

## **Barrell Tree Consultancy - Jeremy Barrell - BSc FArborA DipArb CBiol FICFor FRICS**

**Review of proposed planning policy changes published by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and advise on the reliability of the tree related information.**

### **Executive Summary**

- The Alan Baxter Report contains specific and detailed comments on tree issues; however **there is no record of that advice being verified by a qualified tree professional or of the author having any tree-related credentials.**
- The apparent failure of RBKC, through Alan Baxter Associates, to seek professional advice on the tree issues, has resulted in a misleading position based on lay opinion to influence the emerging policy.
- There is a significant body of industry experience and circumstantial evidence to refute the contention that there is some sort of limitation on the extent that basements could extend beneath the canopies of trees.
- **There is no tree-related technical evidence to support the contention that there has to be a limit on how much of a garden can have basement construction beneath it.**
- **There is no evidence to support or reasons to justify the limitation of basement areas outside a building footprint because it limits large tree and shrub planting.**
- As the area of basement coverage increases, it is the rootable volume of soil that becomes critical, not a simplistic measure of area.
- There is no evidence to confirm or prove that tunnelling under trees automatically affects their health or stability. Indeed, there is plenty of evidence that this can be done and it is done on a regular basis in the context of moving mature trees, which is the only practical reality check that we have.
- In the face of this lack of evidence that 'it cannot be done', it seems more appropriate to adopt a stance of placing the burden on the applicant to prove it can be done rather than dismissing the possibility outright.
- In this context, the onus would be on the applicant to provide the investigation details and the supporting technical analysis to demonstrate that the project is feasible. This is no different to planning for any above-ground development near trees, where careful excavations to identify the location of important roots are routinely used to inform the precise extent of new development.