

Spotlight

Underpinning

Turning bad news into good

A property developer turned a subsidence disaster into a basement conversion.

When a London property developer purchased a £2M-plus St John's Wood house at auction only to find it was suffering from subsidence before he had the chance to insure it, he decided to transform the negative into a positive and turn the underpinning job into a basement conversion.

The owner already knew a substantial amount of underpinning was necessary to stabilise the property because of the prevalence of clay sub-soils coupled with an extensive network of tree roots.

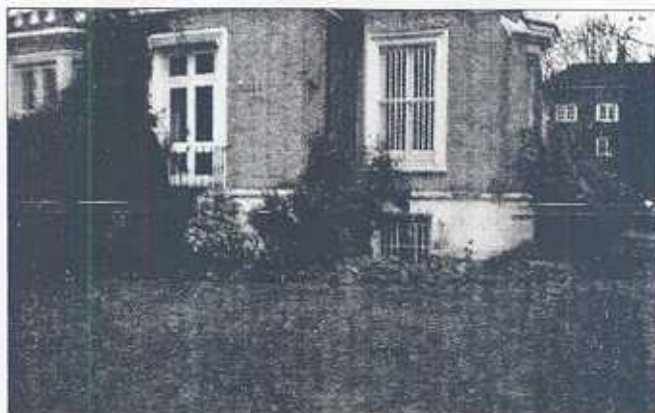
The house also had a half-height cellar so it soon became clear that by underpinning outside of the central area, he could increase the property's

footprint by 25%.

Withers Group subsidiary Basements started work in January and expects to complete the £145,000 job in June.

Managing director Rob Withers said: "The conversion will add an extra 70m² of space and the developer is planning to turn this into a basement flat. We're using traditional hand-dug underpinning with a precast concrete floor for the basement and waterproofing with a Delta Membrane system."

The Delta Membrane high density polyethylene is designed to deal with aggressive ground water conditions, where basements are liable to flooding, or where dampness, contamination or salting problems are prevalent.



The basement conversion will add an extra 70m² of space



WORCESTERSHIRE SUCCESS:

Powerful handheld, reduced vibration, drilling equipment is being used by Roger Bullivant to create a 300mm by 300mm pocket in the side of a property being underpinned in Worcestershire. Subsidence affecting the three-bedroom house in Redditch will be corrected using 18 reinforced concrete needles, cantilevered from 27 piles installed to a depth of 8m beside one wall of the property. Pairs of needle beams will be supported from groups of three piles; with two alongside the house working in compression and a rear pile working in tension. The contract is being carried out over a period of 15 days on behalf of insurer Royal & Sun Alliance and is set to be completed at the end of May.