to just over 300 in 2012 and about 450 in 2013. The aerial photographs present sites with a permission for a basement granted since 2000. The existing policy on basements was adopted in the Core Strategy in 2010 although guidance was provided in the 2009 Supplementary Planning Document. The previous Policy CD32 in the Unitary Development Plan did require 'adequate soil cover'. Whilst there was no formal requirement for the provision of 1m of top soil prior to 2009, the general policy was to require 1m of soil as adequate soil cover in accordance with the UDP. This is also evident from planning decisions made prior to 2009.
- 1.8 Prior to 2009 there was also no maximum limit (85%) on the extent of basements into the garden. However, not all basement proposals extended into the entire garden prior to 2009 and where they did the visual impacts are unlikely to be very different from the 85% maximum limits. It is clear from the aerial photographs that even where basements are restricted to 85% of the garden, entire gardens are excavated. Therefore sites where basements were granted permission under the UDP policies are still considered relevant. The range of aerial photographs presented demonstrate similar visual impacts of permission granted under the UDP and those granted under the more recent SPD and Core Strategy policies.
- 1.9 Further as previously mentioned basements are a relatively recent trend, with the existing policies in place since 2009. Therefore it is inevitable that permissions granted in recent years will be under construction.

¹ Please note this is an A3 sized document and is formatted accordingly.

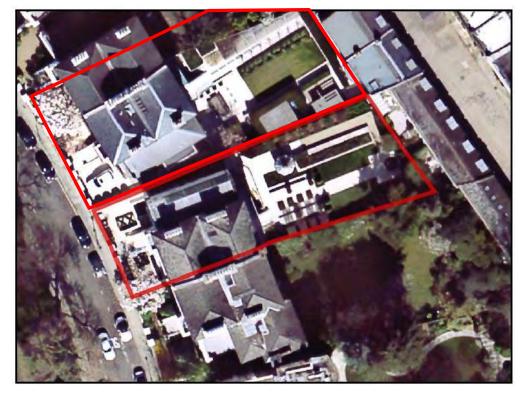
Conclusion

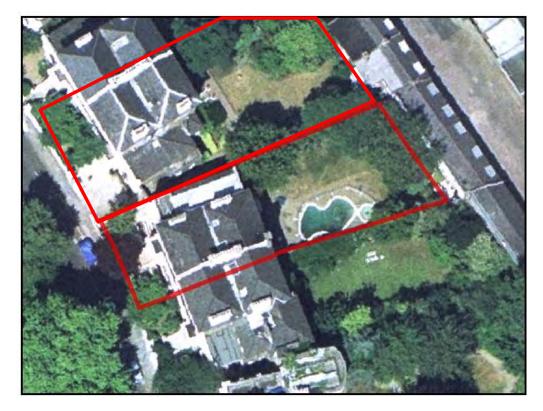
- 1.10 The aerial photographs show that back gardens cumulatively form a chain of green links and together can constitute large areas. It is clear from the aerial photographs that gardens that have been subject to basement development underneath can generally be distinguished from those without basement development. Gardens with basements underneath generally appear artificial and sterile compared to the informal leafy character that was present before. Gardens with basements below also seem to have reduced planting. Some images show construction taking place in adjoining gardens. The cumulative impact of a large number of basements can change the character of the gardens in the borough and have implications for biodiversity in the longer term. This will fundamentally change the character and/or appearance of the area.
- 1.11 Some sites in the aerial photographs are under construction. It is acknowledged that the appearance of these sites would improve once the landscaping in place. However these are considered relevant as they demonstrate the scale of excavation into the gardens and replacement of soil with impermeable materials. These images also show that in reality, the visual impact of the 85% limit, translates to (in many cases) the appearance that the entire garden has been excavated. This is because the majority of the garden has been excavated with only a 15% area, usually an inconspicuous strip along the side or bottom of the garden retained. Deep excavations in entire gardens can also break the continuity of back gardens supporting a range of biodiversity.
- 1.12 It is acknowledged that garden designs can be changed as a result of above ground extensions or just because the owner wishes to change the design of the garden as this may not fall within the definition of development. However, this does not seem to be a wide spread trend. In addition a superficial change such as placing hard paving on soil is an easily reversible process with flexibility for large scale planting if so required in the future, but basements are fairly irreversible as can be seen in the images of sites under construction.

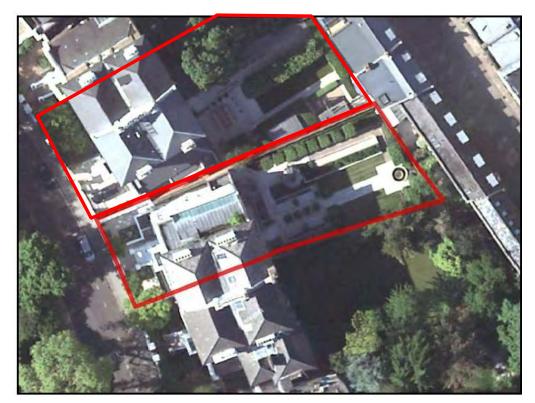
11 The Boltons London SW10 9TD, REF: PP/03/00601, 10 The Boltons, London SW10 9TD, REF: PP/05/01499











6 Cheyne Walk, REF: PP/04/01145













5 Upper Phillimore Gardens, London, W8 7HF, REF: PP/06/01843 3 Upper Phillimore Gardens, London W8 7HF, REF: PP/11/02477









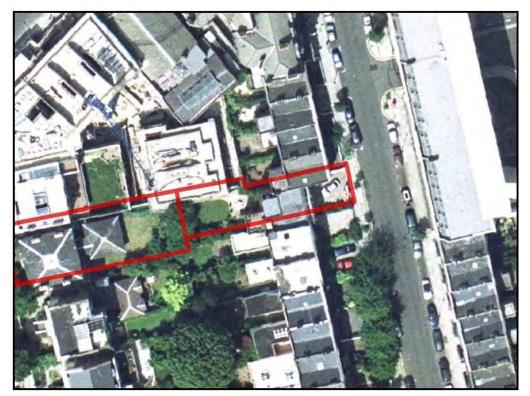


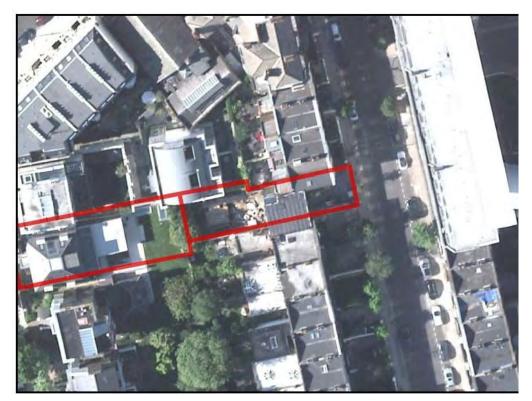
2 Pembridge Place, London W2 4XB, REF: PP/06/02729, 10 Chepstow Place, London, W2 4TA, REF:PP/12/01233











5 Cottesmore Gardens, London W8 5PR, REF: PP/07/00299 7 Cottesmore Gardens, London W8 5PR, REF: PP/07/00391









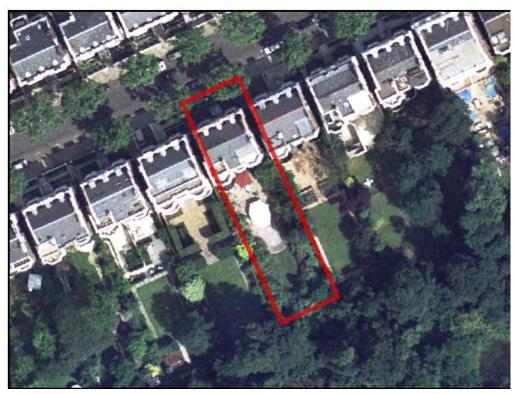


9 Holland Park, London,W11 3TH, REF :PP/07/02816







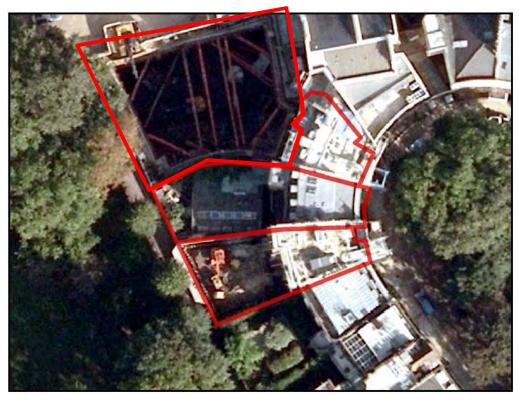




29 Brompton Square, London , SW3 2AE, REF: PP/08/00249 30 Brompton Square, LONDON, SW3 2AE, REF: PP/00/01006 31 Brompton Square, LONDON, SW3 2AE, REF: PP/07/03525



2008



2004



2012





42 Drayton Gardens, London, SW10 9SA, REF :PP/07/02410
44 Drayton Gardens, London, SW10 9SA, REF :PP/08/00875
46 Drayton Gardens, London, SW10 9SA, REF :PP/08/01674
48 Drayton Gardens, London, SW10 9SA, REF :PP/09/00550
50 Drayton Gardens, London, SW10 9SA, REF :PP/03/00274
1999













11 Holland Park, London W11 3TH, REF: PP/08/01884 12 Holland Park, London, W11 3TH, REF: PP/07/03166 14 Holland Park, London W11 3TH, REF: PP/07/01274 15 Holland Park, London, W11 3TH, REF: PP/02/00102 16 Holland Park, London W11 3TH, REF: PP/06/00707 1999



2008



2013



2004





15 Paultons Square, LONDON, SW3 5AP, REF: PP/08/01985 16 Paultons Square, LONDON, SW3 5AP, REF: PP/08/03528













7-10 Cottage Place, London, SW1 2BE, REF:PP/09/01006











12 Lansdowne Crescent, London, W11 2NJ, REF: PP/07/02264 13 Lansdowne Crescent, London, W11 2NJ, REF: PP/10/03567











15 Kensington Palace Gardens, London, W8 4QG, REF :PP/07/01773





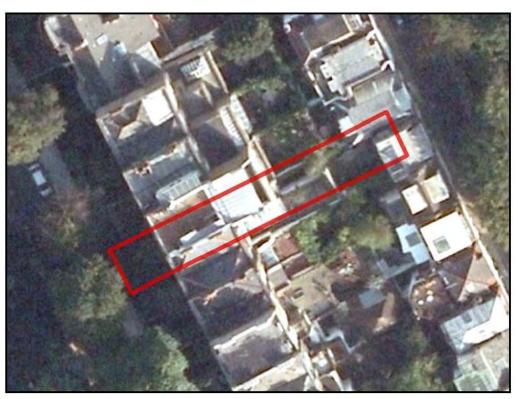






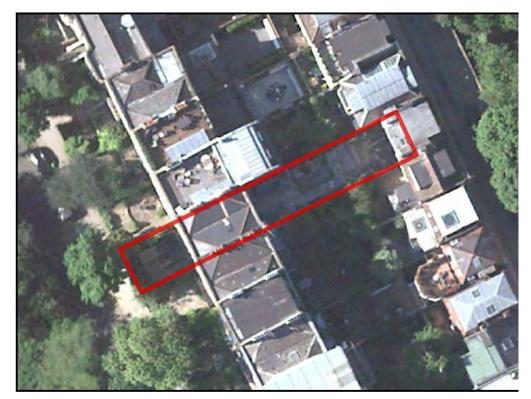
6 Campden Hill Square & 6 Hillsleigh Road, London, W8 7LB, REF: PP/07/01841







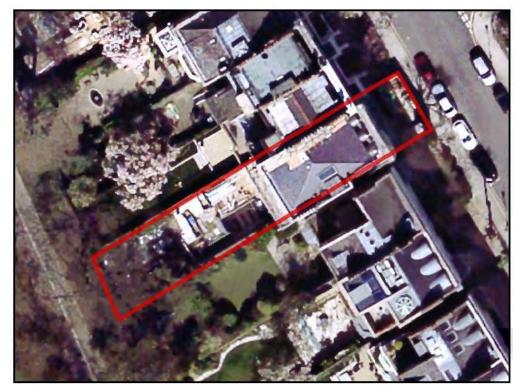


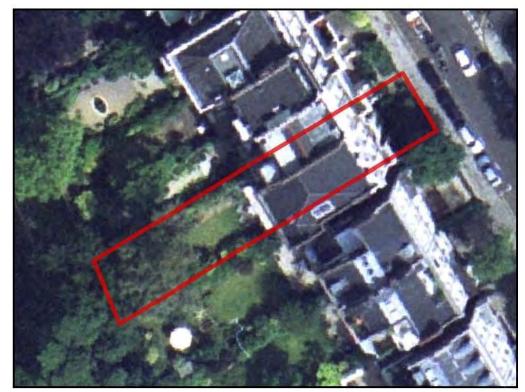


17 Phillimore Gardens, London, W8 7QG, REF: PP/07/02148





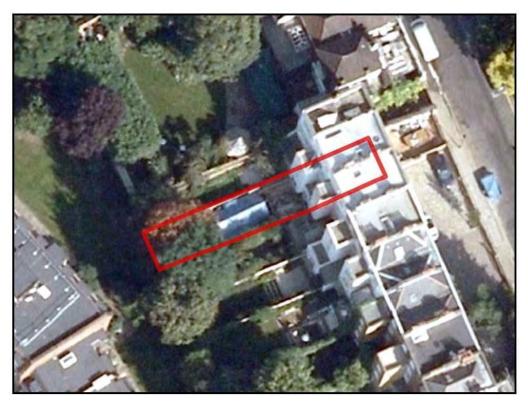




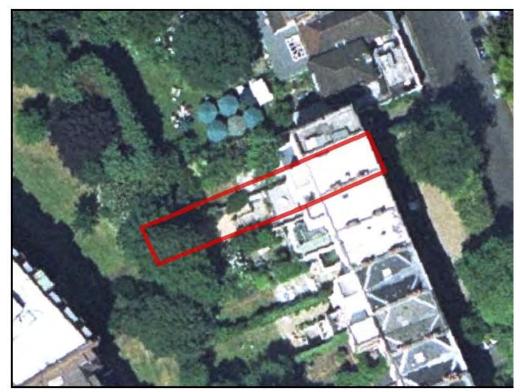


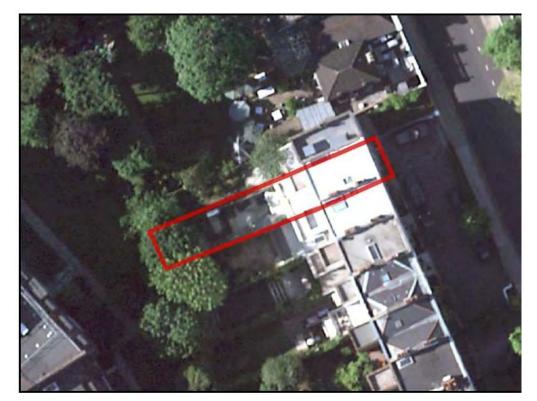
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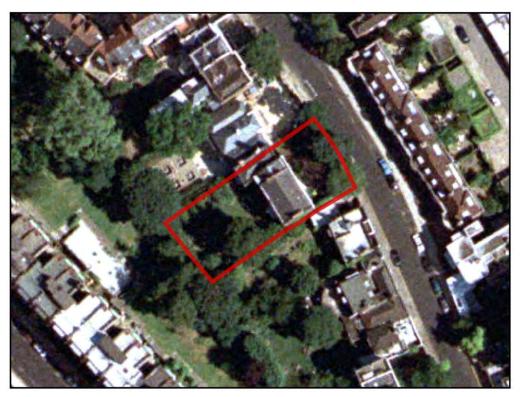




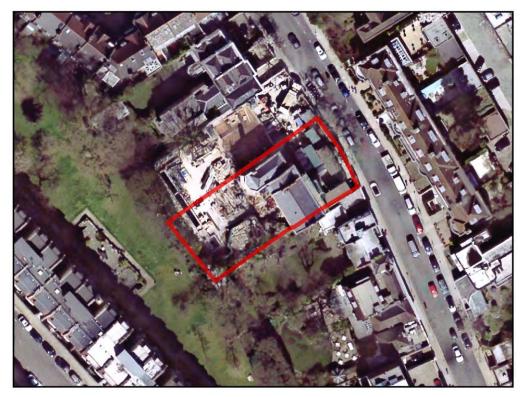


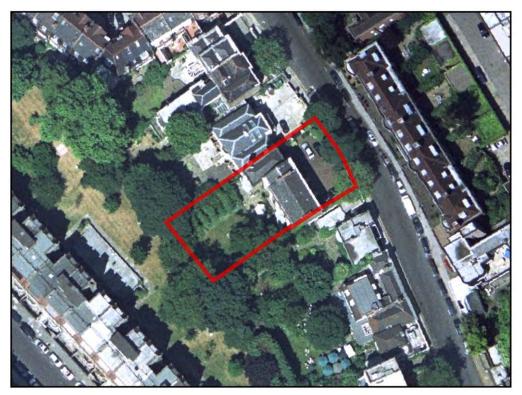


149 - 151, Old Church Street, LONDON, SW3 6EB, REF : PP/08/03319







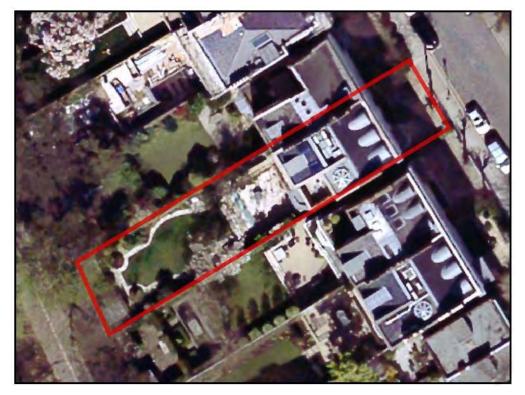




13 Phillimore Gardens, London, W8 7QG, REF: PP/07/02522











40 Carlyle Square, London, SW3 6HA, REF: PP/07/02908











6 Egerton Terrace, London, SW3 2BT, REF: PP/07/03030











2 Albert Place, London, W8 SPD, REF: PP/07/03127











23 Old Church Street, London, SW3 5DL, REF: PP/07/03438











46 Egerton Crescent, London, SW3 2ED, REF: PP/12/00511 47 Egerton Crescent, London, SW3 2ED, REF: PP/07/03535









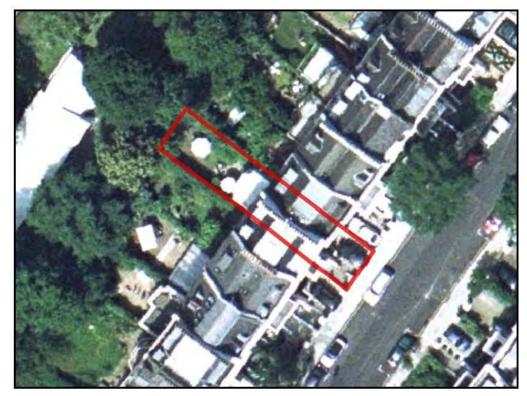


92 Elgin Crescent, London, W11 2JL, REF: PP/07/03560









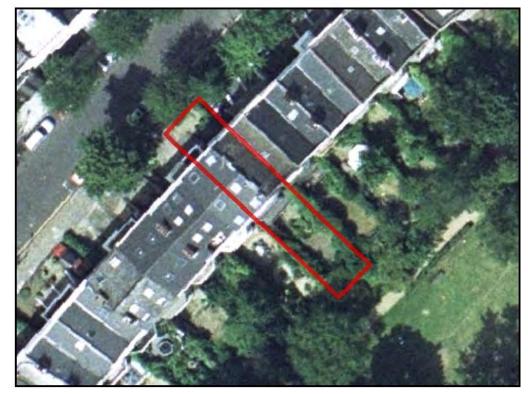


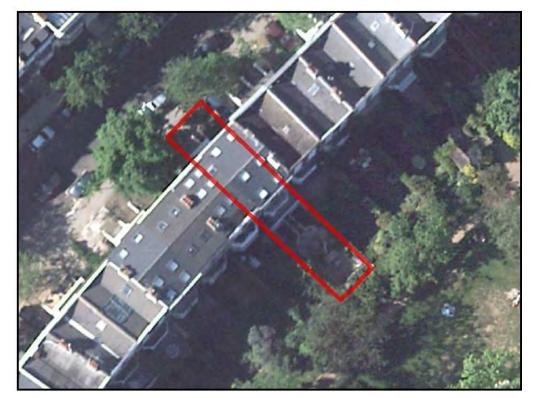
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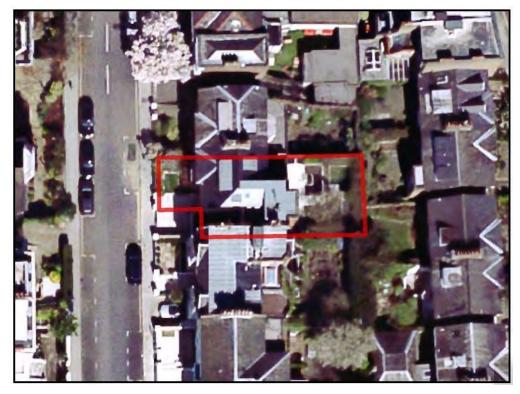




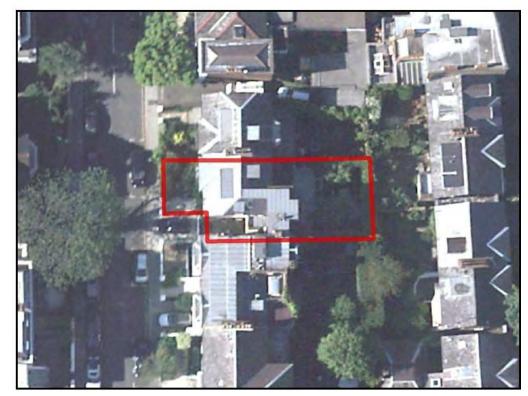
45 Victoria Road, London, W8 5RH, REF: PP/08/00164











2 Holland Villas Road, London, W14 8BP, REF: PP/08/00457











19 Campden Hill Square, LONDON, W8 7JY, REF:PP/08/00502











22 Portland Road, LONDON, W11 4LG, REF:PP/08/00744











32 Holland Park, London, W11 3TA, REF :PP/08/01176











60 Addison Road, LONDON, W14 8JJ, REF:PP/08/01827











Basement/ground Floor Flat, 53 Holland Park, London, W11 3RS, REF:PP/08/02046











29 Princedale Road, London, W11 4NW, REF: PP/08/02233











85 Addison Road, London, W14 8ED, REF:PP/08/02266





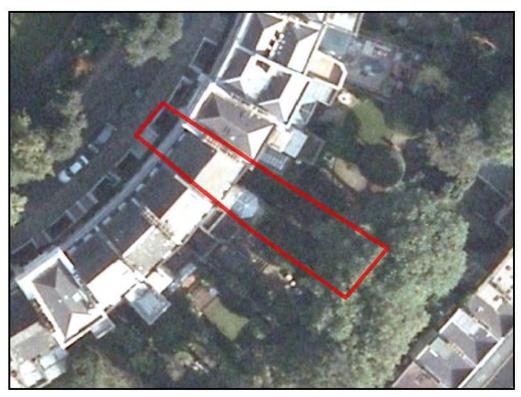






40 Egerton Crescent, London, SW3 2EB, REF:PP/08/03128







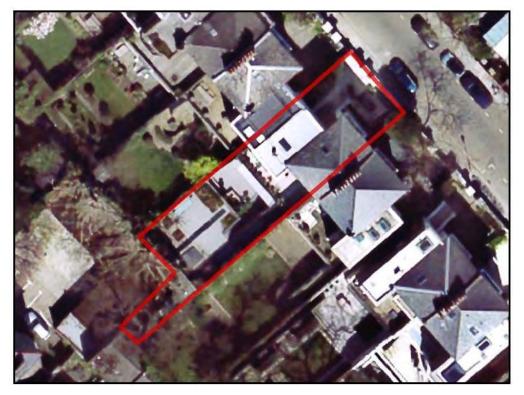


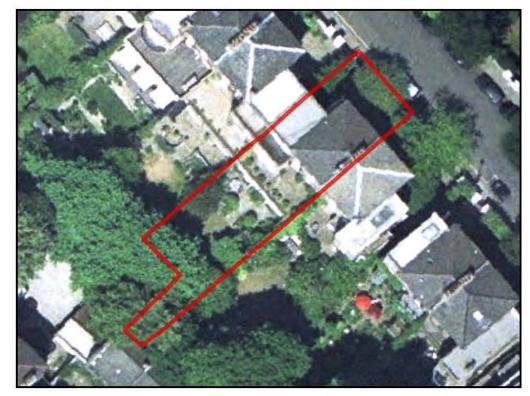


35 Gilston Road, London, SW10 9SJ, REF:PP/08/03505











55 Palace Gardens Terrace, London, W8 4RU, REF: PP/09/00062







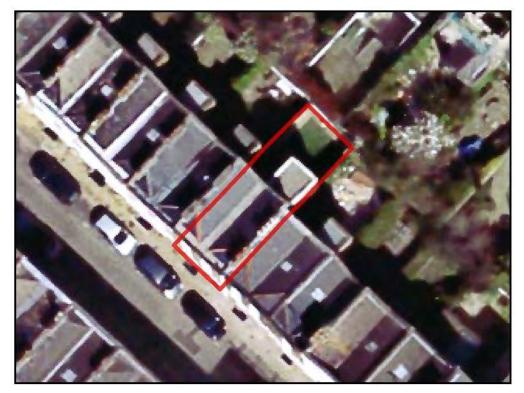


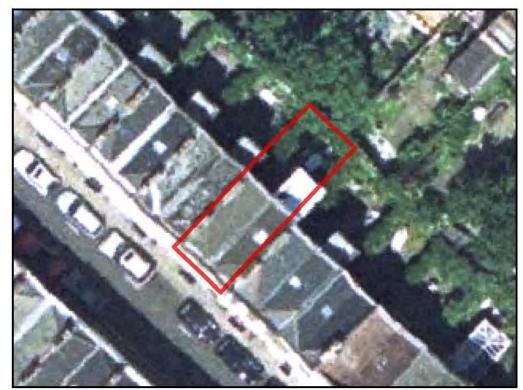


24 Seymour Walk, London, SW10 9NF, REF :PP/09/00115









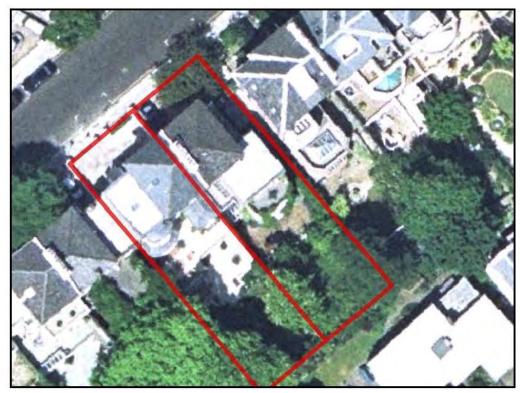


13 Tregunter Road, LONDON, SW10 9LS, REF: PP/09/00306 15 Tregunter Road, LONDON, SW10 9LS, REF: PP/09/01582









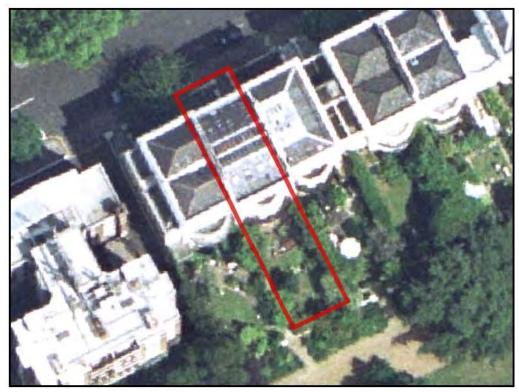


21 Kensington Park Gardens, London, W11 3HD, REF: PP/09/00535











4 Walton Place, London, SW3 1RH, REF: PP/09/00742











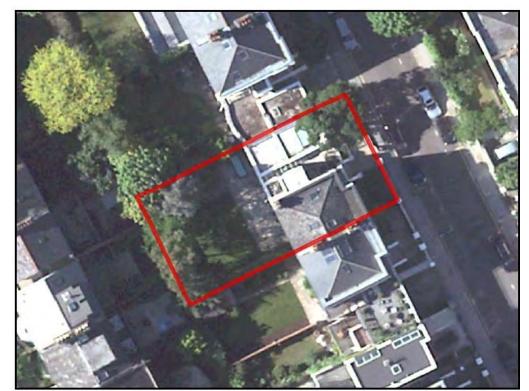
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17 Portland Road, London, W11 4LH, REF: PP/09/01898









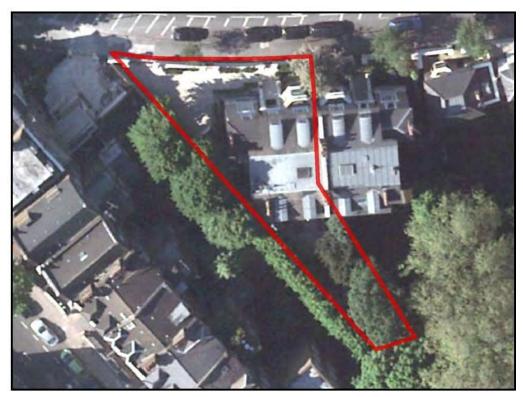


15 Addison Crescent, London, W14 8JR, REF: PP/09/02187







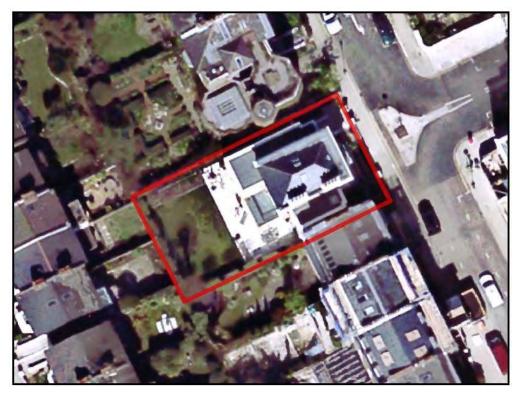




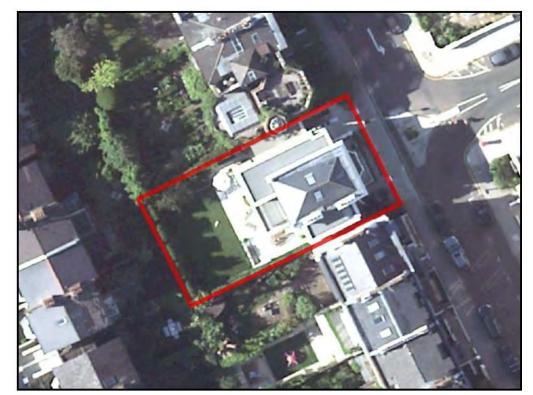
41 Clarendon Road, London, W11 4JB, REF:PP/09/02265











17 Ilchester Place, London, W14 8AA, REF: PP/09/02270











74 Palace Gardens Terrace, London, W8 4RR, REF: PP/09/02373











20 Alexander Square, London, SW3 2AX, REF: PP/09/02972











27 Astell Street, London, SW3 3RT, REF: PP/10/00001











41 Egerton Crescent, London, SW3 2EB, REF: PP/10/00854











26 Pelham Crescent, London, SW7 2NR, REF: PP/10/00989











29 Clarendon Road, London, W11 4JB, REF: PP/10/01191









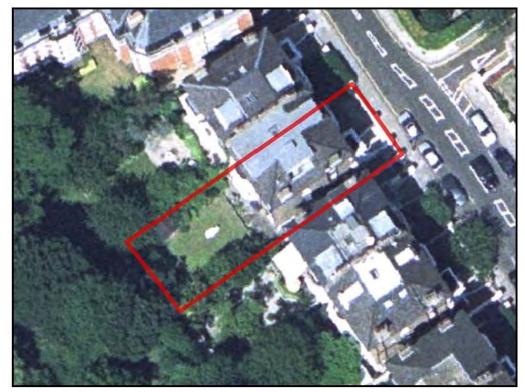


33 The Little Boltons, London, SW10 9LL, REF: PP/10/01208











52 Paultons Square, London, SW3 5DT, REF: PP/10/01502











9 Royal Crescent, London, W11 4SL, REF: PP/10/01556











20 Paultons Square, London, SW3 5AP, REF: PP/10/02136 21 Paultons Square, London, SW3 5AP, REF: PP/10/01714











12 Kensington Gate & 46 Queen's Gate Mews, London, W8 5NA, REF: PP/10/02234











14 Campden Hill Square, London, W8 7JY, REF: PP/10/03645











18 Lansdowne Road, London, W11 3LL, REF: PP/10/03845











48 Palace Gardens Terrace, London, W8 4RR, REF: PP/11/00229





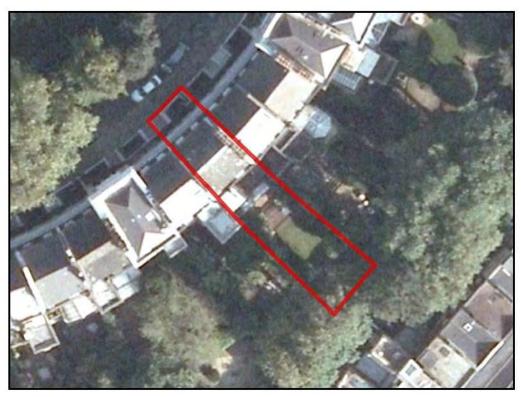






38 Egerton Crescent, London, SW3 2EB, REF: PP/11/02336











12 Chelsea Park Gardens, London, SW3 6AA, REF: PP/11/02473











13 Argyll Road, London, W8 7DA, REF:PP/11/02608











Basement/ground Floor Flat, 32 Oakley Street, London, SW3 5NT, REF: PP/11/02675



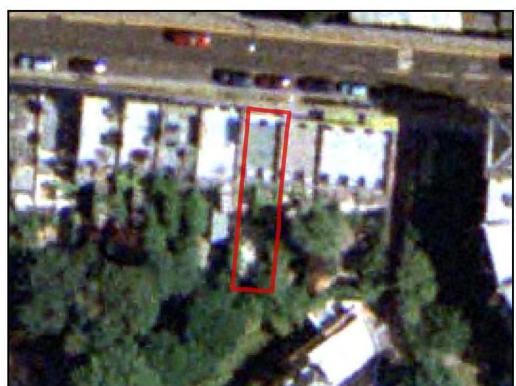








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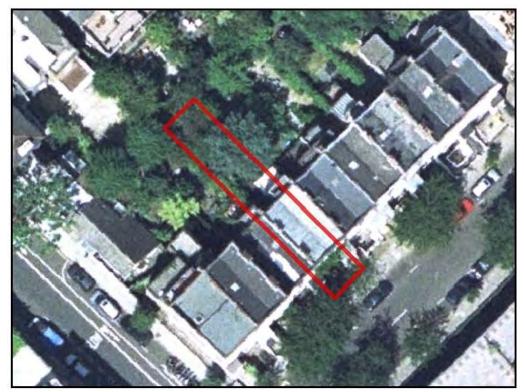


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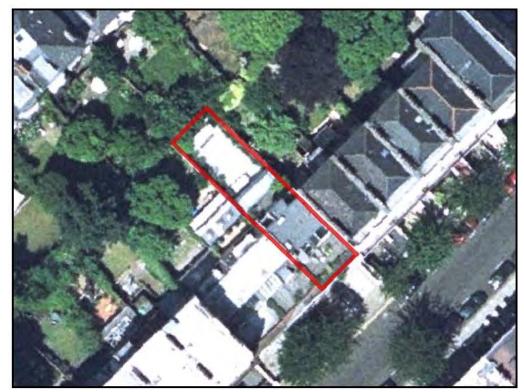


54 Cathcart Road, London, SW10 9JQ, REF: PP/11/03622





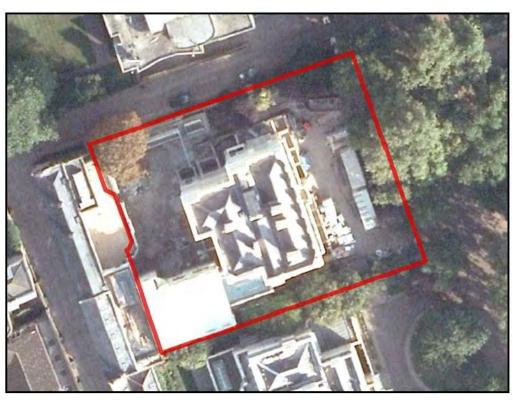


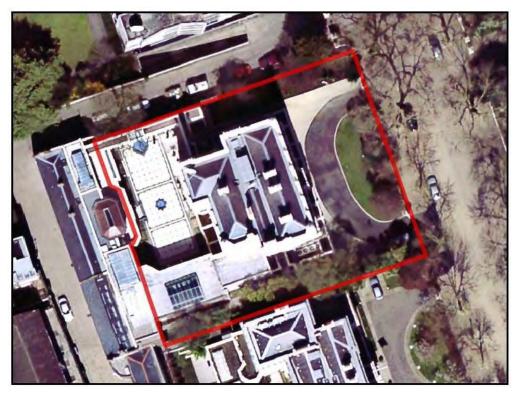


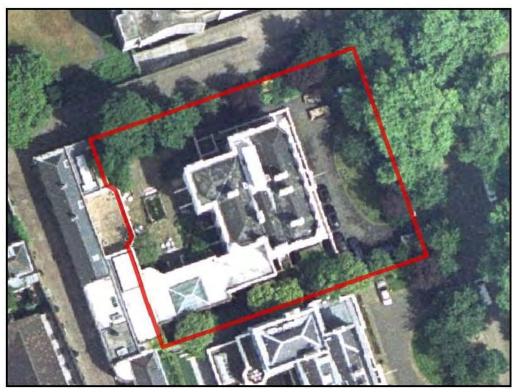


24 Kensington Palace Gardens, London, W8 4QQ, REF: PP/11/03635





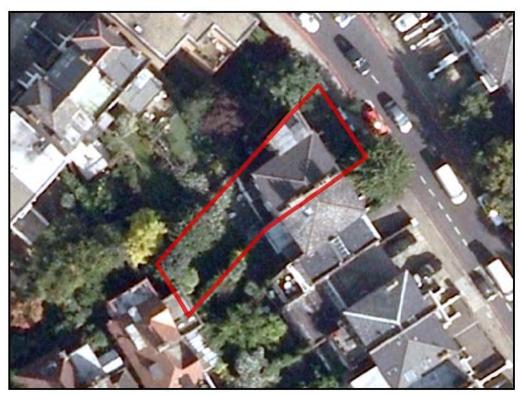






2 Edith Grove, London, SW10 0NW, REF: PP/11/03690











23 Egerton Terrace, London, SW3 2BU, REF: PP/11/03746











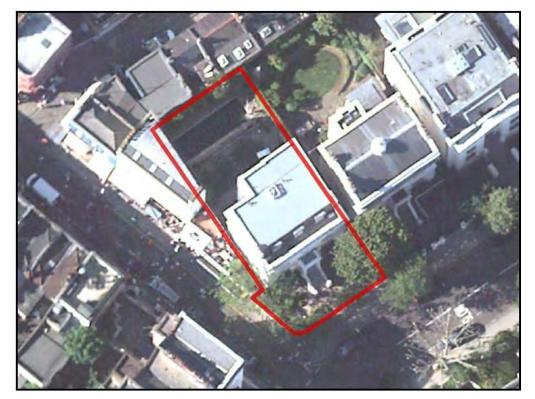
52 Chepstow Villas, London, W11 2QY, REF: PP/11/04230











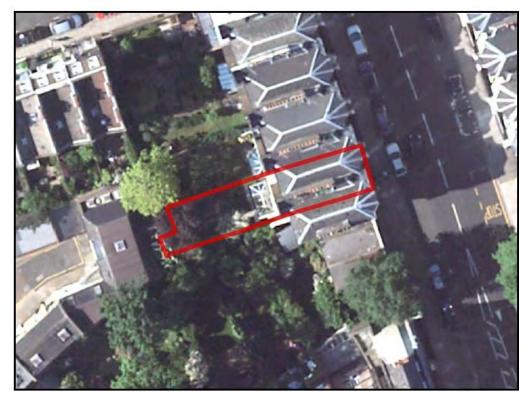
1 St Ann's Villas, London, W11 4RU, REF: PP/12/00077









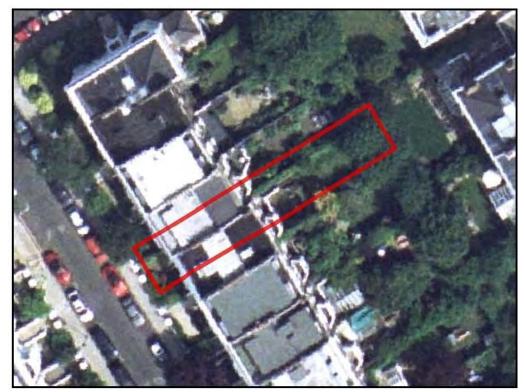


49 Argyll Road, London, W8 7DA, REF: PP/12/00090











28 Abbotsbury Road, London, W14 8ER, REF: PP/12/00121











62 Addison Road, London, W14 8JJ, REF : PP/12/00291











46 Egerton Crescent, London, SW3 2ED, REF : PP/07/03535











62 Cadogan Lane, London, SW1X 9DY, REF: PP/12/00667











8 Brunswick Gardens, London, W8 4AJ, REF: PP/12/01748 10 Brunswick Gardens, London, W8 4AJ, REF: PP/12/00343











34 St Ann's Villas, London, W11 4RS, REF: PP/12/02097











33 Danvers Street, London, SW3 5AY, REF: PP/12/02257











27 Chepstow Villas, London, W11 3DR, REF: PP/12/03106











5 Addison Crescent, London, W14 8JP, REF: PP/12/04958









