Subsidence Tree Report

For William Hunt Consulting

Property: 24 Broomfield Drive, Billinghurst, RH14 9TJ

Insured:	Mr & Mrs Fautly
Insurer:	Aviva
Insurer Ref:	TBC
WH Ref:	20620
Our Reference:	05602Rv2
Consultant:	Keiron Hart (BSc Hons, C.Env, F.Arbor.A, FICFor, MEWI, AARC, APAEWE, VETcert)
Visit Date:	1st July 2026
Report Date:	7th July 2026

Scope of Report

To assess trees within potential influencing distances. Identify their current & future potential to cause or contribute to damage to the property by way of direct or indirect damage.

Note

This report is based on the assumption engineers are satisfied that any damage is attributable to vegetation related subsidence. It is intended for use between the client, Tamla Trees Ltd and any parties detailed within the report.

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1. Property Description & Overview

1.1 My instructions relate to a vegetation related subsidence damage claim to the property. I am asked to review the available site investigations, complete my own site survey and provide comment and recommendations.

1.2 The property is described by the case engineer as a *"Detached house constructed circa 1970 in a residential estate location on a plot that is considered generally to be level. The property also has a kitchen extension and a conservatory built in 2006 for the Insured, which is the primary subject of the claim."*

1.3 I am advised that damage has developed in and around the extension to the rear in the summer of 2025. An escalation of damage during the summer months is consistent with damage being vegetation related subsidence.

1.4 During my site assessment I had access around the building I took measurements with a Leica D1 distometer, entered survey data on an iPad and took 7 photos with a Canon Ixus 70 camera, I took three photos with an iPhone 13.

1.5 The property and trees detailed within this report are within the Horsham District Council administration area. The property is affected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) but is not located within a Conservation Area.

1.6 The level of cracking assessed with Table 1 of BRE Digest No.251[1] is advised as BRE Cat 3. Noted levels of damage are by the case engineer upon their assessment. It is normal for damage levels to increase and decrease throughout the year depending on the level of influence and weather conditions.

Category	Description	Size
Cat 0	Negligible	<0.1mm
Cat 1	Very Slight	0.1-1.0mm
Cat 2	Slight	1mm-5mm
Cat 3	**Moderate**	**5mm-15mm**
Cat 4	Severe	15mm-<25mm
Cat 5	Very Severe	>25mm

Table 1 – BRE Digest 251 damage categories. The level of damage is advised as BRE Cat 3.

[1]BRE Digest 251: Assessment of damage in low-rise buildings, with particular reference to progressive foundation movement. Revised 1995

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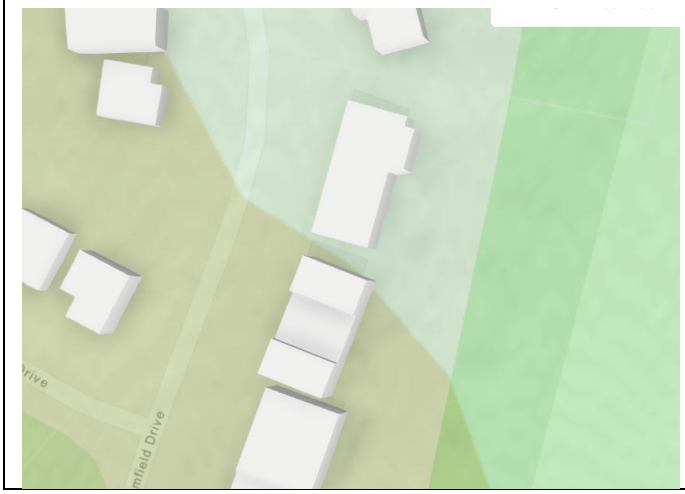
2. Underlying Soil

2.1 For vegetation related subsidence damage to occur an underlying clay soil is required. An assessment of the British Geological Survey open-source data for the property indicates:



Soil Description

Bedrock Deposits: Weald Clay Formation- Sandstone. These sedimentary rocks are fluvial, palustrine and shallow-marine in origin. They are detrital, forming deposits reflecting the channels, floodplains and deltas of a river in a coastal setting (with periodic inundation from the sea).[2]

Superficial Deposits: None advised

3. Site Investigations

3.1 The following site investigations were available for the formation of our report.

~~Level & Crack Monitoring~~
Soil testing
Engineers Report

Trial Pit & Borehole Logs
Root Identification
~~Drain Report~~

[2] https://webapps.bgs.ac.uk/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?pub=WC

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4. Tree Ownership & Protected Status

Ownership	
Are trees all located within grounds of property	No
Are 3rd Party trees a current or future risk factor?	Yes
Protected Status	
Is the property within a Conservation Area	No
Is the property affected by a Tree Preservation Order	Yes

Conservation Area Status	
Is the site located within a Conservation Area	No
Notes: (i) All trees larger than 7.5cm diameter at 1.5m above ground level are subject to regulations within a Conservation Area. Exemptions apply for trees which are dead and dangerous but clarification before any tree works is advised. A notification is required in many circumstances.	
Tree Preservation Order Status	
Are inspected trees subject to a TPO?	Yes
Type of TPO	~~**Area**~~
	~~**Individual**~~
	Group
	~~**Woodland**~~
TPO Reference	TPO 0013
Date TPO Made	1968/69
Notes: (i) The type and details of any TPO determine which trees are 'protected'. Exemptions apply for trees which are dead and dangerous but clarification before any tree works is advised. An application may be required before undertaking works. (ii) At the time of writing Horsham District Council indicates the presence of a TPO but confirms the property and trees are not located within a Conservation Area.	

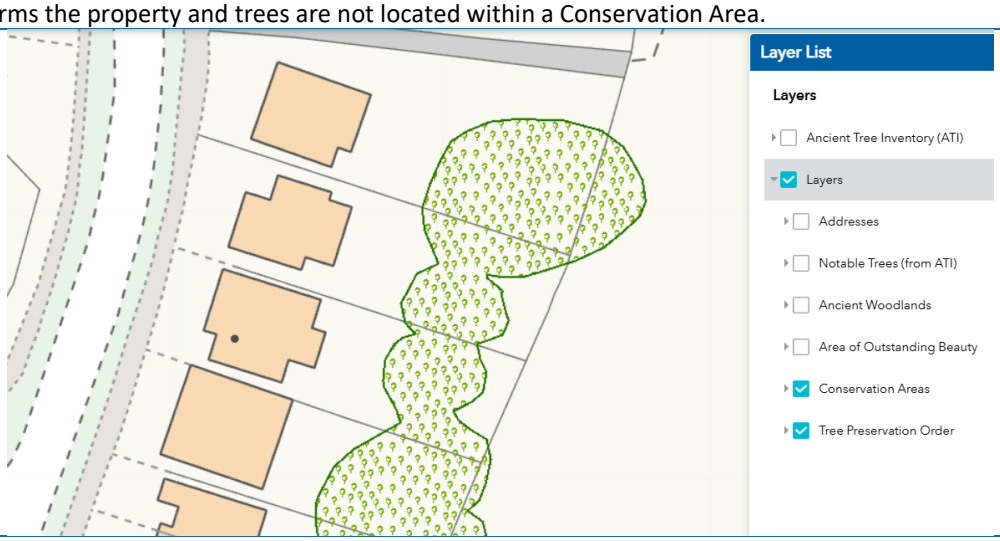

Fig 1 – The property is affected by a TPO but not located within a Conservation Area.

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5. Report Detail

5.1 Causation

5.2 **Bedrock Deposits:** Weald Clay Formation-Sandstone. These sedimentary rocks are fluvial, palustrine and shallow-marine in origin. They are detrital, forming deposits reflecting the channels, floodplains and deltas of a river in a coastal setting (with periodic inundation from the sea).

5.3 **Superficial Deposits:** None recorded.

5.4 Subsidence from vegetation and trees occurs when the vegetation dries the underlying soil and if this contains clay it can shrink in size, and the building subsides. The soil then rehydrates during the wet winter months giving classic cyclical movement profiles.

5.5 In March 2026 a site investigation was completed. Trial holes referenced as TP/BH1 and TP/BH2 were opened to the rear.

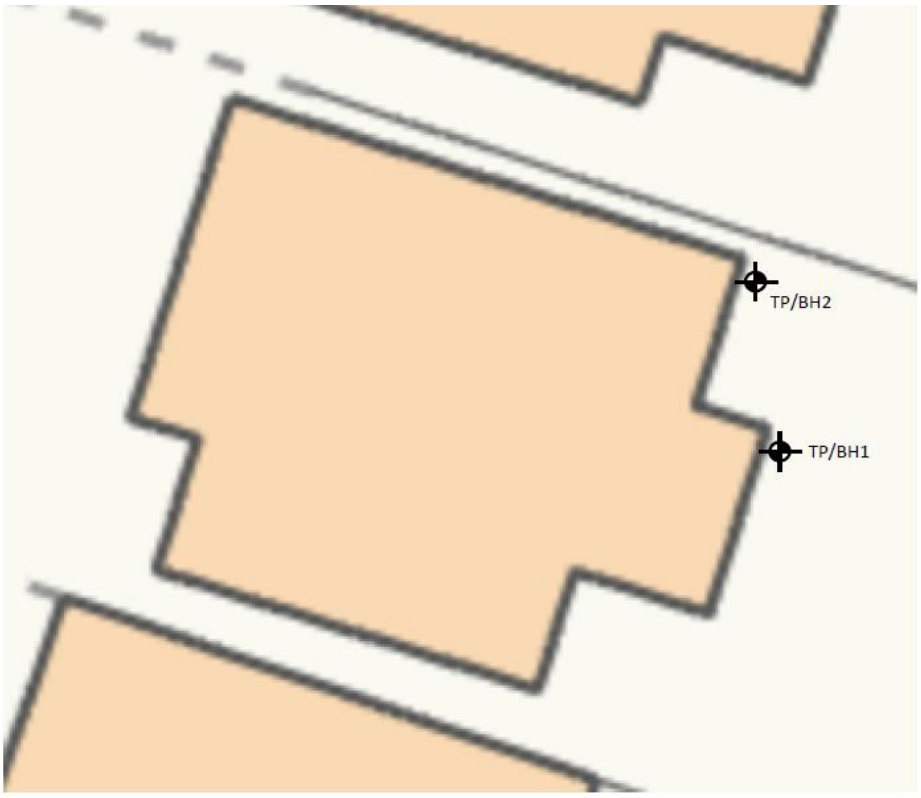

Fig 2 – Site investigation location plan showing locations of TP/BH1 & TP/BH2

5.6 TP/BH1 revealed a foundation that extended to a depth of 1100mm below ground level. In TP/BH2 the underside of foundation depth was recorded as 1600mm below ground level. Generally, the natural drying of soil (in the absence of the influence of vegetation) will not extend below a depth of around 600mm. On that basis the foundations in TP/BH1 and TP/BH2 extend below this depth.

5.7 TP/BH1 was extended to a depth of 4.7m. In TP/BH2 this was to 5.7m. The boreholes all remained dry upon completion. This, and the fact damage escalated in the summer of 2025 (and was advised

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to be returning in summer 2026 at the time of my inspection) supports an opinion drains are not causal in the damage.

5.8 Roots were noted in the to 1.9m (TP/BH1) and 2.4m (TP/BH2).

5.9 Soils samples were recovered and tested in the laboratory and shown to be of intermediate to high plasticity (BS5930). Driscolls formula details that a soil can be described as desiccated where the moisture content is <40% of the liquid limit. The results relative to these figures are tabulated as follows:

Ref	Date	Depth	MC as % of LL	Desiccation
TP/BH1	March 2026	1.2 – 1.7m	**50%**	No
TP/BH1	March 2026	2.2 – 2.7m	**37%**	Yes
TP/BH1	March 2026	3.2 – 3.7m	**35%**	Yes
TP/BH1	March 2026	4.2 – 4.7m	**35%**	Yes
TP/BH2	March 2026	1.7 – 2.2m	**70%**	No
TP/BH2	March 2026	2.7 - .2m	**40%**	Onset
TP/BH2	March 2026	3.7 – 4.2m	**45%**	No
TP/BH2	March 2026	4.7 – 5.2m	**43%**	No

Table 2 – Driscolls formula applied to the supplied sample results and shows desiccation was recorded in TP/BH1 and onset of desiccation in TP/BH2.

5.10 Atterberg soil testing is supportive of the opinion vegetation is of influence. This is on the basis that desiccation is recorded in TP/BH1 and onset of desiccation in TP/BH2.

5.11 Soils have also been the subject of Oedometer testing which measures the swell capacity of a sample upon rehydration. If the soil has been influenced by vegetation it will retain a swell capacity.

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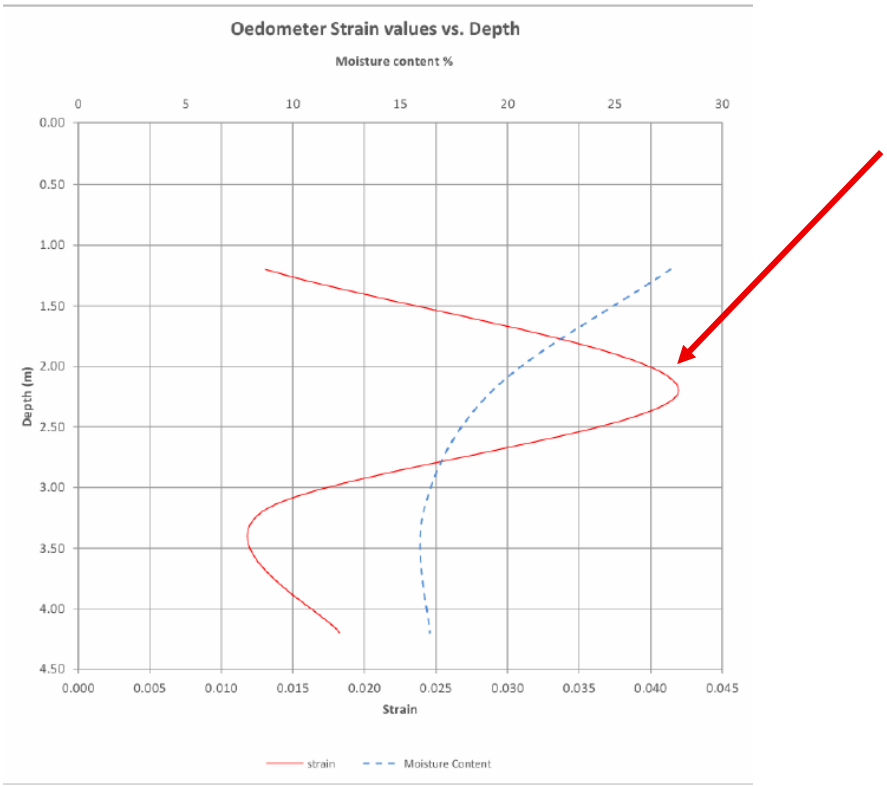

Fig 3 – Oedometer strain testing shows a characteristic 'bulge' (arrow) which is associated with the influence of vegetation on an underlying clay soil. This influence has peaked at between 2 – 2.5m depth.

5.12 *Quercus* spp roots were recovered from TP/BH1 and TP/BH2. A single *Cupressaceae* spp root was recovered from BH2. The roots of no other species were recorded.

5.13 No monitoring is advised. The advice within this report is on the basis that seasonal movement is confirmed. The homeowners personal observations are supportive of the opinion the movement is seasonal on the basis they noted the damage in the summer of 2025. The cracks then closed during the winter and spring. At the time of my inspection, I was advised and shown areas where damage was now returning in the summer of 2026.

5.14 On the basis of the advised site investigations and the insureds own observations on seasonal movement it can be confirmed that, on a balance of probabilities test, the movement damage being recorded is vegetation related subsidence.

5.15 Remedy

5.16 On the basis damage is considered vegetation related subsidence tree works have the likely capacity to return stability.

5.17 Foreseeability

5.18 The trees appear under private ownership although the trees beyond the rear boundary could be under commercial ownership given the area, they are located is not a residential garden. However, it seems unlikely that there would be first incidence foreseeability to the respective tree owners.

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5.19 Tree & Vegetation Management

5.20 In terms of vegetation management tree removal would likely return stability. The root testing supports an opinion to remove Oak tree(s) would remove the influence of vegetation.

5.21 At 17m in height and 8.7m distant the closest tree to the property is that referenced as T1 (Oak) within this report. This is a 3rd party garden tree within the neighbouring property of No 26.

5.22 Depending on the extent of movement being experienced it is possible the removal of this single tree would return stability. However, a number of other large mature Oak trees would remain, all with a size to distance ratio that they could, in theory also be of influence.

5.23 In addition to this the Oaks appear of similar age and to have grown naturally. This supports an opinion they will have a unified root system. In situations where root systems of trees have become unified it can be more difficult to remove the influence by way of individual tree removal (because the remaining trees can sustain the root system of the removed tree retaining the influence). This can extend claim durations and result in progressive tree removals over prolonged periods of time to affect a sufficient reduction in influence so as to return long term stability.

5.24 In addition to the difficulties in precise tree removal to return stability (other than removing all trees with the capacity to be of influence) the Oaks detailed within this report are the subject of a TPO. Currently there is insufficient evidence to progress a TPO application.

5.25 Level monitoring would be required as this is a requirement of such applications. Its duration would need to include a recovery period (winter/ spring) on the basis recovery movement confirms any influence is vegetation related.

5.26 It is likely that subject to the level monitoring showing seasonal movement a correctly framed TPO application could generate permission for tree removal (which would then need agreement with any respective tree owners).

5.27 This opinion is on the basis that a refusal would expose the local authority to a potential compensation claim, and it is our experience that such costs are not affordable to local authorities. This results in them granting permission where the evidence supports an opinion trees are causal.

5.28 However, this approach can generate adverse publicity, and it is noted that there is just such a claim in the local area.

5.29 Our instructions indicate a root barrier is proposed and subject to its extent and depth this would have the capacity to return stability. The removal of T1 may still be required depending on the proximity of the barrier installation to it.

5.30 This is on the basis a barrier installation severs tree roots an at only 8.7m from the property there is a risk the structural root plate is adversely affected if the installation is any closer than around 7m (and this is an estimate only).

5.31 Further advice on the potential implications of a barrier to this tree are available upon request. Whilst tree removal is regrettable the local authority may well take the view that the removal of this tree, in an effort to isolate the property from the influence of all other remaining trees, is to be supported.

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5.32 The *Cupressaceae* spp root is noted. The only source of this potential root noted during my inspection is TG1. On this basis it is considered the potential source of this root and any barrier would be advised to account for the presence of this vegetation.

5.33 Full management recommendations are contained at section 6. Please note if the intention is to complete future tree works between the 1st of March & the 31st of July (inclusive) a due diligence check for nesting birds must be completed before work starts in order to comply with the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. This check should be recorded in the Site-Specific Risk Assessment. If active nests are found work should not take place until the young have fledged. Further information is available here:

5.34 All tree works should be carried out by qualified, trained and fully insured operators in accordance with BS3998 (2010): 'Recommendations for Tree Works'. If required tree surgeons can be sourced here.

5.35 Please note that is a root barrier is to be progressed a TPO application would be required on the basis any roots of the trees are also protected.

Is vegetation management likely to contribute to the future stability of the property?	**Yes**
Is there a risk of heave if trees are removed?	**No***

On the basis of oedometer strain testing results but to be confirmed by case engineer.

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6. Recommendations

6.1 Immediate Action

Tree No.	Species	Age Cat	Approx Height (m)	Distance to Building (m)	Ownership	Observations	Subsidence Risk Action	Recommended Tree Work
Tree Age Category: A = Younger than property; B = Similar age to the property; C = Significantly older than property								

Note: A review of management recommendations to include further works may be required if stability does not return

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6.2 Future Risk Tree Works

* Estimated

Tree No.	Species	Age Cat	Approx. Height (m)*	Distance to Building (m)	Ownership	Observations	Subsidence Risk Action	Recommended Tree Work
T1	Oak	C	17	8.7	No 26 Broomfield Drive	Mature 3rd party garden tree.	Action to Avoid Future Risk	May require removal on H & S grounds depending on barrier location.
T2	Ash	C	17	14.9	No 26 Broomfield Drive	Mature 3rd party garden tree.	Action to Avoid Future Risk	No works - Root Barrier advised.
T3	Oak	C	17	21	TBC - Field to rear of property.	Mature field boundary tree. Some signs of canopy stress.	Action to Avoid Future Risk	No works - Root Barrier advised.
T4	Oak	C	17	20	TBC - Field to rear of property.	Mature field boundary tree. Ivy.	Action to Avoid Future Risk	No works - Root Barrier advised.
T5	Oak	C	17	20	TBC - Field to rear of property.	Mature field boundary tree. Ivy.	Action to Avoid Future Risk	No works - Root Barrier advised.
T6	Oak	C	17	20	TBC - Field to rear of property.	Mature field boundary tree. Ivy.	Action to Avoid Future Risk	No works - Root Barrier advised.
Tree Age Category: A = Younger than property; B = Similar age to the property; C = Significantly older than property								

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Tree No.	Species	Age Cat	Approx. Height (m)*	Distance to Building (m)	Ownership	Observations	Subsidence Risk Action	Recommended Tree Work
TG1	Cypress	A	9.5	12	No 26/28 Broomfield Drive (TBC)	Close grown boundary hedge/ screen. Exact ownership unclear.	Action to Avoid Future Risk	No works - Root Barrier advised.
S1	Philadelphus	A	2.4	2.8	No 26 Broomfield Drive	Established shrub.	Action to Avoid Future Risk	Prune to shape annually. (Note: May require removal for any barrier installation.
Tree Age Category: A = Younger than property; B = Similar age to the property; C = Significantly older than property								

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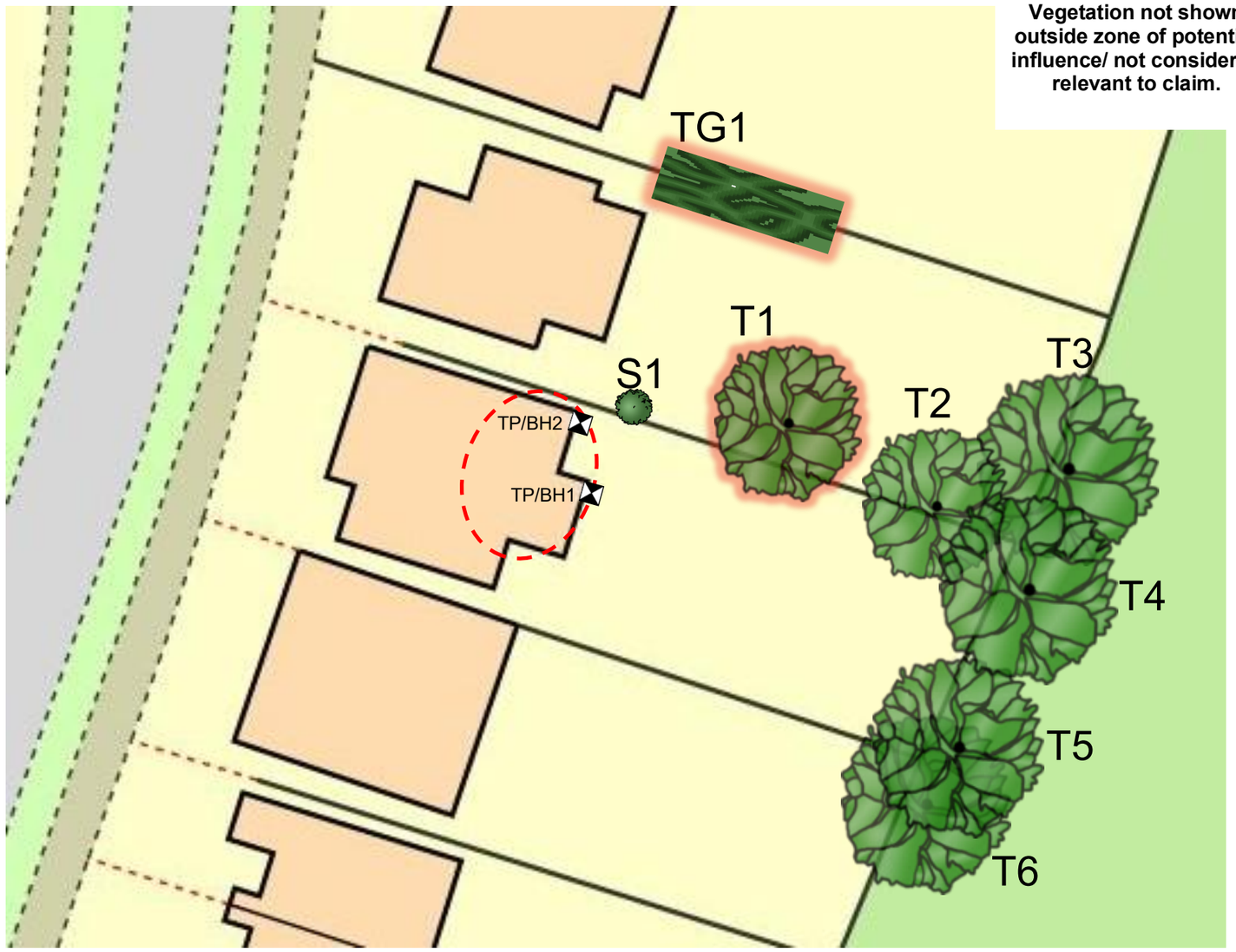
7. Site Plan



Vegetation not shown outside zone of potential influence/ not considered relevant to claim.

T/TG	Tree/ Tree Group
S/SG	Shrub/ Shrub Group
H	Hedge
C/CG	Climber/ Climber Group
⋈	Trial Pit

Job Reference: 05602R

Site Location:
24 Broomfield Drive,
Billinghurst, RH14 9TJ

Date: July 2026

Causal Tree

Note: The extent of Oak trees present means further trees other than T1 may well be of influence.

In the UK the prevailing wind direction is from the Southwest

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8. Photographs



Image 1 –T1, T2 & T4

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Image 2 –Trees to the rear

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Image 3 –S1 and the rear of the property



Image 4 –Looking towards TG1.

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9. Limitations

This report is intended as a preliminary appraisal of trees >7.5cm dbh, their health and safety condition. The potential influence on the property now and for a period of 5 years as 'future risk' from tree related subsidence. Recommendations for tree works and future management are made to meet the primary objectives of making trees safe and limiting any soil stability/ subsidence issues to the purchase property. In achieving this, it should be appreciated that recommendations may in some cases be contrary to best Arboricultural practice for tree pruning/management and is a necessary compromise between competing objectives.

Tree felling / removal operations must be carried out in a manner that reflects good forestry practice, as set out in the current UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) and BS3998 Tree Works. When preparing tree felling / removal operations, appropriate consideration should always be given for possible impacts on habitats and species, these will include but not limited to (i) Ensuring operations are in compliance with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 relating to European Protected Species (EPS); and (ii) Ensuring timing of operations (such as in the bird nesting season) are in compliance with the protection of birds under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. (iii) Ensuring the advice of an ecologist is sought as appropriate with all appropriate license requirements (bats) in place prior to the completion of works.

The presence of Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) or Conservation Area status must be determined prior to any tree works being implemented, failure to do so can result in fines in excess of £20,000.

A legal Duty of Care requires that any tree works specified in this report should be performed by qualified, arboricultural contractors who have been competency tested to determine their suitability for such works in line with Health & Safety Executive Guidelines. Additionally, all works should be carried out according to British Standard 3998 (2010) Recommendations for Tree Work.

In preparing this technical report, we may have used Large Language Models (LLMs) or AI tools to produce body text or analyse data. We adhere strictly to ethical principles, respecting privacy, and data protection. Compliance with GDPR is ensured, with no identifiable information entered into these tools. The author has exercised professional judgment and expertise in the preparation of this report, ensuring that the findings reflect the author's own analysis and interpretation, without intentional deception or falsification.

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