



BACKGROUND PAPER

Draft Basement Controls for Low-Rise Housing

November 2025



SUMMARY

Council is proposing draft controls to address inconsistencies for constructing basements for low-rise housing across the City.

Currently, planning provisions vary significantly: in some parts of the City, basements in low-rise housing are encouraged, while in other parts, they are discouraged. This inconsistency creates confusion and uncertainty for people who file development applications, designers, planners and the broader community.

We also recognise that many residents value the flexibility to include basements in their homes. Basements can provide practical benefits such as parking and storage, as well as opportunities for additional living spaces including gyms, home offices or theatre rooms.

The intent of the proposed draft controls is to strike a balanced approach by managing potential impacts of basement development while allowing their inclusion on appropriate sites.

These draft controls aim to provide greater clarity and consistency in basement design and use to achieve sound planning and design outcomes and community aspirations.

PROPOSED CHANGES

The key changes to the Canterbury-Bankstown Development Control Plan 2023 propose to:

- clarify where basements can be built,
- control the size of basements,
- control the widths of driveways to minimise impacts on landscaped areas, street trees and on-street parking.

This document summarises the background to the key changes and is for information purposes only.



WHAT IS A BASEMENT?

It is the lowest storey of a building, wholly or partly below ground.

WHY ALLOW BASEMENTS?

- To park cars
- To use as storage space
- To use as plant room for mechanical services or ducting
- To use as living space.

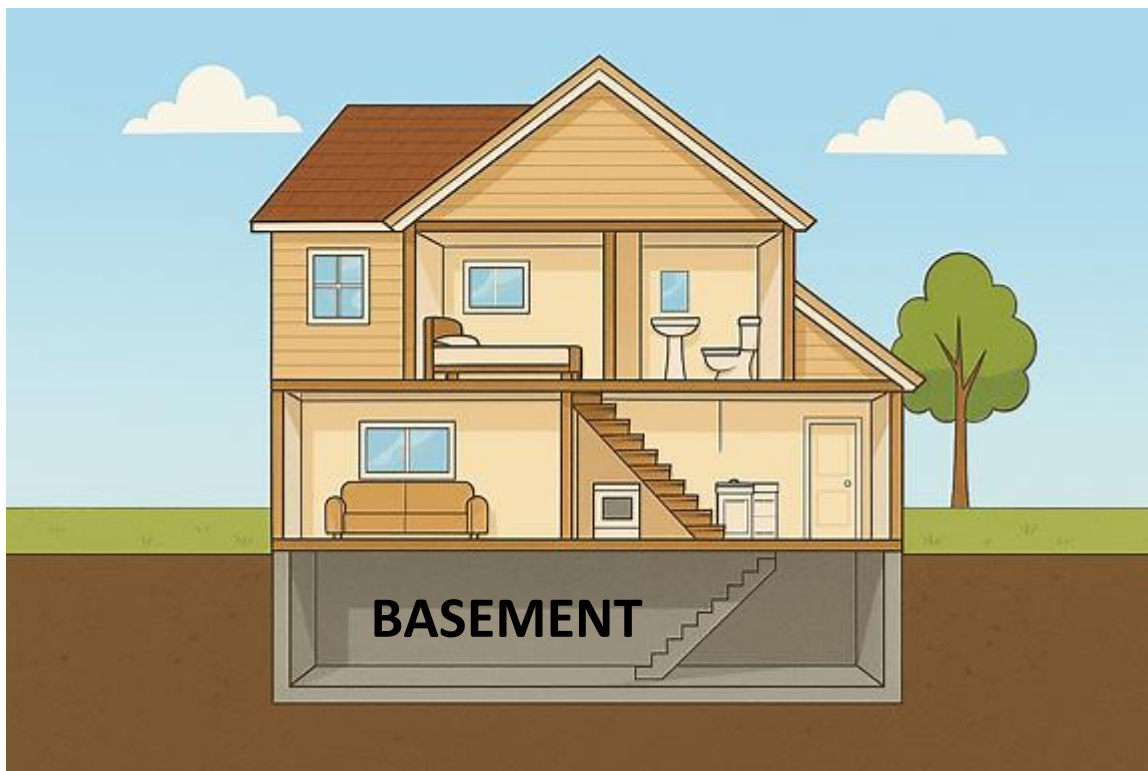


Figure 1: Example of a basement wholly below ground



WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS?

ISSUE 1: Clarify where basements can be built

Currently, planning provisions vary significantly: in some parts of the City, basements in low-rise housing are encouraged, while in other parts, they are discouraged. This inconsistency creates confusion and uncertainty for people who file development applications, designers, planners and the broader community.

Recommended Action

- Allow low-rise housing to have basements, subject to lot size and design controls. This will provide clear guidance for development applications on where Council allows basements in Canterbury-Bankstown.

ISSUE 2: Control the size of basements

The existing planning rules are inconsistent with the NSW Government's Complying Development Code, which limits the size of basements based on lot size. The existing planning rules also do not address the cumulative impact in our residential streets.

Recommended Actions

- Allow basements on lots at least 7.5m wide at the front building line (after any proposed subdivision) and where the design meets the earthworks requirements in the LEP (clause 6.2).
- Limit the combined area of parking, storage, plant rooms and any areas used for mechanical services or ducting. Any area beyond the limit will be included in the calculation of gross floor area.
- Basements must not extend beyond the perimeter of the floor level immediately above.
- Pedestrian access to basements with no parking must only be provided internally or from the side or rear of the dwelling. Pedestrian access from the side or rear of the dwelling must not result in stairs or access encroaching into the minimum boundary setback areas.



ISSUE 3: Control the widths of driveways to minimise impacts on landscaped areas, street trees and on-site parking

Front yards are essential to the character and comfort of our residential streets. However, the rise in basements and ramps threatens this balance, as the increase of hard surfaces:

- erodes the potential for landscaping in front yards,
- removes car parking spaces available in the street,
- removes street trees,
- restricts the amount of space available for greenery in the verge.

Without stronger design controls, we risk losing the very elements that make our neighbourhoods liveable, sustainable and welcoming.

Recommended Actions

- The maximum driveway width is 3.5m or 40% of the lot width at the front building line (after any proposed subdivision), whichever is the lesser.
- Parking must be tandem parking.
- The driveway and adjoining retaining walls must integrate into the overall design of the dwellings and landscaped area. Large areas of blank, minimally or poorly articulated retaining walls are not acceptable.