

Arboricultural Appraisal Report

Subsidence Damage Investigation at:

Glebe House
Hilmarton
Calne
SN11 8SB



CLIENT:	QuestGates
CLIENT REF:	QG1S1381889
MWA REF:	SUB260512-18715
MWA CONSULTANT:	Steve Swinburne
REPORT DATE:	08/06/2026

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 QuestGates, the insured property was visited on 27/05/2026 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 built in 1960. It has been extended with a single-storey addition to the right-flank with the date of construction currently unknown.

External areas comprise gardens to the front, sides and rear.

The site is generally level with no adverse topographical features.

Damage Description & History

Damage is noted throughout the property.

Further details of the damage can be obtained from QuestGates.

We have not been made aware of any previous claims.

Site Investigations

Site investigations were carried out by Auger on 17/02/2026, when four trial pits were hand excavated to reveal the foundations. The site investigation team were unable to auger through the base of the trial pit due to impenetrable ground. A drains survey was also undertaken.

Foundations:

Ref	Foundation type	Depth at Underside (mm)
TH1	Brick	800
TH2	Brick (assumed)	800 (assumed)
TH3	Concrete	800
TH4	Concrete	900

Soils:

Ref	Description	Plasticity Index (%)	Volume change potential (NHBC)
TH1	Brown fine to medium gravelly silty CLAY	71	High
TH2	Brown fine to medium gravelly silty CLAY	61	High
TH3	Brown fine to medium gravelly silty CLAY	66	High
TH4	Brown fine to medium gravelly silty CLAY	59	High

Roots:

Ref	Roots Observed to depth of (mm)	Identification	Starch content
TH1	800	Acer spp.	Present
TH2	800	Pomoideaea gp. Leguminosae spp.	Present
TH3	800	Pomoideaea gp. Acer spp.	Present
TH4	900	Hedera spp. Prunus spp.	Present

Acer spp. are maples, including sycamore, Norway maple, and Japanese maples. Pomoideaea gp. include apple, cotoneaster, hawthorn, pear, pyracantha, quince, rowan, snowy mespil and whitebeam. Leguminosae spp. include laburnum, Robinia (false acacia or locust), broom, the pagoda tree and the climber wisteria. Hedera spp. include ivy. Prunus spp. include blackthorn, cherry, cherry-laurel, Portuguese laurel, peach, plum, and related species Leguminosae spp. include laburnum, Robinia (false acacia or locust), broom, the pagoda tree and the climber wisteria.

Drains: The drains have been surveyed and defects identified.

Monitoring: Level monitoring commenced on 17/02/2026 with a subsequent reading taken on 16/04/2026.

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Discussion

Opinion and recommendations in this report are made on the understanding that QuestGates has identified clay shrinkage subsidence, rather than defective drainage, 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.

Roots were observed in the soils surrounding the foundations in TH1, TH2, TH3 & TH4. Samples recovered from the trial holes correspond to vegetation recorded on site.

Level monitoring has recorded movement which may be attributed to a vegetative influence; continued monitoring will provide further information for consideration.

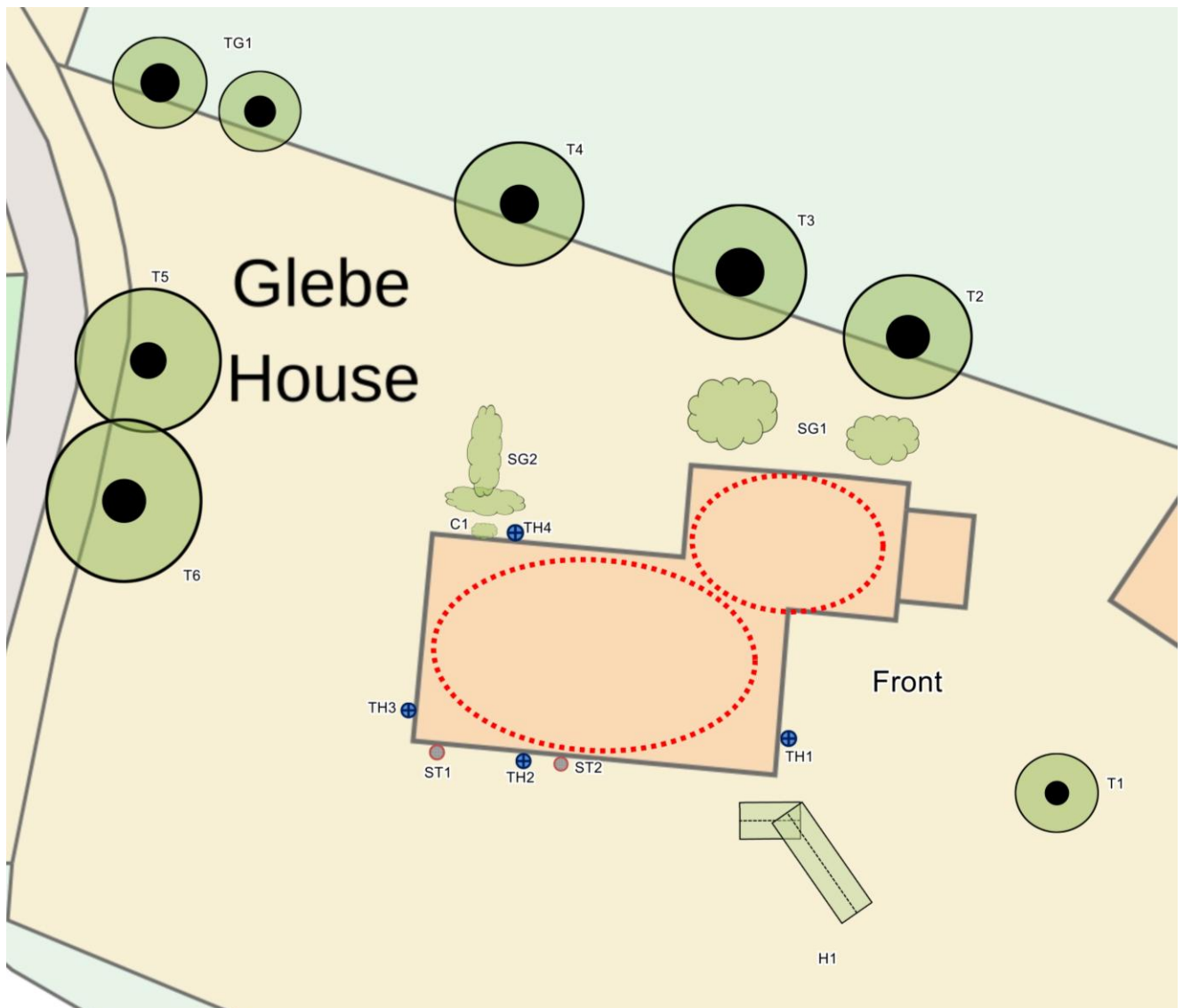
Based on the information currently available and our own site assessment we conclude there is damage with the potential to be linked to shrinkage of the clay subsoil exacerbated by the soil drying effects of vegetation.

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).

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

Site Plan



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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.

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

Tree No.	Species	Height (m)	Dia (mm)	Crown Spread (m)	Dist. to building (m)	Age Classification	Ownership
T2	Sycamore	16 *	650 *	11 *	6.75 *	Potentially older than extension	Third Party The Old Vicarage SN11 8SB
Management history		No recent management noted.					
Recommendation		Remove (fell) to near ground level. Owner to physically remove any regrowth (no chemical treatment due to translocation risk).					
T3	Sycamore	15 *	450 *	13 *	8 *	Potentially older than extension	Third Party The Old Vicarage SN11 8SB
Management history		No recent management noted.					
Recommendation		Remove (fell) to near ground level. Owner to physically remove any regrowth (no chemical treatment due to translocation risk).					
T5	Ash	17 *	600 *	16 *	16 *	Potentially older than extension	Policy Holder
Management history		No recent management noted.					
Recommendation		Reduce height by 3m and crown radius by 1m leaving balanced crown. Prune on a biennial cycle to maintain at broadly reduced dimensions.					
T6	Sycamore	17 *	600 *	14 *	17.5 *	Potentially older than extension	Policy Holder
Management history		No recent management noted.					
Recommendation		Remove (fell) to near ground level. Owner to physically remove any regrowth (no chemical treatment due to translocation risk).					
SG1	Laurel	4 - 6	Ms	4 *	2.5	Younger than Property	Policy Holder
Management history		No recent management noted.					
Recommendation		Remove (fell) to near ground level and treat stump to inhibit regrowth.					

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

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Table 1 **Current Claim - Tree Details & Recommendations Cont'd**

Tree No.	Species	Height (m)	Dia (mm)	Crown Spread (m)	Dist. to building (m)	Age Classification	Ownership
SG2	Mixed species shrubs including Laurel and Hazel	3	Ms	5	2	Younger than Property	Policy Holder
Management history		Subject to past management/pruning.					
Recommendation		Remove (fell) to near ground level all stems within 4m of the property. Owner to physically remove any regrowth (no chemical treatment due to translocation risk). Maintain remaining broadly at no more than current dimensions by periodic pruning.					
C1	Ivy	5	Ms	2.5	0.1	Younger than Property	Policy Holder
Management history		No recent management noted.					
Recommendation		Remove (fell) to near ground level and treat stump to inhibit regrowth.					
ST1	Pyracantha	-	-	-	0.1	Younger than Property	Policy Holder
Management history		Recently removed.					
Recommendation		Treat stump to inhibit regrowth.					
ST2	Wisteria	-	-	-	0.1	Younger than Property	Policy Holder
Management history		Recently removed.					
Recommendation		Treat stump to inhibit regrowth.					

Ms: multi-stemmed * Estimated value

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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	Apple	5.75	370	9	11	Potentially older than extension	Policy Holder
Management history		No recent management noted.					
Recommendation		Maintain broadly at no more than current dimensions by periodic pruning.					
T4	Sycamore	16 *	500 *	14 *	16 *	Potentially older than extension	Third Party The Old Vicarage SN11 8SB
Management history		No recent management noted.					
Recommendation		Reduce height by 3m and crown radius by 1m leaving balanced crown. Prune on a biennial cycle to maintain at broadly reduced dimensions.					
TG1	Sycamore	15 *	500 *	9 *	18 *	Potentially older than extension	Third Party The Old Vicarage SN11 8SB
Management history		No recent management noted.					
Recommendation		Maintain broadly at no more than current dimensions by periodic pruning.					
H1	Beech	2.25	Ms	2	3	Younger than Property	Policy Holder
Management history		Subject to regular past management/pruning.					
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.

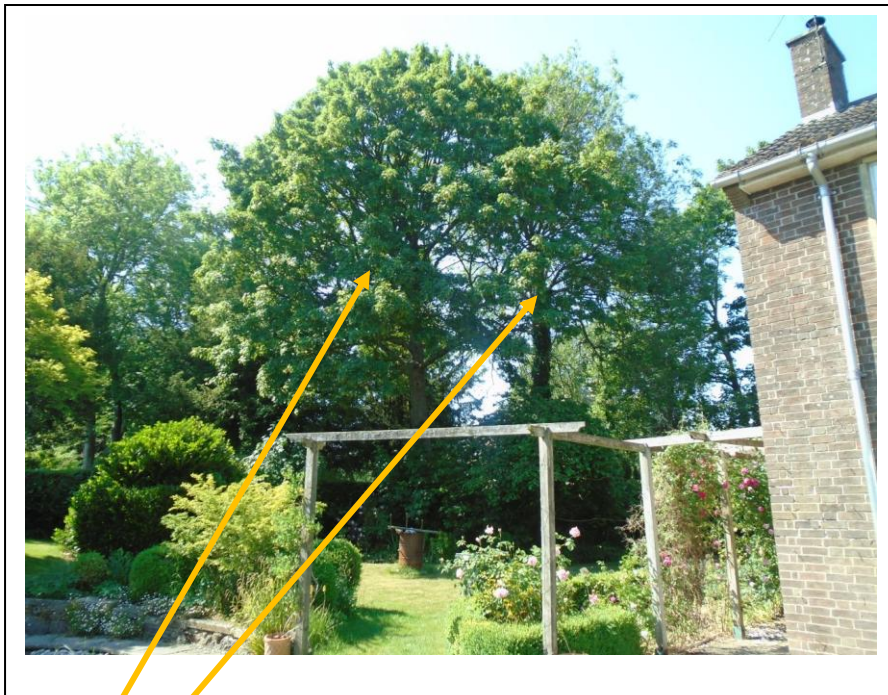
Tree dimensions may be estimated or approximate based on accessibility.

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

Photographs



View of T4, T3 & T2



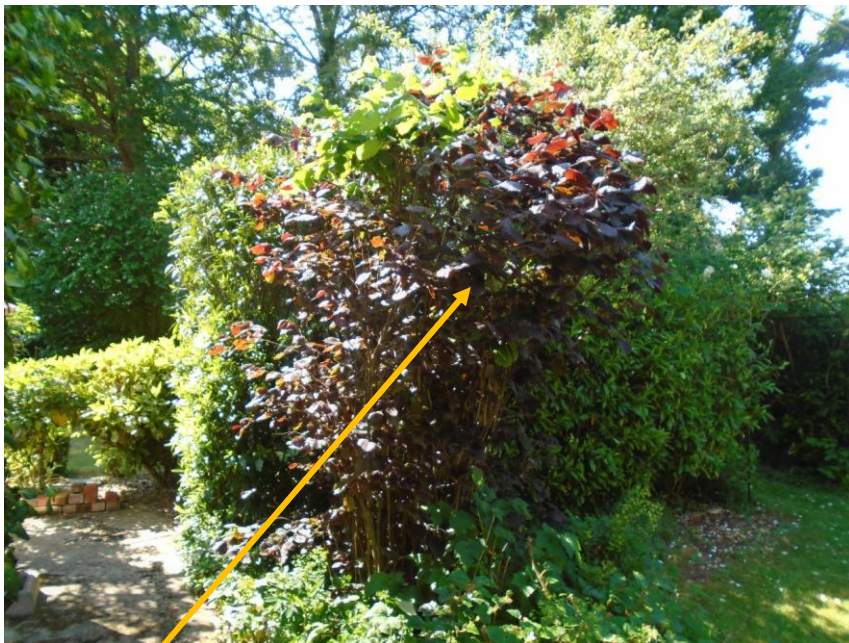
View of T6 & T5

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View of one section of SG1



View of SG2

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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.