



building on success

Basements Development Data

Partial Review of the Core Strategy

July 2013



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA

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Background

- 1.1 There has been a growing trend to construct basements in the Borough as a means of extending accommodation. Basements are also built as part of both new residential and commercial developments (however, this is not a new trend). Land values in this Borough are very high and in some locations are the highest in the country. The built environment is largely historic with 70% of the Borough designated conservation areas and about 4,000 listed buildings. The dense built environment coupled with its historic character limits the scope to extend properties above ground. This has led to a growing number of developments below ground and this document presents data in relation to applications which have a basement element associated with them.

Methodology

- 1.2 The data has been collated by searching the planning applications database for certain key words such as 'subterranean', 'basements', 'light well', 'swimming pool' etc. The search cannot distinguish development by their size and there can be great variations in the size and scale of the applications. The data also does not differentiate between basements built as an extension or those that are part of a redevelopment or new development. Random manual checking of this data has been undertaken for quality control but as each application is not checked manually there is a margin of error. However the data does represent a fair picture of the number of developments which have an element of associated basement development. The description of development has been checked to filter out those basement developments that are more than a single storey to understand scale of the issues around size of development.
- 1.3 Basements are a form of enlarging an existing dwelling and permitted development rights as set out in the GPDO (as amended) apply to basements as they do to above ground extensions. The planning department does not have data on basements constructed as permitted development. Therefore the data is supplemented with commencement of work notification for such developments which is required to be made to building control.

Planning Data

- 1.4 Table 1 shows that the number of planning applications with a basement element increasing significantly since the beginning of the monitoring period in 2001. Whilst there has been a steady increase since 2001 the numbers plateau around 180 from 2007 to 2011 with a dip in 2009 which may be linked to the economic recession. There is a significant increase in the number of cases registered in 2012 to 307. This information is also presented in Chart 1.

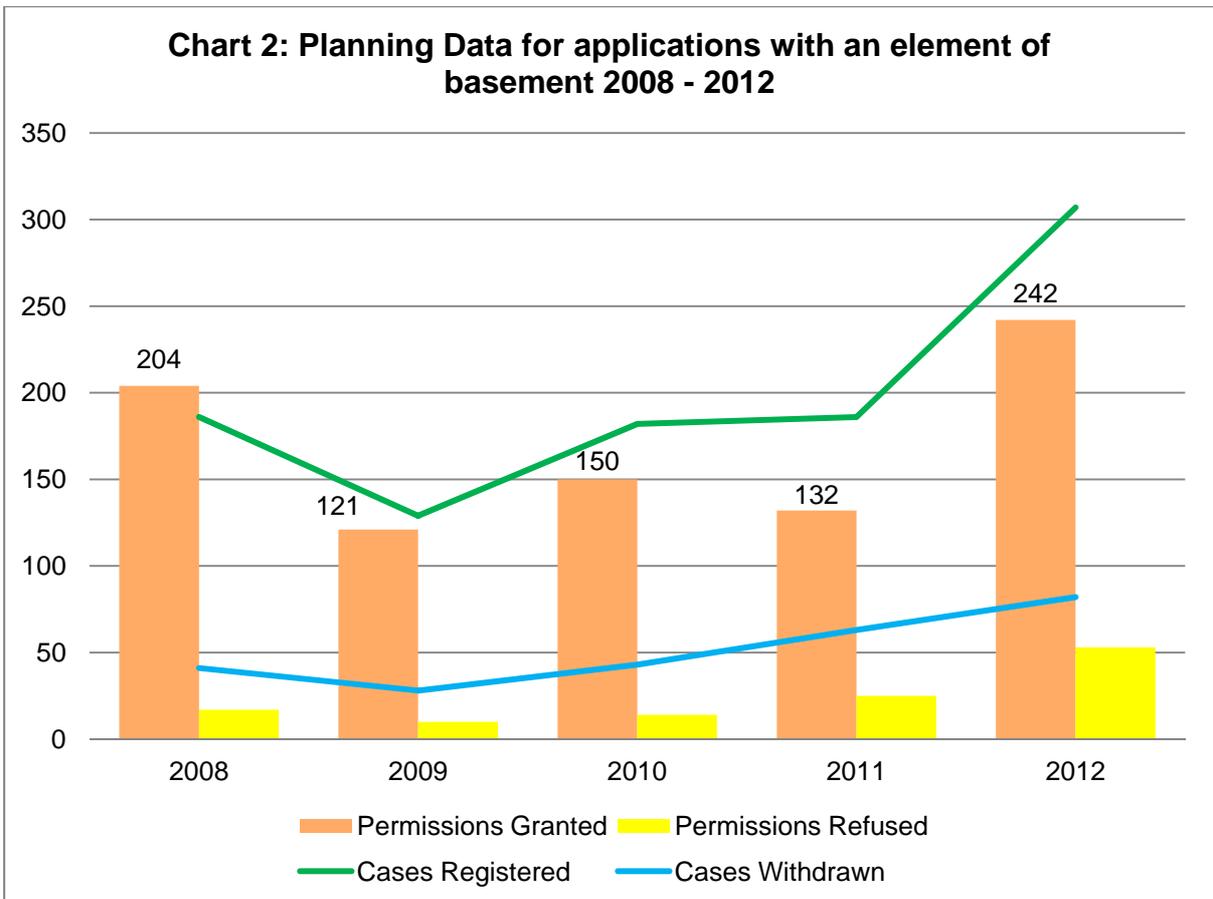
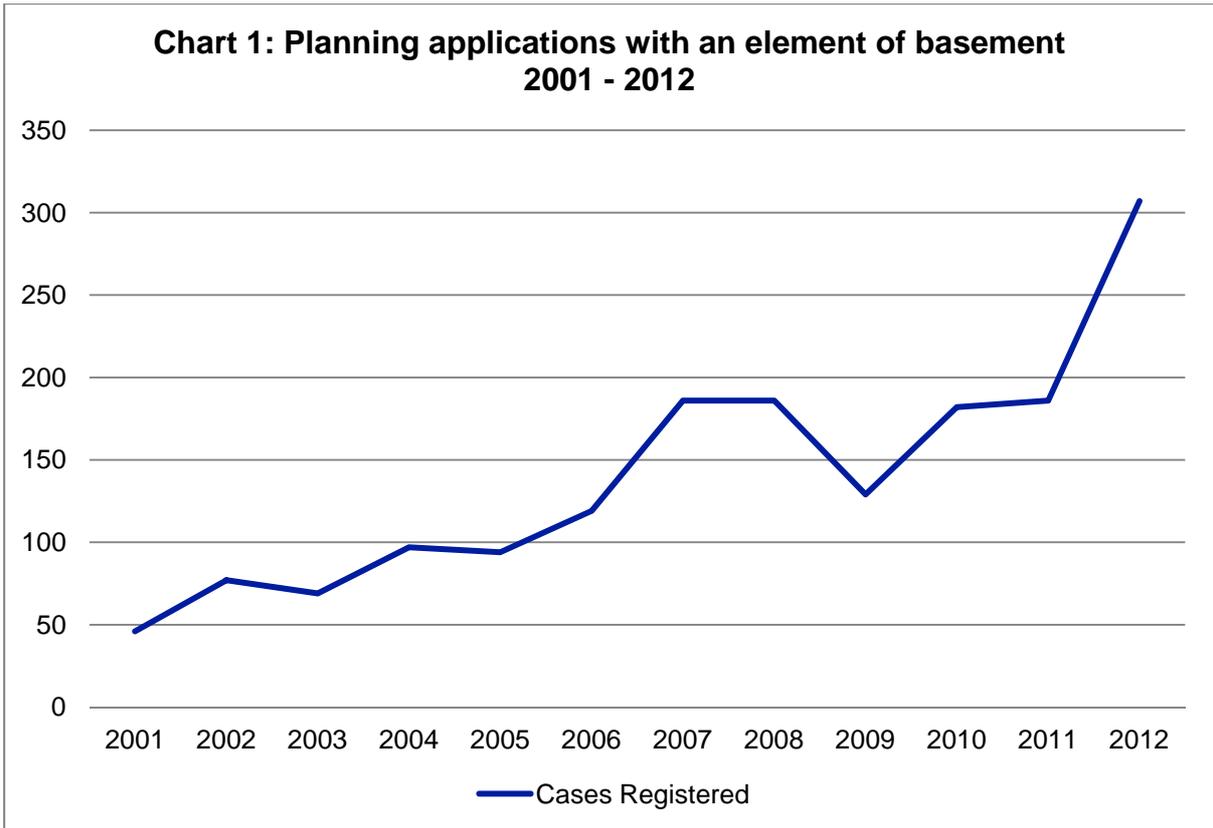
- 1.5 More detailed planning data is available on planning applications with a basement element since 2008. Table 2 shows that 204 basement applications were granted permission in 2008 following which the number of basement applications granted was much lower until 2011. In 2012 there was a significant increase in permissions granted compared to previous years. The table shows that a relatively small proportion of applications with an element of basements are refused each year. Chart 2 shows the increase in the basement applications since 2008.
- 1.6 A number of applications with a basement element are withdrawn every year (Table 2). The increase or decrease in numbers each year corresponds with the cases registered and decided each year.
- 1.7 An average of 198 applications with a basement element were registered between 2008 and 2012 and the average number of permissions were 170 for each of these years. In total between 2008 and 11th June 2013 when this report was compiled, 1,156 planning applications with a basement element were registered and 926 have been granted permission by the Council. In the same period 142 planning applications have been refused permission and 257 have been withdrawn.

Table 1: Data on number of planning applications 2001 – Feb 2013

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007*	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013 (11 June 2013)
Cases Registered	46	77	69	97	94	119	186	186	129	182	186	307	166

Table 2: Planning Data for applications with a basement element

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013 (11 June 2013)	Average (2008 - 2012)	Total (2008 – 11 June 2013)
Permissions Granted	204	121	150	132	242	77	170	926
Permissions Refused	17	10	14	25	53	23	24	142
Cases Withdrawn	41	28	43	63	82	0	51	257
Cases Pending	-	-	-	-	-	66		66
Cases Registered	186	129	182	186	307	166	198	1,156

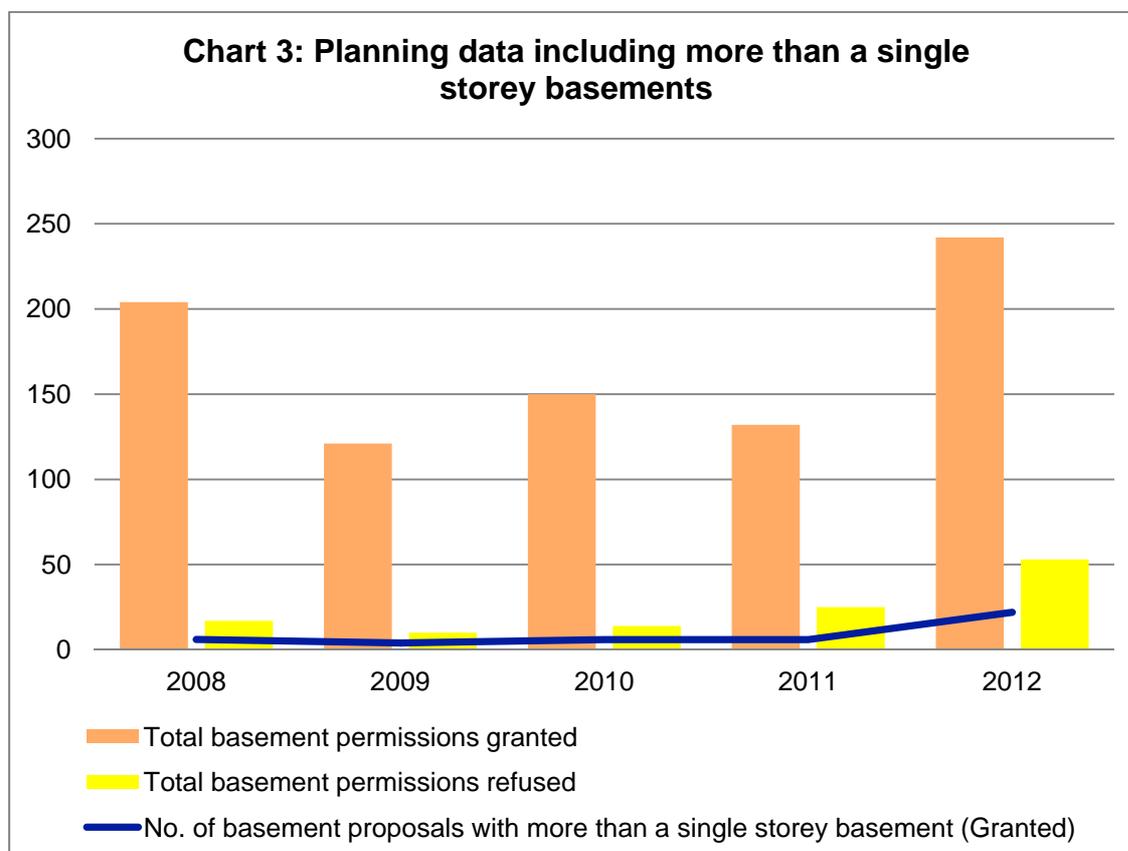


Note: Data for 2013 is not comparable to previous years as a full year's data is not yet available and therefore it is not presented in the chart.

1.8 Table 3 shows that the number of proposals comprising two or more levels is quite small compared to the overall numbers of basement proposals (Chart 3). There is a marked increase in the number of planning applications for two or more levels which were granted planning permission in 2012 compared to previous years.

Table 3: Two or more levels of basement developments granted permission

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013 (11 June 2013)	Average (2008 - 2012)	Total (2008 - 11 Jun 2013)
Two or more levels of basement development - Permitted	6	4	6	6	19	13	8	54
Two or more levels of basement development - Refused	0	0	0	0	3	2	1	5



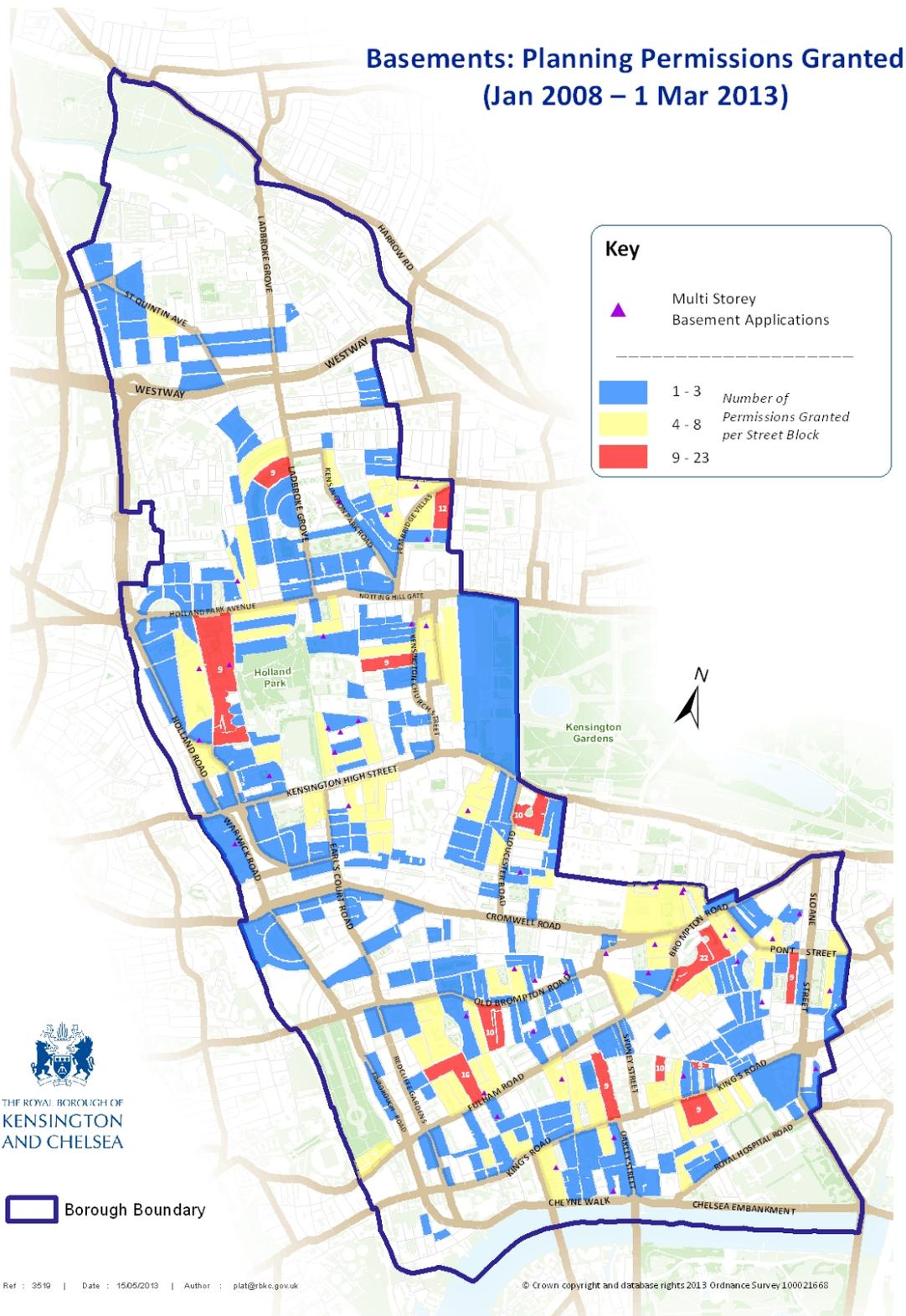
Spatial distribution of basement applications

- 1.9 Map 1 shows all planning applications that have been made to the Council with a basement element since 2008. It shows that the number of cases is significant in what is a small urban area of 3.5 sq miles. The cases are prevalent in all residential neighbourhoods in the Borough with the exception of areas where there is a high concentration of social housing, particularly in the north of the Borough. Areas that are characterised by institutional buildings such as in South Kensington with its museums and university buildings do not have any cases. Other gaps are in areas with mansion blocks, hotels, designated Employment Zones, garden squares or parks.
- 1.10 Map 2 shows the distribution of planning permissions within a block bounded by roads on all sides. There is a high proportion of blocks with 1 to 3 properties with planning permission involving a basement and a significant number of blocks with 4 to 8 properties with planning permission involving a basement. The area around Egerton Crescent in Knightbridge has 22 properties with planning permissions involving a basement.
- 1.11 The maps also show a distribution of proposals involving two or more levels of basements.

Map 1: Spatial Distribution of Basement Applications Jan 2008 – 1 Mar 2013



Map 2: Basement Planning Permissions: Jan 2001 – 1 Mar 2013



Permitted Development

- 1.12 In conservation areas a single level basement under an existing dwelling and extending 3 metres (for semi-detached and terraced house) or 4 metres (detached house) into the garden beyond the rear wall of the original house is considered permitted development. This is in accordance with Class A of the General Permitted Development Order (as amended). Class A has been amended in 2013 and allows extending properties up to 6 metres (for semi-detached and terraced house) or 8 metres (detached houses) into the rear garden in areas which are not designated as conservation areas. However in both cases the total area of ground covered by the buildings within the curtilage of the dwelling house (other than the original dwelling house) should not exceed 50% of the total area of the curtilage (excluding the ground area of the original dwelling house). The 2013 amendments are applicable until 30th May 2016.
- 1.13 In addition to the data available for planning applications, basement development also takes place as permitted development. Such proposals are normally subject to commencement of work notification to Building Control. This data from the Building Control department is presented in Table 4. It should be noted that Building Control is no longer a service exclusively provided by the Council and external private companies can be used by owners. Therefore the actual figures may be higher than those presented. Table 4 shows a marked increase in the commencement of work notifications in 2011 and 2012.

Basements built as permitted development

Table 4: No. of proposals subject to commencement of work notification

Year	“commencement of work” notifications
2008	34
2009	30
2010	28
2011	60
2012	96

Planning Appeals

- 1.14 Table 5 shows the number of planning appeals pertaining to basement issues since 2008. The greater number of appeals in 2012 corresponds with the larger number of applications for this year. In total 21 appeals relating to basement issues have been made since 2008 and mid June 2013. Of these 14 were dismissed and 7 allowed.
- 1.15 Light wells and their impact on character or appearance in conservation areas seems to be the most common issue considered in planning appeals relating to basement development (Table 6). Other appeals relate to issues

around preserving the special architectural and historic interest of listed buildings. Provision of adequate soil depth is also an issue that has been raised in some appeals. Since 2012, structural stability has also been raised in two appeals.

Table 5: Basement Appeals Decided

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013 (mid June)	Total
Allowed	1	0	0	3 (1 part – allowed)	3	0	7
Dismissed	1	3	1	2 (1 part- dismissed)	3	4	14

Table 6: Key Issues in appeal decisions*

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013 (17th Jun 2013)	Total
Listed Building		2		1	1		4
Light well				2	4	3	9
Soil Depth			1	2	1		4
Structural Stability					1	1	2
Car Stacker	1						1
Intensity	1						1
Street Tree		1					1
Roof light				1			1
Extent			1	1			2

The total number of basement related appeals may not match with those presented in Table 5. This is because in some appeals there could have been more than one issue.

