

# Dig that! Now Chelsea boss joins the underground movement

RUTH BLOOMFIELD AND BENEDICT MOORE-BRIDGER

IT IS the London property trend that is annoying neighbours but sailing through planning departments.

Chelsea Football Club chief executive Peter Kenyon is the latest homeowner to be given approval to build an underground extension.

The football millionaire wants to extend his £2 million Georgian townhouse in Notting Hill with a basement stretching almost the entire length of his 33ft garden.

He also hopes to add an extension to the ground floor, creating a new garden terrace. Outraged neighbours have called the plans "unacceptable" but their concerns have been overlooked by Westminster council's planning officers.

Divorced Mr Kenyon, 55, lives in the four-storey house with his new partner, Louise Quinn.

The couple hope to create an underground kitchen, dining room, study and living room and use ceiling "portholes" to let in daylight.

But residents living beside and behind his home argue the terrace will mean the privacy of their homes and gardens will be infringed and the development will block their light.

They are also worried about the noise and air pollution the work to build the basement will cause.

In a letter of objection to the council, lawyer Jacqui Nelson said the development would dam-

age her adjoining property. She said: "The basement would be too extensive in size — it would cover up most of the garden and create a bad precedent. "A number of light wells or roof lights are proposed. "This would result in the rear being illuminated very brightly at night with the result that my young children, who have bedrooms at the rear of my property on the first and second floors, would have light shining into their bedrooms until late. "This aspect of the proposal constitutes a light nuisance and is unacceptable."

Neighbours also claim underground work could cause a flood risk. One resident, who asked not to be named, said there had been friction between Mr Kenyon and some of his neighbours.

The neighbour said: "We have to stop him but unfortunately the council feels it doesn't have the power. Once planning permission has been granted you are on the back foot. "Mr Kenyon does not spend a lot of time here, so people who live in the street all the time have fairly strong views about it." Morag

Beattie, 86, said: "Nobody wants the noise."

Angela Harvey, chairman of Westminster council's planning applications sub-committee, said the proposals complied with council planning policies.

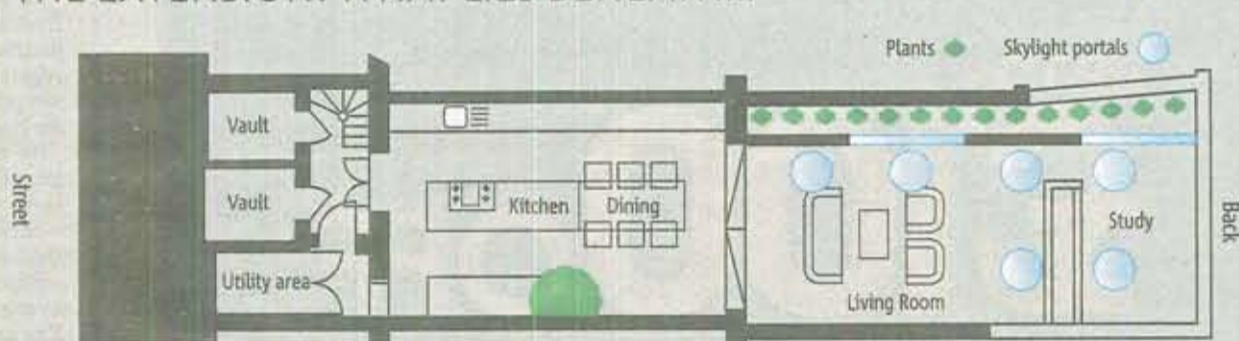
She said: "The committee looked at the plans carefully and is confident it will not affect the amenity of surrounding residents."

Mr Kenyon was unavailable for comment. Underground exten-



Going down: Chelsea FC's chief executive Peter Kenyon and the Notting Hill home he plans to develop

## THE EXTENSION: WHAT LIES BENEATH...



## It is like a mining operation. There's a lot of concrete, a lot of earth, a lot of steel...

COMMENTARY  
**ROBIN KNOWLES**  
MD, LONDON  
BASEMENT CO,  
TWICKENHAM



WE have between 35 and 40 projects on the go at any one time. We get enquiries from all sorts of people, not just those in rich areas but those who can't move, as their home is not worth what they want.

There is no planning issue with the depth you go and you can get ceiling heights the same as first-floor level rooms.

We are up about 10 per cent

on the same time last year. Jobs cost anything from £175 a square foot to £300 a square foot. We do the structure and also fit it out internally.

You have to check ground conditions so we do geological tests to determine what we are dealing with, whether it is clay, or sand, whether water is present or not. At most places there is, so we have methods of pumping it out.

We do build in, as a matter of course, complex pumping systems and back-up pumps and alarms and battery back-ups so it is fail-safe.

A lot of the projects are dug out by hand, or we use mechanical diggers or mini

excavators. It can take about 12 weeks to form a structure, and up to 20 weeks for a full project.

It is like a mining operation. We tunnel down and then underpin the floors above with steel supports.

There is a lot of concrete, a lot of earth, a lot of steel put in. It is a big job.

We put a big hoarding around the property, around where we are excavating, and round the skip and any machinery in the street. The conveyor belt then excavates the soil over and into the skip into the road.

We fill about three skips a day usually. The skip is large,

about 4.5m long, and that does not move. Then one of our grab lorries comes along and takes the soil out, which then goes to landfill.

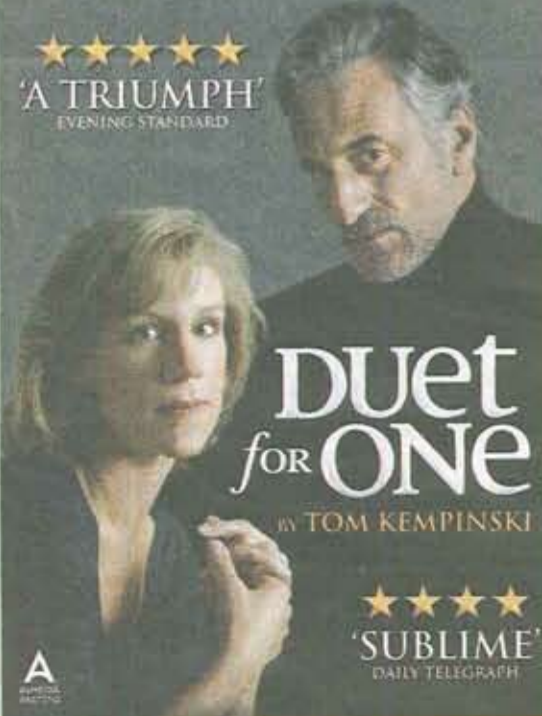
We normally take over between one and two car parking spaces. We have anything from four to 14 men working on a site at one time.

We have five swimming pool projects at the moment, a couple of flats, leisure spaces, media and family rooms, storage spaces, wine cellars. Rather than selling, or investing in the stock market, people are investing back into their property, getting the extra space they want without selling.

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JULIET STEVENSON HENRY GOODMAN  
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EVENING STANDARD



BY TOM KEMPINSKI

★★★★★  
'SUBLIME'  
DAILY TELEGRAPH

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