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TREES AND BUILDINGS

Trees are important to all of us; however, they can cause problems when they are too close to buildings. These problems are most severe when building on shrinkable clay soils such as those found in most of Milton Keynes. This leaflet highlights the common problems and how to avoid them.

The closer trees are to buildings the more likely they are to affect them. The severity of that effect depends on the species of the tree and the nature of the sub soil. Some high water demand trees such as oaks, willows, poplars, eucalyptuses and conifers can have an effect when up to 25 metres away.

Trees take up moisture causing the clay to dry out and shrink. Where no trees are present a foundation depth of 1 metre is normally acceptable as seasonal movement at this level is unlikely to cause structural problems.

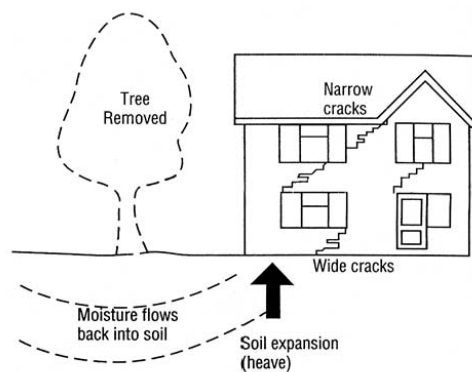


Figure 2. Damaging effect of clay heave

Foundation depths and the floor construction for new building work should be designed at an early stage to avoid the problems detailed above.

We can give you an indication of the likely foundations depth required: please contact our Technical Advice Line with details of the species of tree(s) and its distance from the proposed building. More detailed guidance can be found in the National House Building Council standard "Building near trees".

Care should also be taken with tree planting and landscaping after construction. Advice regarding the mature height, water demand and growth rate should be obtained from a tree specialist to ensure that they are suitable for the proposed location.

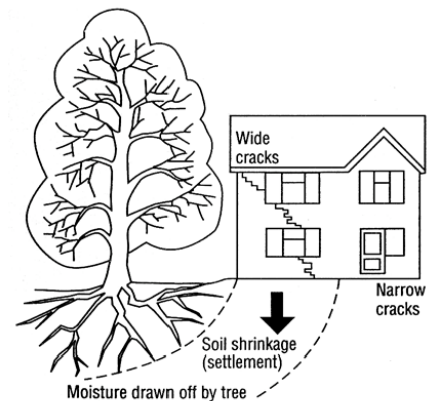


Figure 1. Damaging effect of clay shrinkage

Removing trees has the opposite effect to shrinkage and will cause the clay to swell which can also affect the foundations.