

FROM The Princess Alicia di Sirignano  
add address

Mr Jonathan Wade, Head of Policy  
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Dear Mr Wade

**PARTIAL REVIEW OF THE CORE STRATEGY: POLICY CL 7 - BASEMENTS**

I understand that the Borough Council is consulting on a revised basement excavation policy. As a Chelsea resident who has lived next to one of the biggest basement digs in the south of the Borough, I have first hand experience of what is involved and would like to make the following observations. I would also like to request an opportunity to attend the Examination in Public of the Partial Review policies when, in due course, it takes place.

Please note that I support Council's proposed revisions to its Core Strategy. I welcome, in particular, the recognition of a need for greater limits to the extent and depth of basement excavation and believe that this approach is sound. However certain ways, I consider that the Council should be going further and that some aspects of the proposed policies need further revision. I set out below a key change that I would like to see.

Policy CL7 a. basement development should not... exceed a maximum of 50% of each garden or open part of the site. The unaffected garden must be in a single area and where relevant should form a continuous area with other neighbouring gardens. Exceptions may be made on large sites; and

Policy CL7 b. basement development should.....not comprise more than one storey. Exceptions may be made on large sites;

I would like to focus specifically on the proposal that where gardens are large, developers might be allowed to excavate more than half of the garden and go deeper than one floor. The Council's reasoned justification for this is that, with larger gardens, the nuisances associated with excavation will take place further from residents and so be more acceptable.

May I say, on the basis of the experience of living for nearly three years next door to a very large excavation in a large garden, that the reasoning is not necessarily correct. What it fails to acknowledge is that with a 'big dig', everything is to a larger scale. All the equipment is huge. The skip-loads of spoil and all the deliveries are more numerous. And all the traffic congestion is more frequent.

This means, in turn, that the impact on nearby residents is not reduced, it is increased – and it is more long-lasting. Noise, dust, hammering, drilling, pollution and diesel engines are all more intrusive. It is like living next to wartime, except that the blitz takes place by day rather than by night. This is very wearing and it is not fair or reasonable.

One way to make this point clear to the Inspector would be for the Council to call Mr Mehaffy to give evidence. He will have a log of the times he was called out to visit Sloane House on account of excess nuisance. This would give a very precise picture of how big digs are hell for those living nearby.

And one other thing. All this is new. Only since the great craze for basements began have householders in Chelsea had to suffer such affronts. Modernising a house in the days before excavation was far less of a nuisance to the neighbours. The Council's policy needs to reflect this change in building work. Why should members of the public be made to suffer for so long and to success excess in order to further a purely private interest?

Policies CL7 a & b need to be modified to reflect this new age by expressly excluding all exceptions that could lead to the construction of larger and deeper basements in larger residential gardens.

Yours sincerely

Alicia di Sirignano