

Basements: Informal WCGS Notes November 2016

Introduction

Basement development is increasing in Chiswick as in other parts of London but so far WCGS has dealt with very few basement applications. In doing so the Society would consider the impact of the completed development on the street-scene/character of the area and the amenity of neighbours.

Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) such as LB Hounslow have to consider applications in light of local, London-wide and national planning policy. Negative impacts of the development of a temporary nature such as disturbance during construction are not normally considered as grounds for refusal within these policies. LPAs may, however, apply Conditions to the planning consent that are intended to mitigate such impact.

Local Plan

LB Hounslow's Local Plan was adopted in September 2015. Policy SC7 covers basements.

http://www.hounslow.gov.uk/index/environment_and_planning/planning/policy/local_plan.htm

Text extracts taken from Local Plan

Policy SC7: Residential Extensions and Alterations

Our approach

We will support the extension and improvement of residential properties provided all extensions and alterations (including outbuildings, [basements](#), and the construction of paving and driveways) maintain the character of the area, and do not result in harm to the amenity of neighbouring residents, existing and future occupants, and the built and natural environment.

We will achieve this by

- (a) Requiring that all alterations and additions do not harm the existing character and appearance of the building and its context by ensuring development has regard to relevant design guidance and standards set out in Supplementary Planning Documents;
- (b) Ensuring development responds to and reflects the design recommendations in the Urban Character and Context Study and Conservation Area Appraisals;
- (c) [Preparing guidance for basement extensions in the form of a Supplementary Planning Document](#); and
- (d) Using planning conditions to prevent the use of outbuildings or extensions as self-contained dwellings.

We will expect development proposals to

- (e) Complement the original building, harmonise with adjoining properties and maintain the character of the general street scene and the character and amenity of private spaces (including rear gardens);
- (f) Minimise harm to neighbouring residents (such as avoiding an unacceptable loss of daylight/sunlight, outlook or by creating an unacceptable sense of enclosure) and future occupants through high quality design;
- (g) In the case of an extension or outbuilding development, have regard to the quality, character, materials and scale of the principal building, be subordinate to the existing building, and not over develop the site in terms of mass and density;
- (h) Respect the surrounding established context including the quality and size of gardens.
- (i) Have regard to further design guidance as set out in Supplementary Planning Documents, and design recommendations in the Urban Context and Character Study and Conservation Area Appraisals; and
- (j) Have regard to the design standards set out in the Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents where the development of outbuildings, extensions and alterations are carried out under householder permitted development rights.

Supplementary Planning documents

Reference to preparing planning guidance in the form of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is made in relation to a number of the policies in the Local Plan. No draft SPD is yet available for Policy SC7.

Meanwhile, some idea of the issues that may be covered can be found in the updated SPD produced in April 2016 by LB Kensington and Chelsea. In addition to planning considerations, it refers to Building Control and other issues of relevance to neighbours such as Party Wall Agreements.

<https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/supplementary-planning/basements-spd-april-2016>

Application Assessment

The following extracts are taken from a LB Hounslow Planning Officer's Delegated Report on an application for a basement in Chiswick which was approved in September 2015. This provides an indication of how such applications are considered. Other examples of recent decisions concerning basements in Chiswick can be found on the LB Hounslow planning website
http://planning.hounslow.gov.uk/planning_lists_main.aspx

Text extracts taken from Report

6.0 ASSESSMENT

6.1 The main planning issues to consider are:

- ♣ The impact on the appearance and character of the building and conservation area
- ♣ The impact upon the living conditions of neighbouring properties and future occupants

♣ Flood risk

The impact on the living conditions of neighbours and the future occupants

6.12 Policy SC7 (Residential Extensions and Alterations) of the Local Plan outlines that the Council will support the extension and improvement of residential properties provided all extensions and alterations (including outbuildings, basements and the construction of paving and driveways) do not result in harm to the amenity of neighbouring existing and future residents or future occupants. The Council expect extensions to minimise harm to neighbouring residents, for example by avoiding an unacceptable loss of daylight/sunlight, outlook or by creating an unacceptable sense of enclosure and future occupants through high quality design.

6.13 Given the subterranean nature of the development proposed, no harm would be caused to neighbouring properties by means of overshadowing or enclosure. The proposed basement would not accommodate any primary living, with the kitchen and bedrooms remaining on the upper floors of the house. The extension is therefore felt to satisfy any concerns in relation to the living conditions of future residents. This will be ensured by condition and any self-contained living or subdivision of the house would require further explicit permission.

6.14 A number of objections were received from residents raising concerns in relation to **noise, pollution and disturbance as a result of construction**. It is accepted that subterranean construction and excavation can be more intensive than other forms of residential extension. This would not however represent a valid reason to refuse the planning application given these effects would be temporary. Conditions will however be imposed in order to limit working hours to those outlined within the Control of Pollution Act 1974 (8am-6pm Monday to Friday, 9am-1pm Saturday with no works on Sunday or bank holidays) and to ensure the contractor is a member of the 'Considerate Constructors Scheme'. These measures are felt to reasonably mitigate the impacts of intensive construction on neighbouring living conditions.

6.15 The proposed development is a residential extension and would not create any new bedrooms within the house. There would therefore be no foreseeable traffic and highways pressures placed upon the surrounding area as a result of the development.

6.16 A number of objections centred on the **structural impact** the proposed development would have on the surrounding properties and the potential for subsidence and other forms of damage to neighbouring properties. Whilst these are important considerations, these matters are ensured by Building Control through relevant Building Regulations.

9.1 CONDITIONS

7 No development shall be carried out until such time as the person carrying out the work is a member of the Considerate Constructors Scheme and its code of practice, and the details of the membership and contact details are clearly displayed on the site so that they can be easily read by members of the public.

REASON: To ensure the proposal does not adversely impact on the amenity of the neighbouring properties in accordance with Local Plan policies CC2 (Urban Design and Architecture) and SC7 (Residential Extensions and Alterations).

8 No excavation or construction work shall be undertaken prior to the submission and approval in writing by the Local Planning Authority, of a Construction Method Statement, which is certified by a qualified professional giving details of excavation, temporary works and construction techniques, including details of potential impacts on neighbouring land based on assessment of the geology and hydrology of the area.

REASON: To protect the living conditions of neighbouring residents and minimise flood risk in accordance with adopted Local Plan policies CC2 (Urban Design and Architecture), SC7 (Residential Extensions and Alterations) and EQ3 (Flood risk and Surface Water Management).

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Chairman, WCGS, November 2016