

IMPORTANT GUIDANCE

On the submission of Flood Risk Assessment



BUILDING BASEMENTS ADVICE FOR APPLICANTS

To be used until Hammersmith & Fulham has a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment when guidance will be revised.

1. Why is there new advice on basements?

Planning Policy Statement 25 Development and Flood Risk (PPS25) was introduced in December 2006. It states that although flooding cannot be wholly prevented, its impacts can be avoided and reduced through good planning and management. The risk to life for people residing in basement dwellings could be a real threat in time of a flood event, and this is why they must be dealt with appropriately at the planning stage. You can download a copy of PPS25 and the accompanying Practice Guide from www.communities.gov.uk.

2. What does this mean for me?

The approach to be taken with basement development in Flood Zones 2 and 3 is explained in this note. Flood zones indicate the probability an area has of flooding from rivers and the sea. You can find out what Flood Zone you are in by visiting our website www.environment-agency.gov.uk and clicking on 'Flood Risk'.

Section 3 looks at cases where the basement will be self-contained and will not provide internal access to a higher floor in the building. Section 4 looks at an existing basement that is changing its land use from commercial/retail to residential with no overall increase in size. Section 5 looks at any basement development where there will be internal access to a higher floor in the building.

3. Basement dwellings that will not provide internal access to a higher level

Self-contained basements that will have no internal access to a higher floor in the building are now classified as a highly vulnerable development in PPS25. This means that there would be high risk to people's safety in the event of a flood.

Flood Zone 3 (High Risk)

We will **OBJECT IN PRINCIPLE** to any self-contained basement dwelling in Flood Zone 3. This will have implications for your planning permission.

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Flood Zone 2 (Medium Risk)

In order for us to approve a self-contained basement dwelling in Flood Zone 2, the local authority will first need to provide evidence to us that the Sequential Test and Exception Test (as required by PPS25) have been passed. This will be done by the Local Planning Authority and you should speak to them about this prior to any submission.

Once they have supplied us with their evidence, you will need to additionally send us an assessment of the risk (through a 'Flood Risk Assessment') to prove that development is safe to go ahead. We can send you a factsheet on what you will need to submit - please contact us when you are at this stage (please ring 01707 632489 or email northlondonplanning@environment-agency.gov.uk).

We suggest you enter into pre-application discussions with the local authority and ourselves before submitting any applications in this category.

4. Change of use of an existing basement from commercial/retail/other to residential

Flood Zone 3 (High Risk) and Flood Zone 2 (Medium Risk)

Shops, offices, financial services and restaurants are examples of 'less vulnerable' land uses according to PPS25. Dwelling houses are classed as 'more vulnerable'. This will mean that a planning application to turn an existing basement used for commercial or retail purposes into a dwelling could be putting people at a higher level of risk.

In Flood Zones 3 and 2, we will therefore require a Flood Risk Assessment to make sure the development is safe to go ahead. Please contact us (01707 632489 or email northlondonplanning@environment-agency.gov.uk) if you require our factsheet on our basic FRA requirements. We advise entering into pre-application discussions with us before submitting an application formally to the local authority, as it may save you time and money in the long run.

5. Extensions and new basements that will provide access to a higher level

If you are proposing to extend or create a new basement dwelling that does have internal access to a higher floor in the building we advise the following:

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- No sleeping accommodation is provided for at basement level. There could be real risk to people sleeping in basements if there were to be a flood event.
- Flood proofing measures are adopted to minimise risk to people and property in the event of a flood. Please search our website for examples of these or contact our office and we can send some ideas to you (01707 632489).
- Internal access is maintained for occupants to reach a higher floor within the building in the event of a flood.
- Signing up to our free Flood Warning Direct service by calling Floodline on 0845 988 1188. This enables people to be alerted by phone, email or text message when we have issued Flood Warnings for their area.

We also request that the Local Planning Authority place the following condition on any planning permission granted:

CONDITION: The basement is not to be converted to a separate dwelling.
REASON: To minimise the flood risk to occupants.

Please note that we will not be consulted on these applications.

6. Future changes?

Once Hammersmith and Fulham have completed their local document looking at flood risk across the whole borough (their Strategic Flood Risk Assessment), we will update this guidance. This document will look at all forms of flooding and flow routes, and will identify the areas of highest risk within Flood Zones 2 & 3. This will help the local authority to determine where future development should take place, including basement dwellings.

7. Summary

Self-contained basement dwellings can place people at real risk of harm in the event of a flood. This must be addressed through the planning process to ensure that basements are designed with the protection of people and property in mind.