

Arboricultural Appraisal Report

Subsidence Damage Investigation at:

28a Gastons Road
Malmesbury
SN16 0BE



CLIENT:	B Maule & Co Ltd
CLIENT REF:	20258321
MWA REF:	SUB251103-17117
MWA CONSULTANT:	Giles Mercer (BSc Hons)
REPORT DATE:	25/11/2025

SUMMARY

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

Introduction

Acting on instructions from B Maule & Co Ltd, the insured property was visited on 22/11/2025 to assess the potential role of vegetation in relation to subsidence damage.

We are instructed to provide opinion on whether 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 observations/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 two-storey detached house.

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 front left corner and left-hand gable wall. At the time of the initial assessment the structural significance of the damage was found to fall within Category 3 (Moderate) of Table 1 of BRE Digest 251. Further details of the damage can be obtained from B Maule & Co Ltd.

We have not been made aware of any previous claims.

Site Investigations

Site investigations were carried out by Bradgate Surveying Limited on 06/10/2025, 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. For further details please refer to the Site Investigation report.

Discussion

Opinion and recommendations in this report are made on the understanding that B Maule & Co Ltd has 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 indicates moisture depletion/desiccation at the time of sampling at depths beyond normal ambient soil drying processes such as evaporation indicative of the soil drying effects of vegetation.

Roots were observed below foundation depth in TP/BH1.

Samples recovered from TP/BH1 have been positively identified (using anatomical analysis) as Leguminosae and a broadleaved species the origin of which will be the Wisteria (C1) and the Portuguese Laurel (S1) confirming their influence on the soils below the foundations.

Irrespective of the identification of recovered root samples, the roots of the Cypress hedge (H1) are also likely to be present below foundation level in proximity to the area of movement/damage with the potential to influence soil moisture and volumes.

Level monitoring is available from 07/10/2025. Insufficient readings have been taken to date from which to draw any conclusions.

Based on the information currently available, engineering opinion and our own site assessment we conclude there is damage consistent with shrinkage of the clay subsoil exacerbated by the soil drying effects of vegetation. Having considered the information currently available, it is our opinion that the Wisteria (C1), the Portuguese Laurel (S1) and the Cypress hedge (H1) are the principal cause of or are contributing to the current building movement and damage.

If an arboricultural solution is to be implemented to mitigate the influence of the trees/vegetation considered to be responsible for the movement/damage, works set out at Table 1 below are recommended.

Where other vegetation recorded presents a potential future risk to building stability, management is recommended (see Table 2).

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

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

Replacement planting may be considered subject to species choice and planting location.

Site Plan



© Crown copyright and database rights 2025. Ordnance Survey AC0000822731.

Plan not to scale – indicative only



Approximate areas of damage

Tree/vegetation locations are based on what could be determined at the time of the survey.

It should be noted that this is not always clear due to lack of access or a restricted view of the trees/vegetation and may be disputed by property owners.

MWA can undertake land registry searches as required.

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

Tree No.	Species	Height (m)	Dia (mm)	Crown Spread (m)	Dist. to building (m)	Age Classification	Ownership
S1	Portuguese Laurel (small Choisya at base – not significant)	3 *	200 *	3.5	3.5	Younger than Property	Policy Holder
Management history		Recently reduced/pruned.					
Recommendation		Remove (fell) to near ground level and treat stump to inhibit regrowth.					
C1	Wisteria	3.5	60 Ms *	4	1.8	Younger than Property	Policy Holder
Management history		Recently reduced/pruned.					
Recommendation		Remove (fell) to near ground level and treat stump to inhibit regrowth.					
H1	Cypress	4	200 Ms *	2.5 *	5.1	Older than Property	No registrations Third Party 26 Gastons Road SN16 0BE assumed
Management history		Recently reduced/pruned.					
Recommendation		Remove (fell) to near ground level a section of the hedge to create a minimum clearance to the affected property of no less than 8m.					

Ms: multi-stemmed * Estimated value

T - Tree; TG - Tree group; G – Group; H - Hedge; S - Shrub; SG - Shrub group; C - Climber; W – Woodland; ST - Stump

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

Tree No.	Species	Height (m)	Dia (mm)	Crown Spread (m)	Dist. to building (m)	Age Classification	Ownership
T1	Tulip Tree	12 *	350 *	12	13 *	Similar Age to Property	No registrations Third Party 26 Gastons Road SN16 OBE assumed
Management history		No significant recent management noted.					
Recommendation		Maintain broadly at no more than current dimensions by periodic pruning (Recommendations subject to review if movement persists).					
TG1	Mixed species group including Pear, Apple and Japanese Maple	4	150 *	4	7.5	Younger than Property	Policy Holder
Management history		Managed group.					
Recommendation		Maintain broadly at no more than current dimensions by periodic pruning.					
S2	Bay	1.8	45 Ms *	1.4	2.4	Younger than Property	Policy Holder
Management history		Recently reduced/pruned.					
Recommendation		Do not allow to exceed current dimensions.					
S3	Magnolia	3.5	140 Ms *	4.9	4	Younger than Property	Policy Holder
Management history		Recently reduced/pruned.					
Recommendation		Do not allow to exceed current dimensions.					

Ms: multi-stemmed * Estimated or approximate value

T - Tree; TG - Tree group; G – Group; H - Hedge; S - Shrub; SG - Shrub group; C - Climber; W – Woodland; ST - stump

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

Tree No.	Species	Height (m)	Dia (mm)	Crown Spread (m)	Dist. to building (m)	Age Classification	Ownership
C2	Ivy	2.3	50 Ms *	6.75	3	Younger than Property	No registrations Third Party 26 Gastons Road SN16 OBE assumed
Management history		Recently reduced/pruned.					
Recommendation		Do not allow to exceed current dimensions.					
C3	Vine	2.2	70 Ms *	3	3.4	Younger than Property	Policy Holder
Management history		Recently reduced/pruned.					
Recommendation		Do not allow to exceed current dimensions.					
G1	Mixed species group including Salix Integra, Rose, Amelanchier, Spirea	2	45 Ms *	1.75	2.8	Younger than Property	Policy Holder
Management history		Recently reduced/pruned.					
Recommendation		Maintain broadly at no more than current dimensions by periodic pruning.					

Ms: multi-stemmed * Estimated or approximate value

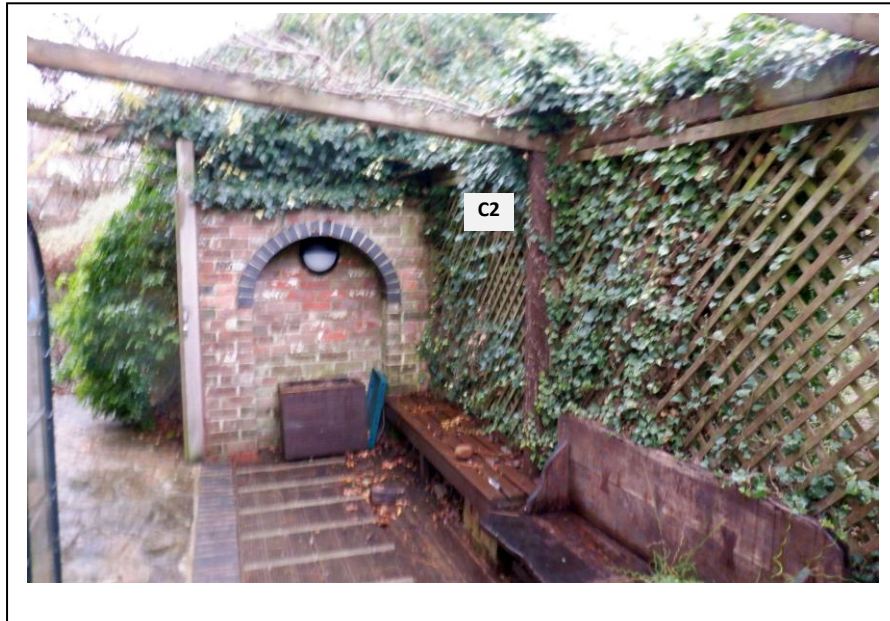
T - Tree; TG - Tree group; G – Group; H - Hedge; S - Shrub; SG - Shrub group; C - Climber; W – Woodland; ST - stump

Distance to building measurements are to the nearest point of the building unless otherwise stated.

Tree dimensions may be estimated or approximate based on accessibility.

Crown spread values are normally an estimate of the maximum spread but note tree crowns may be asymmetrical.

Photographs



View of C2



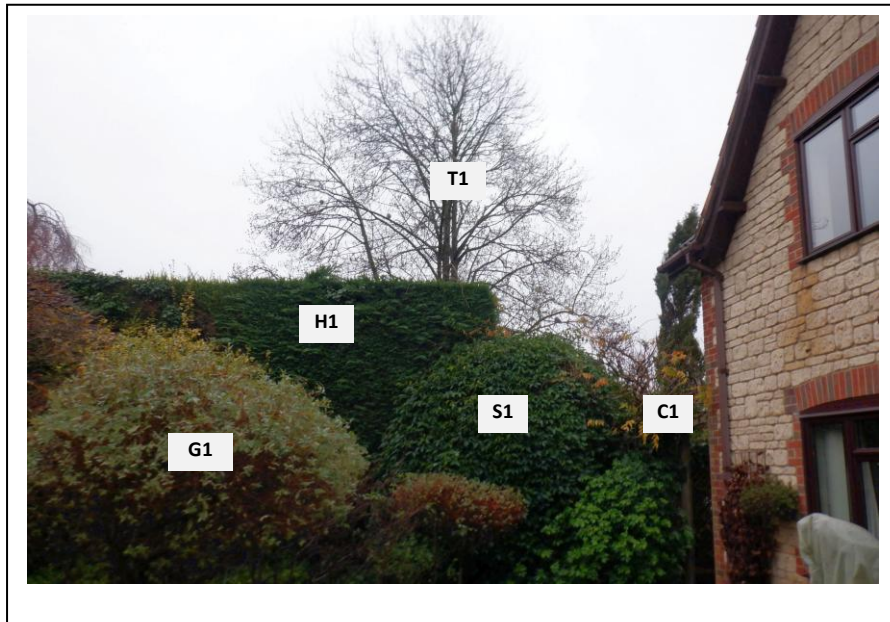
View of C3



View of G1



View of S1,C1 & H1



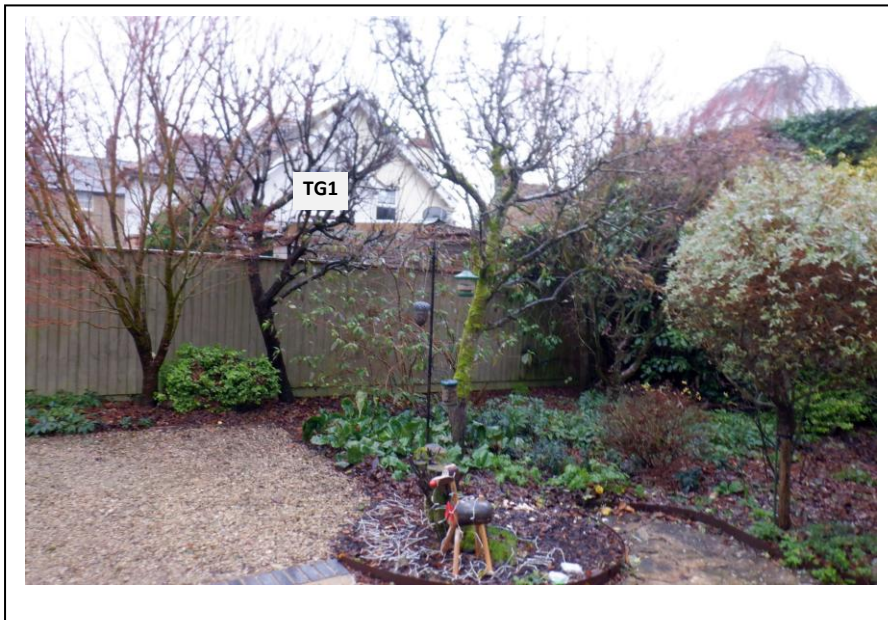
View of G1, C1, S1, H1 & T1



View of S2



View of S3



View of TG1

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 taken up by vegetation exceeds inputs from rainfall, which is at its maximum 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 soils are susceptible to movement as the clay shrinks and swells which when exacerbated by vegetation can result in building movement and cracking to walls.

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 reliable and quickest solution in reducing seasonal volumetric changes in the clay, restoring building stability, 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 and future management of a tree. Pruning alone, whilst reducing soil moisture uptake is often an unpredictable and unreliable management option in restoring building stability, either in the short or long term.