

SUPPORTING DOCUMENT (2) - CORRESPONDENCE FROM STRUCTURAL ENGINEER TO OUR NEIGHBOUR AT 53 WESTON PARK.

----- Forwarded Message -----

Subject: 220938 - 53 Weston Park, N8 9SY - new cracking

Date: Thu, 8 Sep 2022 08:03:02 +0000

From: Tim Attwood

To: 'Ruth Seilig (Ruth Selig Architect)'

Hi Ruth

Very good to see you and Stephen yesterday although not (once again) to look at more cracks to the house. Having said that it was September 2014 when I last visited and then it was cracking to the other party wall when the bay had moved a bit. So it seems there is only a problem in extreme conditions.

To summarise my visit and advice.

1. Cracking has (only) occurred low down to the front of the party wall with No 51. I understand hairline cracks first occurred in early summer but increased significantly in July/August.
2. The cracking appears to relate very specifically to where the low external separating wall between the two houses adjoins the party wall. This wall appears to have subsided towards the front and rotated and pulled at its junction with the front wall of both houses. The bond between the two walls is largely intact but the movement has manifested itself as cracking where the elevation is joined to the party wall behind. Cracks are currently only visible on No 53 side, but almost certainly exist through the depth of the wall. The finishes to the toilet in No 51, which has been boarded out, are currently doing a good job of masking the movement.
3. Apart from the subsidence to the boundary wall, the paths and hard surfacing to both houses have moved, subsided and cracked.
4. The cause of the subsidence is primarily due to the extreme dry weather over the summer which followed a dry winter and spring. This will have reduced the moisture content of the shrinkable clay subsoil causing everything sitting on it to subside. This seasonal movement occurs every year but increases in extreme conditions. The seasonal movement will have been exaggerated by any vegetation which is itself taking out more moisture from the soil, which depending on the amount and type, can occur to significant depths.
5. My concern is that there is a significant amount of vegetation to the front of both houses close to the separating wall showing evidence of subsidence. Specifically the privet hedge on the boundary, the hydrangea and fig in No 53 and (most significantly) the Japanese Pagoda tree in No 51.
6. In addition, there is a pair or a combined drain running under here taking water from both soil pipes. If this has been leaking or been a source of water for the vegetation this may have further exaggerated any seasonal movement when the drain was less used over the summer.
7. The damage that has occurred so far is relatively limited and not serious in structural terms, however, despite the recent rainfall, movement may increase for another month or so before starting to recover – assuming we have more normal rainfall over the autumn and winter. Recovery may see the cracks close slightly over the winter.
8. To reduce the risk of further movement, and particularly any risk of damage to other parts of both houses, I recommend that some immediate heavy pruning is carried out - particularly to the Privet and the Pagoda Tree. Your neighbour appears to be happy to instruct that work.
9. In the medium term, the Pagoda tree, which I understand can grow to 10m plus, should really be removed as it is not very suitable for that location. It was agreed yesterday that a case would be put to the Local Authority (assuming permission is required) to do this.
10. I also recommend that the drains are surveyed to check the position and condition. While a CCTV company is on site it would be worth checking the rest of the house drainage to see where it all goes as there are a number of runs and no means of locating them apart from

the single chamber at the rear. We would suggest G.O. Drainage Services are perfect for this type of work.

11. I have taken record photographs and we will monitor the movement over the winter.

I trust this is an accurate summary of our discussion and my comments yesterday but please let me know if you require any further advice.

I will charge for my input on an hourly basis at the rate of £140 per hour plus VAT and depending how things proceed, issue invoices at suitable stages.

Best wishes

Tim Attwood
Director