

## **Basements Working Group**

**Monday 18<sup>th</sup> February, 3.00 – 5.05, Kensington Town Hall**

**Present:** Councillor Pascall, Kevin O'Connor, Simon Haslam, Earl of Lytton, Sophia Lambert, Dr. James Thompson, Marina Murray, Amanda Frame, Clive Wilson, Penelope Tollitt, Preeti Gulati

**Notes of the last meeting:** were agreed subject to corrections on attendance.

### **Actions from last meeting:**

- SH tabled photos of Hyde Park and Bloomsbury and Cavendish squares that have basement car parks, demonstrating mature tree planting over the top.
- SH also tabled a note from Adam Hollis, a tree expert with whom he works, on depth of soil to support trees.
- SH tabled photos of a case on which he had worked where the rear garden was small, and hard paved, where a single multi-stemmed tree was proposed that would make a significant improvement to the character of the garden.
- SH agreed to circulate all this material by email.

### **Policy discussion:**

#### **b. Single storey:**

- Justification on limiting the size of the basement to reduce residential impact would be stronger if expressed as cubic metres, but 'single storey' is more understandable than cubic meters. Key issue is to avoid 'disproportionate impact on residential amenity'.
- Defining single storey: various suggestions including 4m, and the 'no subdivision' rule.
- 'Additional storey' – wide views, including measure from street not back garden, allow one more under 'original' basements, or allow only under 'semi-basements'. No consensus
- Large – generally accepted there needed to be elbow room for exceptional circumstances, but should be more exceptional than in the draft policy, and its not a matter of the size of the site, but the accessibility of the site. Question if developments like DeVeres 'needed' more than one basement – fairly strong view for not having any exceptions, single storey only.

#### **c. Trees:**

- General agreement that could strengthen to 'improve' not just 'not prejudice'.

#### **d. Heritage assets**

- Agreed 'substantial harm' was the wrong test
- Agreed better to be explicit in the policy that basements under listed buildings will not be permitted, but be clear what 'under' means – party walls?
- Questioned if should have basements under gardens of listed buildings.
- Clarify status of communal gardens in relation to heritage assets

#### **Other comments: Basements under footways**

- Should not be allowed if established through 'cut and cover' because of the inconvenience to residents

### **Actions:**

- No specific actions were identified