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Wellingborough Walks Action Group Limited (Registered in England Number 14738885. Registered office; 5 Castle Rd, Wellingborough, NN8 1LL, www.saveourtrees.co.uk)

FAO: Marion Turner-Hawes

RE: PROPOSED REMOVAL OF FOUR STREET TREES ON HARROWDEN RD, LINKED TO A SUBSIDENCE CLAIM AT 65 ROCHE WAY

These trees are under threat of being felled by North Northants Council as it is claimed that they are causing subsidence at 65 Roche Way

Instruction Received

To produce an Arboricultural report reviewing extensive documentation relating to the application to fell two beech and two maple trees. In particular to examine if 1) there is a case that the trees may be affecting the property, and if so are they the main causal factor, and 2) recommend alternatives to felling that would best resolve the problem.

Conclusions

The very extensive background documentation provides much useful information leading to the request that four trees in Harrowden Road, Wellingborough be felled.

The borehole data clearly demonstrates a shrinkable clay substratum liable to cause damage to properties.

However, there are numerous errors and omissions in these reports that seriously call into question that the trees are the primary cause of damage to 65 Roche Way.

The biggest flaw is that the reports state that the trees are younger than the property when photographs (see Appendix 8) clearly show that they had much the same appearance as today before the property was built. When 65 Roche Way was constructed the architects and builders should have taken into account the presence of mature trees when calculating the appropriate depth of the foundations. Those of the damaged porch are only 50cm and there is no information on the house itself. Foundations should be at least 1m below the lowest root. Roots would certainly have been encountered during the excavation of the foundations.

Also absent from the documentation is the original root analysis. It is most surprising that conifer roots (which are readily recognised) were not detected as a very substantial cypress hedge is less than 4m from the closest borehole.

In terms of damage to buildings it should be noted that beech is classified as low risk and that the two trees under threat are near the outer limits of the 'tree-to-damage-distances' for beech. Maples are medium risk. On the other hand, cypress is high risk and well within the 'tree-to-damage distances'.

The soil desiccation data has very serious limitations. Soil moisture profiles need to be taken over a much longer period than just 9 months. In the absence of a control borehole well away from the trees it is impossible to know whether the desiccation observed was solely due to natural seasonal changes and had nothing to do with the vegetation. The absence of any correspondence between the subsidence pattern and the location of the four trees further calls into question their role in the subsidence, rather than natural seasonal changes in the soil.

The cypress hedge is another complicating factor: as an evergreen it takes up water year round unlike the seasonal summer uptake by deciduous trees. The hedge will lower the water content of the soil next to the property thus making it more susceptible to subsidence.

None of the reports make any mention of the considerable amenity value of the four trees. With trees on both sides, Harrowden Rd is extremely attractive. Removal of the trees will leave a very unattractive fence clearly visible. Nor are there any CAVAT values for the trees .

Although calculating exact CAVAT values involves some subjectivity the total for the four trees will be in the region of £300,000. This sum is almost certainly more than any underpinning costs.

In conclusion; there is woefully insufficient evidence to justify felling of the four mature trees, and the 4 subject trees should not be felled on the basis of the existing evidence.

The subsidence damage is much more likely to be due simply to natural seasonal changes in a shrinkable clay substratum than to the water demand of the four trees in question.

Much more information is essential. This includes foundation depths, a better understanding of the drainage on site and nearby, much longer term monitoring and a control borehole.

Recommendations.

1. Further monitoring.
2. A new control borehole and repeated data, including root analyses, from the new ones near the originals.
3. Remove the cypress hedge and replace with more attractive ornamental deciduous shrubs like those already at the property.

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Appendices (Linked to WWAG Submitted Appendix)

- Appendix 4- List of all the information disclosed by NNC to WWAG and a brief summary of their main points
- Appendix 6 – Roche Way / Harrowden Rd Trees – Environmental Information Request (EIR) results_17 Dec 2025 – Redacted
- Appendix 8 - A document showing photos from 1964 and 1965 respectively, illustrating the presence of the threatened trees before the subject property was built

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