

31 January 2013
RBKC Basement Consultation

The Savills logo consists of the word "savills" in a lowercase, sans-serif font, colored red, set against a solid yellow rectangular background.

The Policy Team
The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

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Dear Sir/Madam,

ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA – BASEMENT DEVELOPMENT CONSULTATION

Thames Water Utilities Ltd (Thames Water) Property Services function is now being delivered by Savills (UK) Limited as Thames Water's appointed supplier. Savills are therefore pleased to respond to the above consultation on behalf of Thames Water. The comments provided below follow on from previous discussions between the Royal Borough and Thames Water in 2012.

We welcome the opportunity to comment on the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea's draft policy on basements and partial review of its core strategy. As you are doubtless aware, a large number of basements have experienced flooding from combined sewers in this area following heavy rainfall – especially the widespread sewer flooding that occurred in July 2007. The problem is a complex one and Thames Water has spent the last 4 years investigating it and has now identified a programme to alleviate this problem. Thames Water are currently in discussion with its economic regulator, Ofwat, about taking this programme forward. Further details can be found at www.thameswater.co.uk/counterscreek.

As a sewerage undertaker, Thames Water has two key interests in this consultation document:

- Firstly, Thames Water are concerned that the sheer scale of subterranean development in the Royal Borough is impacting on the ability of rainwater to soak away into the ground, resulting in more rainfall in their sewers when it rains heavily; and
- Secondly, due to the depth of some of the basements this makes them highly vulnerable to many types of flooding, in particular where development takes place close to and below the depth of large trunk sewers. The depth of some basements also places them at risk of groundwater ingress.

With the above two key concerns in mind, the following comments are made on the consultation document.

Paragraph 1.14 – This states “a lower proportion of neighbours appeared concerned about the impact of basement development on flooding and drainage”. Thames Water's experience from recent public meetings is that those customers that have been affected by sewer flooding are very concerned about basement development.

Box 1 Paragraph 34.3.59 - Residents often ask Thames Water to comment on whether a basement 'not exceeding 75% of the garden' is sufficient for surface water drainage. Thames Water's view is that it depends very much on the scale of future subterranean development. It is known that 'urban creep' (the loss of permeable area) has been significant across the Royal Borough over the last 40 years – Thames Water's own research shows that around 20% of green space has been lost during this time. This rate of urban creep has had a significant affect on the performance of the sewerage network. Therefore, and because of the specific sewer flooding risk in this area, Thames Water has concerns about any development taking place outside of the current footprint of buildings.

Box 1 Paragraph 34.3.72 – Thames Water understand that some developers have interpreted the 1m cover of soil or permeable material to mean increasing the level of the back garden and providing raised flower beds, which would not allow natural drainage of surface water. Notwithstanding the depth of permeable cover that is provided, Thames Waters key concern is that the surface remains permeable to reduce surface water run-off.

Box 1 Paragraph 34.3.77 - Thames Water is currently working with the Royal Borough comparing the flood risk identified through its Surface Water Management Plan and Flood Risk Assessment with the risk of sewer flooding identified from our hydraulic model of the sewerage network. Thames Water would expect that this work will lead to the reclassification of Critical Drainage Areas and Flood Risk Zones in some cases, particularly in areas in close proximity to their trunk sewerage network.

Box 1 Paragraph 34.3.77 - Under this paragraph reference is made to the need for installation of a 'positive pumped device' within areas at risk of flooding. The text should be revised to make this requirement applicable to all basements as sewers are designed to surcharge to just below cover level and as such all subterranean development is at risk, this would be consistent with the guidance contained in Part H of the Building Regulations. It is recommended that planning conditions are used on applications for basement development to ensure provision of such devices. Should such conditions not be used then, as a minimum, informatives should be attached highlighting the need for such devices to be installed in order to protect the property.

Policy CL7 (a) - As stated above, because of the scale of subterranean development in the Royal Borough Thames Water are concerned that any development outside of existing building structures will contribute to urban creep and increased surface water run-off.

Paragraph 4.13 - If the Flood Risk Assessment in the Basement Impact Assessment is to 'take account of climate change' more guidance needs to be provided including the time horizon, which emissions scenario has been used and which data (UKCP09 for example).

Paragraph 4.1.4 - The National SuDS Standards and the London Plan section 4A.14 set out a hierarchy for the drainage of surface water and a preference for sustainable urban drainage. It would be helpful if the Sustainable Urban Drainage report is specifically required to comply with the latter and the former when it takes effect.

Paragraph 5.3-5.4 - Given the loss of permeable area that has occurred across the Royal Borough over the last 40 years and the strain that this now puts the sewerage network under in this particular area following heavy rainfall, Thames Water's view is that it is essential that the Royal Borough makes a direction under Article 4 of the GPDO to remove permitted development rights for basements. Within the consultation document it is stated that an Article 4 direction could apply to the whole Borough or to more targeted areas such as narrow streets. Should any Article 4 direction focus on targeted areas rather than the whole Borough then these areas should include Critical Drainage Areas and Flood Risk Zones 2 and 3.

Appendix C Section C.9 - It would be useful to set out how an individual Basement Impact Assessment should assess the cumulative affect of a new basement on groundwater.

Appendix C Section C.23 – Thames Water commend the requirement for a Flood Risk Assessment. As noted above, the current work on comparing the hydraulic model of the sewerage network with the surface water management plan needs to help redefine Flood Risk Zone 2, 3 and Critical Drainage Areas and

therefore influence when a Flood Risk Assessment is required and as set out in relation to Paragraph 4.13 further guidance is required about climate change.

Appendix C Section C.25 - As noted above, due to the impact of urban creep in this area over the last 40 years, Thames Water consider it essential for basement development to be limited to within the footprint of existing buildings in Flood Risk zones 2, 3 and Critical Drainage Areas. Reference needs to be made to the forthcoming National SuDS Standards and the London Plan section 4A.14.

I trust the above comments on behalf of Thames Water are considered. Should you wish to discuss any of the comments please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

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