

Barnett, Jessica: PC-Plan

From: Michael Grazebrook
Sent: 26 March 2014 17:35
To: Planning Policy
Subject: Consultation on basements

Dear Sir,

I support your policy on basements. Basements are good, as long as the externalities are properly managed, and that seems to be the emphasis of your new measures. London needs more housing, and building down is surely the best way to get it.

I don't understand your restriction on only half of gardens being made into basements, why not the whole lot? (Irrelevant to me personally).

I don't think there should be a restriction to only two levels, but I do think that if someone wants to go deeper the standards must be higher, for example you might require a high standard of geographical and structural surveys and measures to ensure neighbours are not inconvenienced by the longer / noisier construction times. For more than one story, one might also have a clear, simple regime of fines for breaches which could be shared with immediate neighbours as compensation for inconvenience.

Given property values and the wealth of home-owners, I expect most externalities could have a suitable technological solution. For example it should be possible to drastically cut noise levels, and I'm sure there are solutions where spoil could be collected in many small containers, stored within a house, with parking suspensions only for an hour every other day or something like that.

Indeed I believe the public good would be well served if we allowed extensions to be built under adjacent pavements, subject to sufficient standards (structural, traction etc). The council could monetise the planning gain, the pavement surface could be made translucent (e.g. with cobble-like glass), and - if done artistically - it could enhance the character of the area.

In short - be wise, tackle the externalities, let good be done as long as it doesn't harm others.

Yours,
Michael Grazebrook