The London Tree Officers Association third report, 2008 into tree risks states as follows:

"The LTOA therefore believes the time has come for a 3rd Edition of its Risk Limitation Strategy that reflects the latest information available on this subject and also covers the issues that have arisen as a result of the changes within the sectors briefly mentioned above. This edition is informed by the experience of local authorities already following the principles detailed in this Strategy.

The assertion of this document is that the issue of building movement due to the shrinkage of clay soils caused by lack of rainfall is one that **continues to incorrectly implicate trees** as being the material cause in a great many of these claims. The process by which many claims have been dealt with in the past, claims sometimes presented with only cursory and questionable evidence, has resulted in trees being blamed for movement that should have more properly been attributed to other factors.

The LTOA further asserts that the issue is also one of dedicating sufficient resources to maintain and manage London's trees so that they may continue to be an essential part of Londoner's lives in the future. "

May I in particular refer you to part 3.3 of the guidance:

"Tree Officers frequently receive requests that action be taken against a particular tree, or trees, either because they may possibly at some future date cause problems with a building, or because they are already suspected of having caused a problem with the foundations of a nearby property. Unfortunately due to **inaccurate and frequently misleading press reports linking trees with damage to buildings** it has, in the public's mind, become axiomatic that trees are always the cause of building movement even before adequate site investigations have been conducted."

This approach runs contrary to the currently accepted national guidance on the subject provided in the Institution of Structural Engineer's (ISE) document "Subsidence of Low Rise Buildings" 2000 which stipulates **other factors should be eliminated before assuming the tree is the cause of the movement.**

On many occasions they are not the causative agent in the movement, although frequently cited as the prime cause. This may be despite the presence of substantive evidence that points to other more immediate factors causing movement. Proper investigation and cross correlation of appropriate investigative results frequently identify **other factors** as being the primary cause of the movement.

These other factors could for example be:

• Natural seasonal soil moisture changes, irrespective of the presence of trees.

• Localised geological variations, in particular buildings founded on made ground or soils with a high sand or silt content that would interfere with the accuracy of any test results.

• Vibration caused by the passage of nearby road vehicles and over/underground trains.

• Insufficient foundation design for structures that are ancillary to the main super structure of the property, resulting in differential movement between the two e.g. garages, conservatories, late addition extensions, porch, steps and bay structures.

• Lack of flank wall restraint.

• Overloading of internal walls.

• Internal alterations reducing the load bearing capacity of the original building.

• Installation of replacement windows without proper support.

• Loft conversions.

• Settlement and land slip.

• Drainage defects in presence of soil types predisposed to the washing out of fines and the lowering of the load bearing capacity of the soil.

• Lack of proper building maintenance e.g. above ground soil stacks and rainwater goods etc.

• Construction of impermeable hard standing in gardens preventing soil re-hydration during the winter.