

# Arboricultural Appraisal Report

## Subsidence Damage Investigation at:

15 Rowan Avenue  
York  
YO32 4AT



CLIENT:	Crawford & Company
CLIENT REF:	SU2203656
MWA REF:	SUB230504-12983
MWA CONSULTANT:	Mark Johnson (FdSc; MArborA)
REPORT DATE:	22/05/2023

## SUMMARY

Statutory Controls		Mitigation (Current claim tree works)	
TPO current claim	No	Policy Holder	Yes
TPO future risk	No	Domestic 3 <sup>rd</sup> Party	No
Cons. Area	Yes	Local Authority	No
Trusts schemes	No	Other	No
Local Authority: -	City of York Council		

## Introduction

Acting on instructions from Crawford & Company, the insured property was visited on 17/05/2023 to assess the potential role of vegetation in respect of subsidence damage.

We are instructed to provide opinion on whether moisture abstraction by vegetation is a causal factor in the damage to the property and give recommendations on what vegetation management, if any, may be carried out with a view to restoring stability to the property. The scope of our assessment includes opinion relating to mitigation of future risk. Vegetation not recorded is considered not to be significant to the current damage or pose a significant risk in the foreseeable future.

This is an initial appraisal report and recommendations are made with reference to the technical reports and information currently available and may be subject to review upon receipt of additional site investigation data, monitoring, engineering opinion or other information.

This report does not include a detailed assessment of tree condition or safety. Where indications of poor condition or health in accessible trees are observed, this will be indicated within the report. Assessment of the condition and safety of third-party trees is excluded and third-party owners are advised to seek their own advice on tree health and stability of trees under their control.

## Property Description

The property comprises a bungalow built in c.1900. There is an extension at the rear-left of the property, the date of construction of the extension has not been advised.

External areas comprise gardens to the front and rear.

The site is generally level with no adverse topographical features.

## Damage Description & History

Damage relates to the rear extension. Diagonal cracking to the render is evident externally.

For a more detailed synopsis of the damage please refer to the building surveyor's site images.

We have not been made aware of any previous claims.

## Site Investigations

Site investigations were carried out by Auger on 06/03/2023, when a single trial pit was excavated to reveal the foundations, with a borehole sunk through the base of the trial pit to determine subsoil conditions. A drains survey was also undertaken.

### Foundations:

Ref	Foundation type	Depth at Underside (mm)
TP/BH1	Concrete	500

### Soils:

Ref	Description	Plasticity Index (%)	Volume change potential (NHBC)
TP/BH1	Brown fine to medium gravelly silty CLAY	24 - 27	Medium

### Roots:

Ref	Roots Observed to depth of (mm)	Identification	Starch content
TP/BH1	1000	<i>Fraxinus</i> spp.	Present

*Fraxinus* spp. includes common ash.

**Drains:** The drains have been surveyed and no significant defects identified.

**Monitoring:** No information available at the time of writing.

## Discussion

Opinion and recommendations in this report are made on the understanding that Crawford & Company have identified clay shrinkage subsidence as a cause of building movement and damage.

Site investigations and soil test results have confirmed a plastic clay subsoil susceptible to undergoing volumetric change in relation to changes in soil moisture. A comparison between moisture content and the plastic and liquid limits suggests moisture depletion at the time of sampling in TP/BH1 at depths beyond normal ambient soil drying processes such as evaporation indicative of the soil drying effects of vegetation.

Roots were observed to a depth of 1000mm bgl in TP/BH1 and recovered samples have been positively identified (using anatomical analysis) as *Fraxinus* spp., the origin of which will be T2 (Ash) confirming its influence on the soils below the foundations.

Based on the technical reports currently available, engineering opinion and our own site assessment we conclude the damage is consistent with shrinkage of the clay subsoil related to moisture abstraction by vegetation. Having considered the information currently available, it is our opinion that T2 is the principal cause of the current subsidence damage.

If an arboricultural solution is to be implemented to mitigate the influence of the implicated trees/vegetation we recommend that T2 is removed. Other vegetation recorded presents a potential future risk to building stability and management is therefore recommended.

Consideration has been given to pruning alone as a means of mitigating the vegetative influence, however in this case, this is not considered to offer a viable long-term solution due to the proximity of the responsible vegetation.

Recommended tree works may be subject to change upon receipt of additional information.

## Conclusions

- Conditions necessary for clay shrinkage subsidence to occur related to moisture abstraction by vegetation have been confirmed by site investigations and the testing of soil and root samples.
- Engineering opinion is that the damage is related to clay shrinkage subsidence.
- There is significant vegetation present with the potential to influence soil moisture and volumes below foundation level.
- Roots have been observed underside of foundations and identified samples correspond to vegetation identified on site.
- Replacement planting may be considered subject to species choice and planting location.

**Table 1**                      **Current Claim - Tree Details & Recommendations**

Tree No.	Species	Ht (m)	Dia (mm)	Crown Spread (m)	Dist. to building (m)	Age Classification	Ownership
T2	Ash	16 *	450 *	14 *	15 *	Younger than Property	Policy Holder located at 5 Cherry Tree Avenue YO32 4AR
Management history		No significant recent management noted.					
Recommendation		Remove (fell) to near ground level and treat stump to inhibit regrowth.					

Ms:      multi-stemmed                      \* Estimated value

**Table 2 Future Risk - Tree Details & Recommendations**

Tree No.	Species	Ht (m)	Dia (mm)	Crown Spread (m)	Dist. to building (m)	Age Classification	Ownership
T1	Apple	2	130	2	11.5	Younger than Property	Policy Holder
Management history		Subject to past management/pruning - appears regularly trimmed.					
Recommendation		None.					
T3	Beech	13	380 *	9 *	21	Younger than Property	Policy Holder located at 4 Cherry Tree Avenue YO32 4AR
Management history		No significant recent management noted.					
Recommendation		None at present.					
TG1	Hawthorn	6.5	Ms	10 *	11.5	Younger than Property	Policy Holder located at 5 Cherry Tree Avenue YO32 4AR
Management history		No significant recent management noted.					
Recommendation		Maintain broadly at no more than current dimensions by periodic pruning.					
H1	Cypress, Hawthorn, Privet	2 to 3	70 Ms *	23 *	10	Younger than Property	Policy Holder
Management history		Subject to past management/pruning - appears regularly trimmed.					
Recommendation		Maintain broadly at no more than current dimensions by periodic pruning.					

Ms: multi-stemmed \* Estimated value

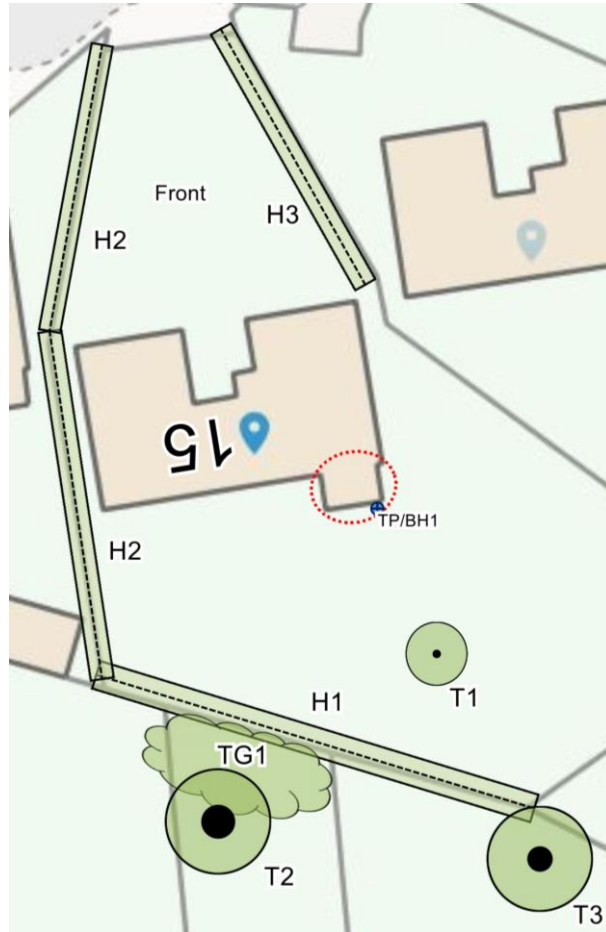
**Table 2 Future Risk - Tree Details & Recommendations Cont'd**

Tree No.	Species	Ht (m)	Dia (mm)	Crown Spread (m)	Dist. to building (m)	Age Classification	Ownership
H2	Privet, Elder, Lilac, Beech	2.5	Ms	40 *	2	Younger than Property	Policy Holder located at Policy Holder and/or 17 Rowan Avenue YO32 4AT
Management history		Subject to past management/pruning - appears regularly trimmed.					
Recommendation		Maintain broadly at no more than current dimensions by periodic pruning.					
H3	Privet, Elder, Beech	2	Ms	14 *	1.5	Younger than Property	Policy Holder
Management history		Subject to past management/pruning - appears regularly trimmed.					
Recommendation		Maintain broadly at no more than current dimensions by periodic pruning.					

Ms: multi-stemmed \* Estimated value



Site Plan

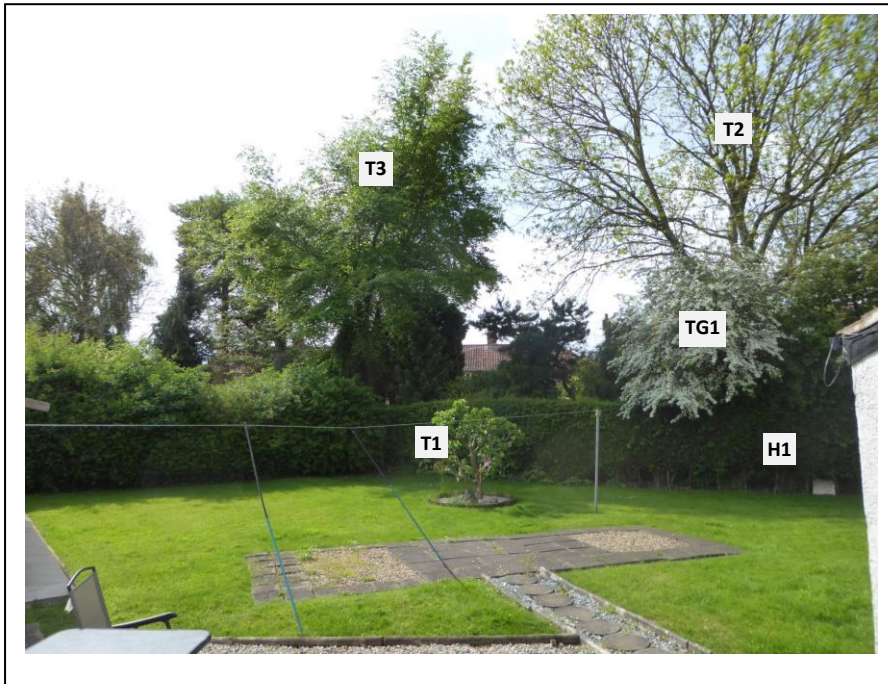


Plan not to scale – indicative only

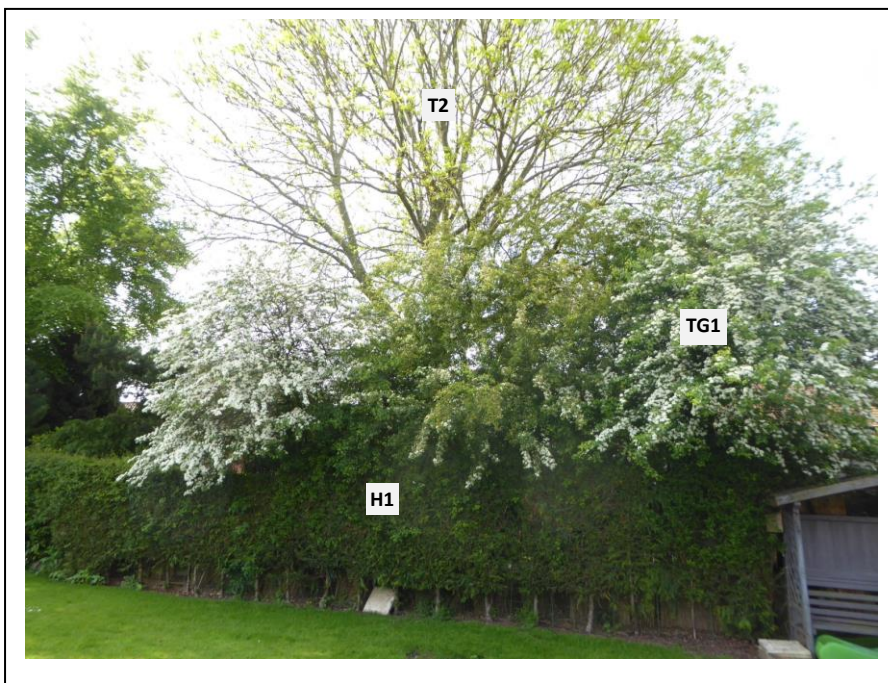


Approximate areas of damage

Images



View of T3, T1, TG1, T2 and H1



View of H1, T2, and TG1



View of H2

## **Management of vegetation to alleviate clay shrinkage subsidence.**

All vegetation requires water to survive which is accessed from the soil. Clay soils shrink when water abstracted by vegetation exceeds inputs from rainfall, which typically occurs during the summer months. When deciduous vegetation enters dormancy and loses its leaves and rainfall increases during the winter months, soil moisture increases and the clay swells. (Evergreen trees and shrubs use minimal/negligible amounts of soil water during the winter).

Buildings founded on clay are susceptible to movement as the clay shrinks and swells which can result in cracking or other damage.

Where damage does occur, pruning (reducing leaf area) can in some circumstances be effective in restoring stability however, removal of the influencing vegetation (trees, shrubs, climbers) causing the ground movement offers the most predictable and quickest solution in stabilising the clay and hence the building and for this reason is frequently initially recommended as the most appropriate solution.

Often this is unavoidable due to the size or number of influencing trees, shrubs etc and their proximity to the building. Very heavy pruning of some species to a level required to effectively control its water use can result in the trees decline and ultimately death and is one factor considered when making recommendations for remedial tree works. Pruning alone, whilst reducing soil moisture uptake is often an unpredictable management option in restoring building stability either in the short or long term.

In some circumstances however, where vegetation initially recommended for removal is subsequently pruned and monitoring indicates the building has stabilised, removal becomes unnecessary with decisions based on best evidence available at the time.