

18 Feb 2013

RBKC Basement Working Group

Section 6.1 to 6.8 – Garden basement impact on garden character

- Arboricultural / garden study is needed as a factual basis for the proposed change.
- What is the aim? Is it to make the borough either greener, increase biodiversity or to increase the number of trees or mature trees?
- If one or more of the above is the aim then there are better ways of achieving this than coarsely limiting basement size. For example requiring a proposed garden with enhanced biodiversity/greenification/tree planting than existing – there is an opportunity to promote and enforce an increase in the desired direction.
- Once proposed the revised section should go out to public consultation as the change based on the new reasons was not part of the Dec 2012 draft policy.

Arboricultural input

Adam Hollis
MSc Arb MICFor CENV F Arbor A
Registered Consultant
Chartered Forester
Chartered Surveyor
Chartered Environmentalist
Landmark Trees
20 Broadwick Street
London W1F 8HT

- 90% of trees roots are found in the top 600mm of soil. i.e. the living part of the soil where there is oxygen and nutrient cycling microbes. There is comparatively little biological activity below this depth.
- All trees can live, support themselves structurally and grow to full size with 600mm depth of top soil. Some large trees, such as beech grow to maturity on much shallower soils on exposed, windswept downlands.
- Studies in the United States, where shade trees are prized, have shown that greater than 30% shade cover may be considered a disamenity. People like to live in optimally sunlit areas with dappled light, neither heavily shaded, nor with 100% direct sunlight.
- Large tree planting is of necessity limited to the corners / boundaries of the small gardens, typically found in the borough; i.e. such planting is likely to take place

within the undeveloped strips at the front and back of the property. The 15% provision already allows for such mature tree planting.

- The existing soil of London gardens is commonly made ground and other low fertility soil, lacking in bio diversity. Replacement soil will be more fertile and ultimately more bio diverse (attractive to roots and nutrient cycling microbes). With rare exceptions (e.g. Hampstead Heath, Richmond Park) the importation of topsoil to London will not displace important native soil and microbes.

BS 5837 already provides guidance and the Council's SPD, a policy framework with which to retain and protect existing trees through development