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Director & Principal Consultant
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Mr K O'Connor
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Dear Mr O'Connor,

PLANNING POLICY REVIEW – 'TREES & BASEMENTS'.

I write regarding the above with specific reference to –

- '*Trees & Basements*', Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea (RBKC) dated February 2014,
- British Standard 5837: (2012) '*Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition & Construction – Recommendations*'.

I consider that I am well placed to offer the following advice on the basis of my qualifications and experience details of which can be found in my CV which is attached.



The purpose of the RBKC basement planning policy review appears to be to both resist and restrict proposals for basement extensions using arboricultural issues as a justification. I submit that there is no such arboricultural justification!

It is generally accepted that the majority of tree roots occur within the upper soil horizons; it is equally accepted that in some, exceptional, circumstances, rooting may extend to depths of 2-3 metres ie site specific circumstances dictate and there is no 'rule of thumb'; thus proposals for basement construction must be considered on their own site specific circumstances. Where a suitable rootable soil volume can be maintained there is no arboricultural justification for **ANY** limitation on subterranean construction! Further, it is generally accepted that trees will tolerate some root loss without adverse effect depending upon extent; again a matter for site specific consideration.

British Standard 5837: (2012) '*Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition & Construction – Recommendations*', Paragraph 7.6 '*Subterranean Construction*', deals specifically with the matter under consideration giving guidance as to the factors which must be taken into account. It concludes that, site specifics permitting, it is technically possible to construct within the Root Protection Area (RPA) of any subject tree(s) and that such construction needs to result in **NO** limitation as regards new planting. Indeed much of the thrust of the Standard concerns itself with how, when specific site circumstances permit, the RPA might be intruded within whilst minimising any arboricultural impact. Paragraph 7.6.1 of the Standard states –

“It might be technically possible to form the excavation by undermining the soil beneath the RPA”.

Clearly, this is an acknowledgement that there is no 'hard and fast' rule and flexibility based upon the specifics of a particular site/proposal is the only reasonable means by which any application for basement development can be determined.



In conclusion therefore, I respectfully submit that it appears that trees are being used unreasonably as a means to unnecessarily resist/restrict subterranean development and that such a 'broad brush' policy is likely to result in numerous, unsuccessful planning appeals, all of which will place an unnecessarily greater burden upon the limited resources available to RBKC; hardly best use of resources, site specifics have to dictate!! I further submit that any rigid policy which has no regard for the associated, site specific variables is inappropriate, unjustified and untenable. It is therefore my recommendation that RBKC adopt a more flexible approach by placing the onus upon any applicant to prove their particular proposal can be achieved without any great arboricultural impact.

I hope that this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

John

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Encs: CV



Curriculum Vitae

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PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Sheffield/Hallam University, MSc in Environmental Management (Distinction), 2005-2006

Nottingham Trent/Derby Universities, Masters in Business Administration (MBA) 2002-2005

Merrist Wood College, RFS Professional Diploma in Arboriculture, 1992-1993

Merrist Wood College, National Diploma in Arboriculture (Distinction) (B Tec), 1987-1990

Cardiff University/Bond Solon, Expert Witness Certificate, 2007

Lantra Certificate – Professional Tree Inspection, 2007

CAREER

2007 - Arboricultural Consultant

1994 – 2007 - Arboricultural Manager for Derby City Council.

1990 – 1994 – Tree & Landscape Officer for Wycombe DC

1988 – 1989 – Assistant Arboricultural Officer for Bolton MBC

1981 – 1987 – Arborist for Bolton MBC

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD)

The maintenance of an active CPD record is a strict membership requirement of the following professional organisations to which I subscribe –

- The Arboricultural Association
- The Institute of Chartered Foresters
- The Institute of Expert Witness's
- The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management
- International Society of Arboriculture

MEMBERSHIP OF PROFESSIONAL BODIES

Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Foresters

Chartered Environmentalist

Chartered Arboriculturist

Fellow, past National Chair, Trustee and Registered Consultant of the Arboricultural Association

Member of Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management

International Society of Arboriculture

Licentiate of City & Guilds Institute

Arboricultural Association Representative on National Tree Safety Group.

Past Assessor for the Professional Diploma in Arboriculture & Institute of Chartered Foresters

Professional Membership applications.

PUBLICATIONS



Numerous articles and papers in academic journals and trade literature.

