

Basements Working Group

Wednesday 20th February, 11.00 – 1.35, Kensington Town Hall

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

Notes of the last meeting: had not been prepared

Actions from last meetings:

- AF circulated copies of photographs of basements in gardens from property magazines

Policy discussion:

e. Character:

- in relation to garden character this should specify that it means 'green and leafy' and not hard paved, otherwise about right

f. Lightwells etc in the street scene:

- Is 'visible from the street' really what we mean? What about out of site but still with an impact on character?
- Do we mean 'the street' or the 'stretch of street with a coherent character' or streetscene?
- If we do mean 'not visible' should any wall or hedge that is screening the lightwell making it not visible be conditioned to remain in perpetuity?
- 'where they are a feature of the street' – should that say original, traditional or (probably best) positive feature of the street, to avoid repeating 'ugly' light wells.

g. SUDs

- The 1m soil is for both suds reasons and for landscape reasons. After much debate it was felt the policy framework would be clearer if suds and landscape were separated out into separate policies
- Should the 1m be prescriptive? No real consensus, but if the basement is not covered by 1m soil, and uses other suds, then there could be character/appearance issues with the basement, so 1m soil is a pragmatic way to ensure this doesn't happen?
- Problem of 1m soil being subsequently paved was not resolved – but the policy will not achieve a perfect world, just a better one. Could it be conditioned to be permeable in perpetuity? Would this result in enforcement issues?

h. Carbon

- Agreed to defer to a meeting at which JW is present

i. Traffic management

- Considerable discussion about cumulative impact. No perfect solution. Need to dovetail the planning and highways legal frameworks as much as possible.
- Need to clarify what the 'approval' is from the Highways team of the traffic plan prior to submitting the application – 'consulted', 'vetted'?
- Minority view that this strays beyond the realm of planning

j. Noise, dust etc

- As for i

k. Structure

- Party wall legal framework designed to be facilitative not punitive, and revolves around the 'unnecessary inconvenience' – ie. accepts that construction causes inconvenience.
- awards are very limited. Party wall surveyor can only get involved with those parts of the construction that relate to the party structure – they can't be involved with the rest. Be careful not to oversell what a resident can achieve through the party wall system. But accepted this is not the job of planning
- Role of the HSE?
- Strong view that the policy or supporting text should refer to the level of damage that is acceptable – although there are some pragmatic problems with this in some situations. If set at level 2, 'dumbing down' those situations where level 1 could be achieved. Further thought needed on how to deal with this.
- In addition to specifying that the engineer must be named and chartered, need also to do the same thing with temporary works engineer and the temporary works co-ordinator.
- Errors in both Arup and Baxters on party wall matters.

Actions:

- JL to find out more about how Grosvenor deal with the 'level 1 level 2' issue.
- Date of next meeting to be fixed around JW's diary, probably next week or week after.