TO: Residents of Wood Vale, Wood Lane, Cranley Gardens and Woodland Gardens

FROM: Prerna Chainani & Thor Monsen at 93 Wood Vale

12, September 2023

RE: IMPACT OF PROPOSED BASEMENT DEVELOPMENT AT 95 WOOD VALE

Dear Neighbour,

As you may be aware, a planning application has been submitted for the formation of a substantial new basement, among other extensions, at 95 Wood Vale (HGY/2023/2174). We are the owners residing immediately downhill of the site, so have studied the proposal with some care and consideration.

In this letter, we hope to share our findings with you - ***as the proposed works may affect other residents of the area, not just us*** - so that you may better judge the potential risks to your property and/or impact on your quality of life.

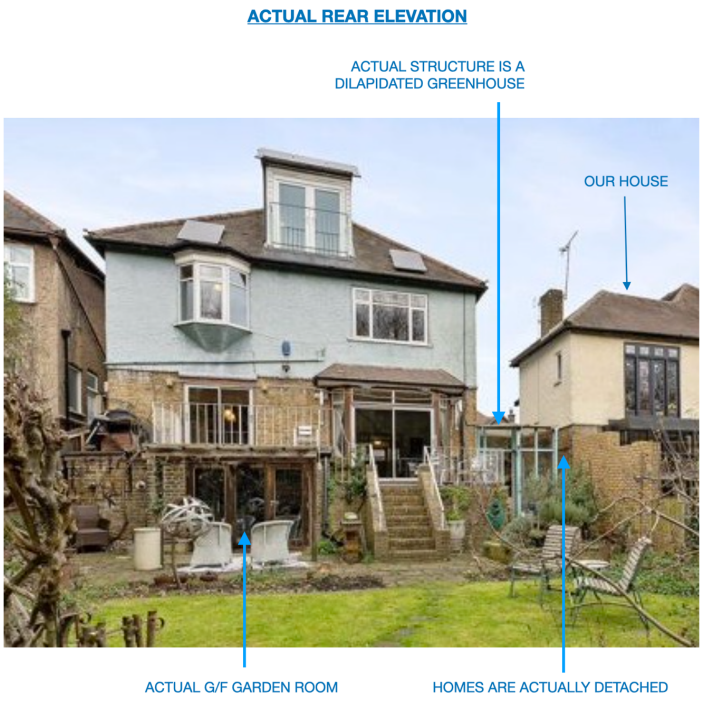
Residents of Cranley Gardens and Woodland Gardens have been included in this mailing because we share the same set of topographical and geo-hydrological conditions that make basement development in our area potentially unsound.

Residents of Wood Lane have been included because you are a key point of access to the proposed site and should also be aware of the timeline for a development of this magnitude.

SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT

A number of the drawings submitted are either inaccurate and/or incomplete, so that the application does not reflect the property's existing state - thereby minimising the perceived scale of proposed development:

i. Basement and side extension structures described as *'existing'*, do not actually exist in any habitable form



The '*existing basement*' is in fact an above ground garden room and '*the existing side extension'* is made up of two separate spaces[1], one of which is a dilapidated greenhouse and neither of which are integral to the existing house. Council guidelines discourage full width extensions[2], so representing the greenhouse as being part of the existing house is a material error/inaccuracy.

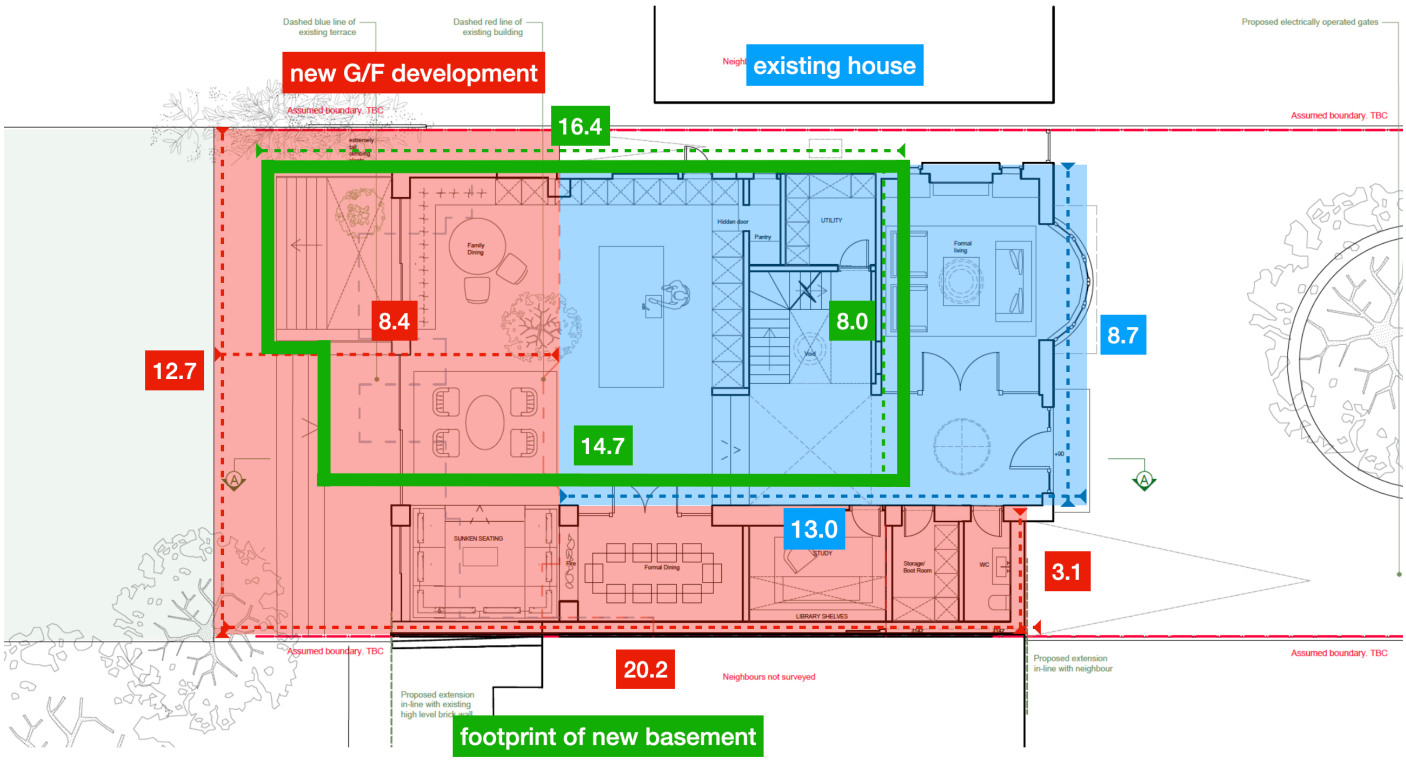
Proper classification of these structures shows habitable space increasing from 2630 to 4510 sqft **(1070 sqft of which is basement),** a 71% increase.

ii. **New basement footprint relative to footprint of existing house is not clearly represented**

In drawing PO2 - Proposed G/F Layout - the dashed blue line is labelled 'existing terrace' whereas on the next page PO3 - Proposed Basement Layout - the dashed blue line is not labelled. The observer might assume this line to also represent an *existing* entity (which would make the basement appear relatively smaller). In fact, this line demarcates the *proposed new* footprint.

We have overlaid the existing house (blue), the proposed extension (red) and the basement excavation (green line), to give you a sense of the true overall scale of development:

BASEMENT OVERLAY



As the architect boasted to us, this project is *'huge'.* We believe it may be unprecedented on Wood Vale and therefore warrants your consideration as a resident of the area.

iii. **New terrace is omitted from list of proposals**

As seen above, drawings also show the formation of a substantial new raised terrace, making the total projection from the existing house almost 8.5 metres. At a height of 0.7m (0.4 m above the permitted development allowance) the new terrace should have been included in the list of proposals.

Aside from over-urbanizing our green views, excavation so close to CREOS and our private gardens may cause root damage / death to parts of the mature woodland. Adding so much new hardstanding may also

create surface drainage issues, divert groundwater flows and run-off, putting homes and gardens downhill of the property at risk of flooding. Surface Drainage / Flooding are already concerns in our area - and wet soil contributes to subsidence risk. Council Development Policy addresses these issues (details below).

iv. Heights and levels of new rear extension relative to surroundings not shown / unclear

At a height of over 4 metres from ground level, projecting 4 metres from the existing building and over 11 metres wide, the proposed rear extension is monolithic in bulk and scale, and blocks our 45 degree Right to Light.

EXCAVATION & CONSTRUCTION TIMELINE

The application lacks any kind of statement to support drawings so there is no indication given of methodologies or timescale for the proposed works.

We consulted a respected North London builder and a party wall surveyor to get a sense what to expect: they estimate two years - one for the basement and one more for the ground floor extensions - depending on the size of the construction team and the level of heavy plant machinery used. Faster pace may be achieved by deploying higher construction intensity at the site, which would come with additional concerns.

We can make our own rough calculations:

If basement internals are 450 cubic metres = 850+ tonnes of clay soil
8-yard skip holds 8 tonnes of clay soil
100+ skips = 100+ lorry trips for basement internals only

In addition to this, there would be underpinnings for the applicant's building and for two adjoining properties, plus what looks to be over 40 linear metres of other new foundations and retaining walls to excavate. Spoil and debris will need to be moved off-site and heavy plant machinery, conveyor belts, diggers, pile drivers, concrete, steel and other materials moved on-site.

If this timeline seems excessive, please consider, our own modest terrace extension of 40sqm took 6 months to excavate and build – in the dry summer of 2022.

IMPACT ON RESIDENTIAL AMENITY

Of course, any neighbouring construction will have some temporary impact on residential amenity - which we are all, in the main, willing to tolerate for the sake of the overall betterment of our neighbourhoods (not to mention reciprocation when it comes time make our own home improvements!).

However, many Councils now recognise that disruptions caused by basement projects often go beyond what should be reasonably expected and may even cause harm. Haringey Policy DM18. (A.h and A.i) addresses these issues, requiring that applicants demonstrate how their basement proposals:

- *Will not cause harm to pedestrian, cycle, vehicular and road safety, adversely affect bus or other transport operations, significantly increase traffic congestion, nor place unreasonable inconvenience on the day to day life of those living, working or visiting nearby; and*

- *Will minimise construction impacts such as noise, vibration and dust for the duration of the works.*

In the absence of a Construction & Traffic Management Plan, we cannot know the extent of anticipated impacts or whether we consider them to be unreasonable.

What we do know is that congestion and road hazard are already issues in our area - and that the only access to the site is via an already stressed stretch of suburban road, part of which traverses a Nature Reserve (from Wood Lane to Cranley Gardens through Queens Wood) and is marked as unsuitable for HGVs.

SITE-SPECIFIC RISKS: DRAINAGE, FLOOD & SUBSIDENCE

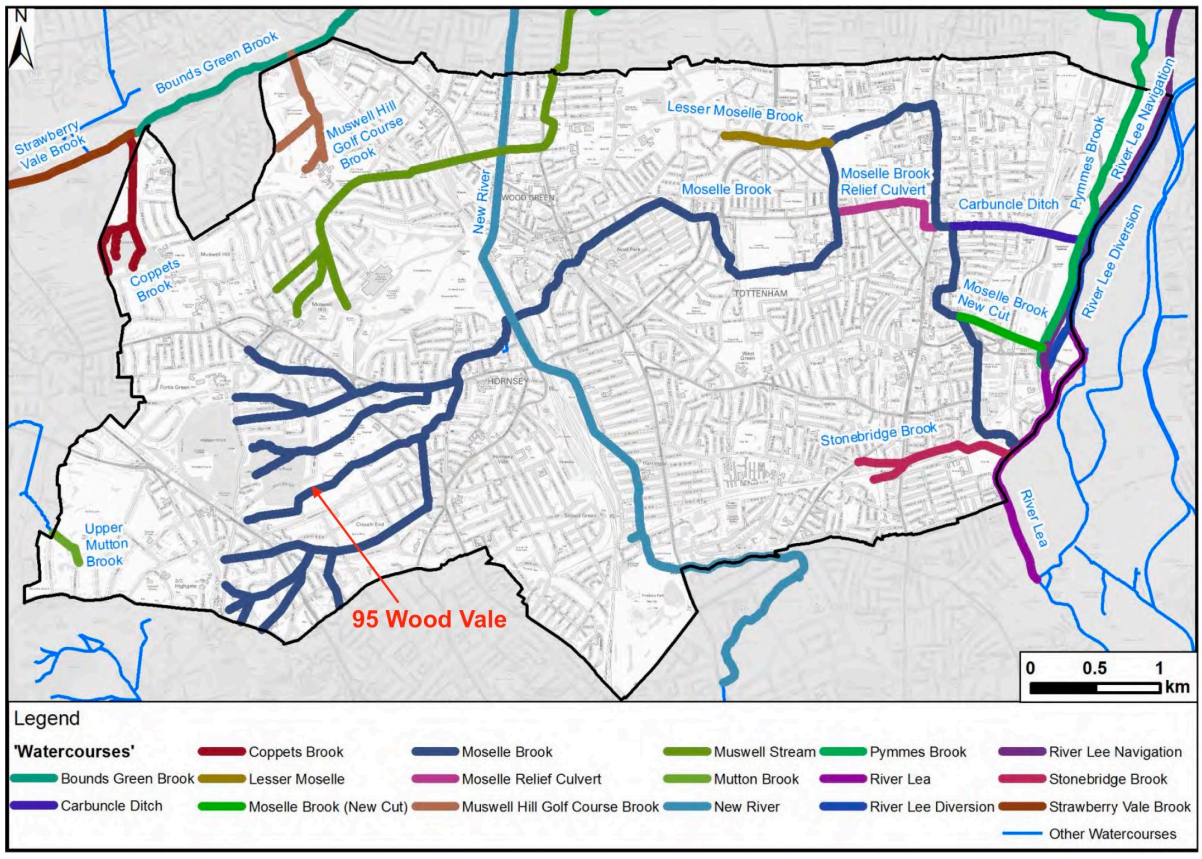
The risk of subsidence is amplified in our area by a unique set of topographical and hydro-geological conditions. These site-specific risk factors are recognised by Haringey Council in its Development Management Policies:

a. THE SITE IS ON A CLAY SLOPE (Policy DM1.C responding to Landform, Levels, Slopes; DM18: A.i. having regard to local geological conditions)

b. IN A CRITICAL DRAINAGE AREA (Policy DM24: 4.76 requiring Flood Risk Assessments in these areas)

c. ON TOP OF WATERCOURSES (DM18: having regard to local geological conditions; DM28: Protecting and Enhancing Watercourses and Flood Defences)

Figure 2-1: LB of Haringey- 'watercourses'



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The site located on top of a culverted watercourse[3]

Watercourses transect Wood Vale at two other points and run along Cranley and Woodland Gardens, making all properties in these areas potentially vulnerable to the same.

This map was taken from Haringey's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2015, where it is recommended:

'development sites that are located on top of or adjacent […] to the existing culverted watercourse […] must ensure that the culvert is strong enough to withstand increased loads during construction […] and there is no short term or long term risk to the structural integrity.'

We simply cannot know what the geo-hydrological risks are until the relevant surveys are conducted. This application offers none.

There is already a major case of subsidence at 105 Wood Vale, only five doors uphill from the site, so detailed investigation is most certainly warranted.

SITE SPECIFIC: ECOLOGICAL IMPACTS

While Wood Vale is not in a Conservation Area, we are in an area of ecological importance by virtue of our proximity to Queens Wood and CREOS. The site itself, and homes on either side, are directly adjacent to CREOS, those boundaries being so blurred and entirely irrelevant to other species.

The proposal does not address Haringey Policy DM19 which states:

A. *Development proposals on sites which are, or are adjacent to, internationally designated sites, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserves, Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation or Ecological Corridors, should protect and enhance the nature conservation value of the site.*

B. *Development that has a direct or indirect adverse impact upon important ecological assets, either individually or in combination with other development, will only be permitted where:*

    a. *The harm cannot be reasonably avoided; and*

    b. *b) It has been suitably demonstrated that appropriate mitigation can address the harm caused*

Policy DM1.C. is also not addressed – with the proposal not responding to '*trees on and close to the site, landscaped boundaries and treatments; and any other significant biodiversity in or close to the site'.*

Alongside ecological impacts, damage to/removal of root systems also affects surface drainage, heave and subsidence risk. An Arboricultural Assessment should be submitted to address these concerns.

EVOLVING POLICY RESPONSE TO BASEMENTS

Evidence from other boroughs of London show the negative impacts of basement construction to be significant. The Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea adopted an Article 4 direction that removed permitted development rights for basements in 2015. Camden followed suit in 2017 and issued new Basement Planning Guidance in 2021 [4].

Both boroughs now have well defined policy and rigorous standards to be met with regards to basement development**,** including the mandatory submission of Basement Impact Assessments among a long list of other site-specific reports detailing and mitigating risk.

RBKC policy was no doubt guided by the overwhelming response received to their 2012 'Basement Developments - Neighbours Survey' [5]. More than 50% of respondents reported negative impacts. There are

200 pages of comments and many are harrowing. 230 out of 1354 respondents reported 'damage to property'.

Such is the incidence of property damage that in some areas, *"insurance premiums for houses within a radius of as much as 400 metres of a basement excavation are now being penalised with increased insurance premiums and, in some cases, being refused insurance cover altogether."* [6] . Mortgage lenders are also known to deny mortgages to/raise rates on homes that have suffered subsidence.

Muswell Hill Councillor Pippa Connor has called for there to be a moratorium on new basement approvals until Haringey Policy is better defined to address this type of development. We feel this is only sensible.

OBJECTING TO THIS APPLICATION

In the absence of any statements or assessments to identify, understand and mitigate the risks outlined, we hope you will join us in objecting to this planning application.

We've enclosed a PETITION for you to sign, should you prefer that to making an individual submission.

The petition can be returned to us via email [redacted] dropped into our letter slot, or we can collect it from you personally.

Deadline for objections is Tuesday 19, September so it would be helpful to us if you could please return your signatures to us by Sunday 17th.

If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Prerna on the above email or mobile number.

Sincerely, your neighbours at 93 Wood Vale,

Prerna & Thor

**all calculations are approximate*

NOTES:

1. a) the remains of a greenhouse/pavilion, and; b) a lean-to shed that encloses upon the flank wall of our property. Both these structures were formed without consent and are collectively the subject of a historic and ongoing dispute on this wall.
2. Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) 1a Design Guidance and Design Statements: F.2.
"*Extensions or alterations to buildings should be subordinate in scale to the original building and should respect its architectural character. […] to ensure subordination,* ***full width rear extensions are not normally considered acceptable*** *and they should not normally extend beyond […] 4 metres for semi-detached or detached houses from the rear wall of the house."*
3. Priory Brook is a main tributary of Moselle Brook and its system of underground culverted rivers and sits just beyond our garden fences on this stretch of Wood Vale.
https://www.haringey.gov.uk/sites/haringeygovuk/files/strategic_flood_risk_assessment_sfra_level_2_report.pdf
4. https://www.camden.gov.uk/documents/20142/4823269/Basements+CPG+Jan+2021.pdf/43eb1f08-dc6b-0aa5-4607-bcfbe4ba60e6?t=1611580510428
5. https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/wamdocs/Basement%20Neighbours%20Survey-%20FINAL%20report.pdf3
Of the 1354 respondents completing the questionnaire:
   - 812 responded that noise levels were outside acceptable limits
   - 731 responded that dust and pollution from site was outside acceptable limits
   - 717 responded that traffic was disrupted
   - The word 'noise' appears 1783 times in the report
   - There are 409 mentions of the word 'cracks' in the report and countless statements of damage to property
   - The survey also returned reports of new vermin infestation, drainage problems and flooding.
6. https://www.southhampstead.info/basements.html