

Simon Pryce Arboriculture

Report

Client: Neil Hawes and Associates Ltd

Site: 102 Florence Road, London, N4 4DR

Subject: Trees and other vegetation near the building and their effects on it.
Specification for necessary or appropriate work.

Inspection date: 3rd March 2026

Report date: 18th April 2026

Reference: 26/002

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1 Introduction

Instructions

- I.1 This report has been prepared on the instructions of Neil Hawes and Associates Ltd in connection with their investigation of a subsidence claim at 102 Florence Road, London, N4 4DR.
- I.2 I have been asked to inspect trees and other vegetation growing nearby, to assess their condition and possible effects on the building and to specify any necessary or appropriate work.

Sources of information

- I.3 This report is based on the information below.
 - 1. Meridian Site Investigations Ltd report ref MSI1661
 - 2. Haringey Council's interactive maps showing planning restrictions covering trees
- I.4 I also visited the site and inspected the trees on 3rd March 2026. The inspections were visual and made from ground level. Trees belonging to other parties were inspected as closely as reasonably possible either from within the site boundary or from the road.
- I.5 General matters are discussed below. The attached schedule contains comments and recommendations for individual trees and they are shown on the site plan. Left and right are used as if facing buildings from the front, unless noted otherwise.

2 Background

The site

- 2.1 Number 102 is on the south side of Florence Road and is at the end of the terrace, so the right hand side boundary abuts the back gardens of numbers 48 - 50 Stapleton Hall Road. It is a three storey Victorian or Edwardian house with a single storey addition built onto the rear. Cracking and signs of foundation movement have occurred and are being investigated for the insurers by Neil Hawes Associates. Their reports and those of the other specialists involved contain a full account of the investigations but some points are summarised below.

Damage

- 2.2 The damage consists of cracking in the main part of the house and the rear extension, with the general pattern suggesting downward movement towards the right. This is being monitored for seasonal movement, but readings are not available yet.

Foundations

- 2.3 In January 2026 Meridian Site Investigations dug two trial pits (TPs) in order to expose the foundations.
 - 1. TP1, next to the front bay showed that the main wall foundation is stepped brickwork on a concrete footing 890mm thick with its base 1.6m below ground, while the bay window is on an 870mm concrete footing, also with an overall depth of 1.6m.
 - 2. TP2, next to the rear right corner of the extension, revealed a 500mm thick concrete footing with its base 600mm below ground.

Ground conditions

- 2.4 The subsoil is a brown silty clay and bore holes from the bases of the trial pits confirmed that this extends down to 5m. It was firm, becoming stiff with increasing depth and confirmed by the shear strengths increasing steadily towards the bases of the bore holes. Samples had plasticity indices between 39 and 47% indicating a high potential for shrinkage and swelling with changes in moisture content as defined by the National House Building Council.
- 2.5 Sample moisture contents were between 29% and 31%, with no obvious variation with depth or between the two bore holes. They were typically just over 40% of the liquid limits, except the sample from 2m in BH2 in which the figure was 39%. That is considered to be an indication of desiccation, i.e. the clay being drier than would be anticipated under normal equilibrium conditions.

Roots

- 2.6 Roots were found in all the locations and samples identified as below. The presence of starch indicates that they were active at the time or until shortly before being recovered, although all plants have some dead roots, so that is not necessarily an indication of the health of the parent tree. Juvenile means that the root had been produced recently, not necessarily that it was from a young plant. USF = underside of footing.

TP/BH	depth [m]	species	starch
TP1	USF	2 roots Acer (sycamore and maples)	yes
		3 roots - shrub, probably <i>Aucuba</i> spotted laurel	none
		7 root too small to identify	
BH1	2m	1 sample - very small but possibly <i>Aucuba</i>	yes
TP2	USF	1 root <i>Tilia</i> (lime)	yes
		2 roots <i>Eucalyptus</i> (gum) -small <0.4mm dia.	yes
		1 root too small to identify	
BH2	1.5m	2 roots <i>Eucalyptus</i> - 0.5mm dia.	yes
		1 root too small to identify	

3 Observations - trees and other vegetation

- 3.1 The most significant trees are all offsite and include a large eucalyptus close to the rear extension and some pollarded limes in the back garden of no.48 Stapleton Hall Road and a Norway maple belonging to Haringey Council in the pavement in front. The eucalyptus was topped several years ago and has regrown vigorously to form a large crown. The Norway maple was also reduced a few years ago and has regrown.
- 3.2 These are described individually in the schedule forming the second part of this report, with recommendations for any necessary or appropriate work. They are numbered on the attached site plan.

4 General comments

- 4.1 Roots of living trees dry the soil during the growing season and clay soils shrink when dried and swell as they rehydrate, which can lead to subsidence in nearby buildings if the foundations do not extend below the affected zone. This usually starts during dry summers and shows a seasonal cycle, with downward movement in summer followed by recovery through the winter when the weather is cooler and wetter and the vegetation inactive.

- 4.2 The size, age and vigour of an individual tree all influence its water consumption, but there is also variation between species. Eucalypts have a strong ability to extract water, so are among the higher risk tree genera. The other trees in the vicinity are regarded as low or moderate water demanders, although any healthy tree can affect foundations on clay soils. Large shrubs and climbing plants can also cause significant soil drying and are frequently planted near buildings.
- 4.3 Pruning to remove live foliage reduces water uptake. The small water absorbing roots die each winter, then new ones develop in spring and grow according to the tree's need, so reducing the crown and controlling new growth lessens the extent and water uptake of the root system. Healthy trees sprout after pruning, so regular recutting is essential, although this is not always effective with vigorous trees close to buildings. This management can harm trees, although some species tolerate pruning better than others. Removing trees will eliminate any threat associated with them, and can allow new planting that presents a lower risk without needing intensive maintenance.
- 4.4 Frequently soil movements caused by trees are purely seasonal, so felling stabilises the building almost immediately if done during the dormant season and within one winter at most. However large vigorous trees can cause a persistent moisture deficit at depth where the soil does not rehydrate fully in winter. If these are removed the resulting soil rehydration and swelling can lead to heave damage in buildings nearby, especially if they were built after the moisture deficit established.

5 Discussion

Causation

- 5.1 The site investigation found a highly shrinkable clay subsoil extending well below the foundations at the front and rear of the house. There were no obvious signs of significant soil desiccation, but the soil samples were taken in winter, when the clay would have rehydrated since the end of the growing season. Monitoring will give a clearer picture when more readings are available and a seasonal cycle with cracks widening in summer and recovering through the winter would be conclusive evidence implicating trees. It would also tend to discount problems with the drains.
- 5.2 The identified roots at the front were from Haringey's Norway maple growing in the pavement and those at the rear correspond to the large eucalyptus and the pollarded limes in the back garden of no.48. They are all growing on after being reduced so their water uptakes will be increasing.

Remedial and precautionary options

- 5.3 The eucalyptus is too large and too close to the house for further reduction to be an effective remedy or a reliable preventive measure, so the only viable option is to remove it. The other trees are all smaller and farther from the house and the previous reductions make them more resilient to further pruning, so they could be cut back and maintained at reduced sizes. It will be essential to trim regrowth regularly in order to maintain the benefit.
- 5.4 The attached schedule contains comments and recommendations for work on the various trees and shrubs, based on the available information and my assessment. It will address the current problem and future risks, although it might need to be reviewed if problems occur or in the light of any new information.

Heave

- 5.5 Removing the eucalyptus could lead to some soil swelling. The heave potential could be investigated further and possible effects on the building would be an engineering matter, but the tree is younger than the house, so that could not lift it above the original built level. The tree is also too close to the building for any form of pruning to be viable, so felling is the only arboricultural option.

Restrictions

- 5.6 Haringey Council's online maps show that none of the trees in the vicinity are protected by tree preservation orders (TPOs), but the properties are in Stroud Green Conservation Area, so the council normally would need to be given six weeks notice of any proposed work to trees over 75mm diameter at 1.5m above ground. They can allow that by confirming that they do not object or by letting the six weeks lapse without making a TPO to prevent the work. In that event, or if trees are already protected, it would be necessary to make an application for consent; if that is refused there is a right of appeal to the Secretary of State via the Planning Inspectorate.
- 5.7 There are exceptions to this, including any work necessary to prevent or abate an actionable nuisance, such as subsidence. If councils refuse to allow such works they can be liable for compensation.

Tree work

- 5.8 Any tree work should be carried out in accordance with BS3998: 2010, Recommendations for Tree work, by an arboricultural contractor with appropriate third party and public liability insurance. The Arboricultural Association has a list of approved contractors, at <https://www.trees.org.uk/ARB-Approved-Contractor-Directory>.
- 5.9 Where trees or other woody plants are removed it is good practice to remove the stumps and main roots in order to prevent colonisation by honey fungus, which can spread into other plants, either killing them or decaying the structural roots while they are still alive, making them unstable. That also makes them less likely to send up sucker shoots, which can be a problem in some species.

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6 Conclusions

- 6.1 Site investigation shows that the damage in the house is subsidence caused by the sub soil shrinking as it has been dried by roots from nearby trees and other vegetation.
- 6.2 The main causes are the large eucalyptus and pollarded limes to the rear and the Council's Norway maple growing in the street in front. These have all been reduced at various times and are regrowing, with their water uptakes increasing in the process.
- 6.3 The eucalyptus is too large and too close to the house for any form of pruning to be effective, so the only viable arboricultural option is to remove it. The other trees are smaller and farther from the house, so they could be reduced again but it will be essential to cut regrowth regularly in order to maintain the benefit.
- 6.4 The recommended work will reduce the drying effect on the soil under the house significantly but might need to be reviewed in the light of any further investigation or if the problems continue.
- 6.5 There are no statutory restrictions on tree work but the trees concerned all belong to other parties so there is no direct control over them.

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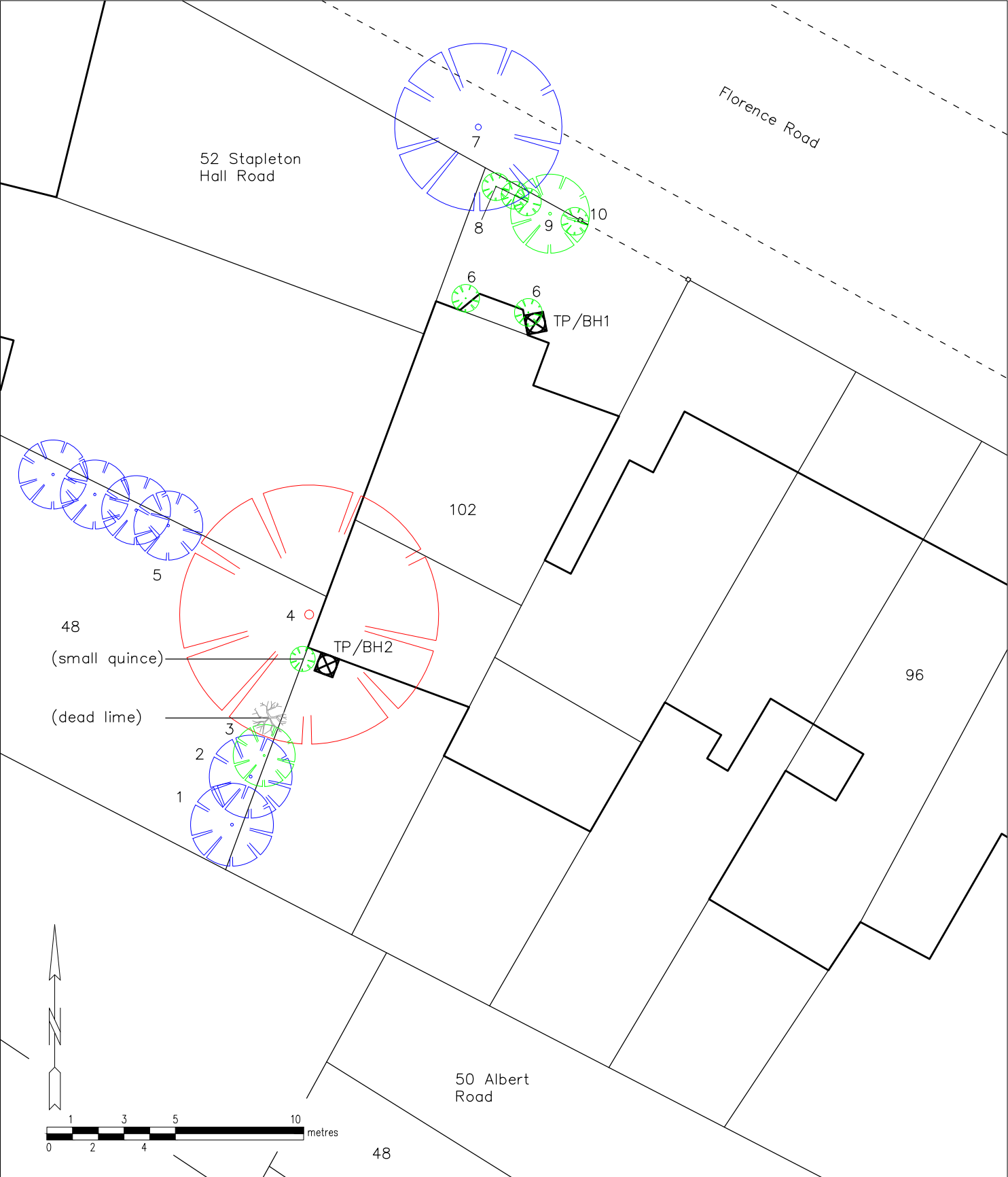
Tree no.	Species	Distance	Height	Trunk dia.	Est. age	Comments and recommendations
The trees are described in sequence, starting to the rear of the property and going round clockwise, as shown on the site plan. Asterisks in the first column denote those in other ownership, with house numbers in brackets or [c] denoting council owned trees. Some dimensions of these were estimated. m/s = multiple stemmed.						
1 * (48)	Lime	7.5m	7m	250mm	90+	Pair of nearly identical trees, both pollarded in the past at about fence height and evidently cut back regularly before being allowed to grow on. Possible source of the roots in TP/BH2 and capable of growing much large if left, but tolerate pruning well. • <i>Reduce to former pollard points, cut regrowth every 1 - 2 years.</i>
2 * (48)	Lime	5.5m	7m	250mm	90+	
3 * (48)	Ceanothus	4.5m	4m	150mm	40+	Wide spreading and one sided due to being shaded and suppressed by the other trees. Not implicated but also capable of growing larger. • <i>Reduce to about 2.5m - 3m and maintain at about that size by trimming annually.</i>
4 * (48)	Eucalyptus	1.5m	13m	450mm	40+	Large vigorous tree that was topped at about 5m and has regrown to develop a large crown with dense, vigorous foliage. Roots from it were identified, it is the dominant influence on the house and will get much larger if left. Too close to the house for pruning to be a viable option. • <i>Fell, remove stump or treat to present regrowth.</i>
5 * (48)	Lime & walnut	4 - 10m	8 - 10m	200 - 250mm	40+	Row of trees along the boundary between 48 and 50, all reduced and recut periodically. Ones at the far end could affect the backs of nos.48 and 50. • <i>Recut regularly to maintain them at 4 - 5 high or smaller.</i>
6 * (C)	Norway maple	8m	12m	350mm	40+	Street tree that has had a moderate crown reduction several years ago and grown on. Only source of the Acer roots found in TP/BH1. • <i>Reduce below the most recent points and maintain at 6 - 7m by recutting every 2 years.</i>
7	2 no. Aucuba	½m	1.5m	m/s	20+	Pair of healthy shrubs rooted each side of the front bay. Roots from them were found in TP/BH1 and they are too close to the house for pruning to be viable. • <i>Remove both.</i>
8	Aucuba	4m	2m	m/s	20+	Shaded by the birch but reasonably healthy and well away from the front of the house. • <i>No work needed beyond normal maintenance and trimming.</i>
9	Birch	4m	13m	220mm	30+	Leans and partly suppressed by the maple otherwise fair. Capable of some more growth, but is one of the lower risk species. • <i>No urgent work needed, could be reduced and managed if the need arose.</i>

Trees inspected by Simon Pryce, 3rd March 2026

Tree no.	Species	Distance	Height	Trunk dia.	Est. age	Comments and recommendations
10	Pyracantha	4m	3m	m/s	20+	Leans over the entrance due to growing under the birch otherwise fair. One of the higher water demanding shrubs, but not a major risk at this distance from the house. No work needed beyond normal maintenance.

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Simon Pryce Arboriculture 30 Woodfield Road, Radlett, Herts, WD7 8JD 01923 467600 07710 224906 info@simonpryce.co.uk www.simonpryce.co.uk	Client: Trees and subsidence claim	Ref: 26/102	Rev:	Trees are colour coded according to effects on the building and work needed: Red - directly implicated or a significant risk, removal or intensive management needed Blue - not conclusively implicated but active management and/or monitoring recommended Green - no current effect found and any risk does not warrant intervention, no work beyond routine maintenance © Crown copyright and database rights 2026 Ordnance Survey
	Site: 102 Florence Road, London, N4 4DR	Scale: 1:200 at A4		
	Title: Trees and subsidence claim	Original drawing: Simon Pryce on OS base plan		
	Date: 3rd March 2026			