

Mrs Barbara Whitehead – 23rd October 2019

During long periods of dry hot weather considerable drying out of clay subsoils can occur and this can be exacerbated by nearby trees and other vegetation withdrawing moisture from the subsoil. When clay subsoil loses moisture shrinkage will normally occur resulting in loss of support to certain parts of the structure of a building. If this loss of support continues for a significant period of time the stress imposed upon the building will eventually manifest itself in settlement, fractures and distortion which is known as subsidence damage.

Subsidence can also be caused by broken and leaking drains. The leakage of water can over a period of time wash away the fine particles of subsoil and cause softening of the subsoil, which can in turn cause settlement and damage to nearby foundations including oversite concrete slabs and floor slabs.

Damage to certain parts of the buildings and hard landscape features can also be caused by the physical effects of tree roots and such like.

HISTORY

You say that you have occupied the house for about 44 years and that at the date of purchase the Tree Preservation Order was already in place for the Lawson Cypress tree located next to the brick retaining wall at the left hand area of the rear garden. It is understood that this TPO was put on the tree in 1973 when it was quite young, about 50 years ago.

You have recently applied for permission to remove this tree as you have been advised that it is causing damage to the nearby brick retaining wall.

Permission has been refused by the Hillingdon Borough on the basis that no technical evidence has been provided that links the damage to the retaining wall to the tree in question.

Slight cracking to the retaining wall was noted in May 2019 during the preparation of a Party Wall Award. You have become increasingly concerned regarding more cracking and movement to the retaining wall which has now increased in severity. You now feel that the damage should be further investigated and you have requested that we prepare a report as instructed, which can then be submitted to Hillingdon Borough for their further consideration.

OBSERVATIONS

Generally

A detailed inspection of the brick retaining wall at the left hand area of the rear garden was carried out.