

Services completed for this site

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| ☒ Lot Classifications | ☐ Acid Sulphate Report | ☐ Wastewater Management Report |
| ☐ Salinity Test | ☐ Exposure Classification | ☐ Level 1/2 Compaction Test |
| ☐ In-situ Permeability Test | ☐ Contamination Report | |

LOT CLASSIFICATION REPORT

Prepared for: Wattle Court Sydney North
Site Address: 31 Curl Curl Parade, CURL CURL

Revision: B
Site Test: 06/02/2025
Lab Test:
Customer Job: NSN0045-PO-010 - 010
Ideal Job: 8874-75495
Technician: MKa



Site Classification
P

Soil Classification
M
Y_s = 20 - 40

Wind Classification
N3 (W41)

Allowable Bearing Pressure	Available Depth (mm)	
	BH 1	BH 2
100kPa	1400	500
150kPa	1400	500
200kPa	1700	500
400kPa	1700	500

Standards

Test results completed in this report are in accordance with the following standards :

- AS 2870-2011 Residential slabs and footings
- AS 4055-2021 Wind loads for housing
- AS 1726-2017 Geotechnical site investigations
- AS 3798-2007 Guidelines on earthworks for commercial and residential developments

QBCC Licence #1206441

2.0 SITE ANALYSIS

P = Problem Site (AS 2870-2011)

Is there current evidence of the following that would likely affect this site?

*Note: * denotes relevant to (P) a PROBLEM SITE*

2.1*	Existing Fill (>800mm on sand site), (>400mm on other material site)?		No
2.2*	Fill containing wood, metal, plastic or other deleterious materials		No
2.3*	Residential allotment (<1000m ²) with over 1.6m fill		No
2.4*	Rural allotment (>1000m ²) with over 2.4m fill		No
2.5*	Soft or collapsing soils		No
2.6*	Are there any trees (or removed trees) on site or adjoining site? If Yes show locations at 6.0	(P)	Yes
2.7*	Is the project a knock down rebuild or extension?	(P)	Yes

FURTHER SITE OBSERVATIONS

2.8	Floating boulders	No
2.9	Rock (difficult excavation)	Yes
2.10	Underground flowing water and/or seepage evidence	No
2.11	Marine environment or other risk of corrosion (within 1km from water with surf)	No
2.12	Erosion	No

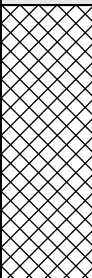
3.0 INSPECTION OF SITE

3.1	Site status: Platform Slope: 7 Degrees Fall direction: N	
3.2	Slope stability assessment recommended (> 11 Degrees)	No
3.3	Are there any Retaining Walls supporting this site? (if Yes, see attached plan drawing 6.0)	Yes

4.0 VISUAL OBSERVATION OF NEIGHBOURHOOD

4.1	Presence of rock Is surface rock visible on this site or on adjoining lots, or is rock visible in nearby excavations?	Yes
4.2	Existing masonry buildings Is there significant cracking of existing masonry walls? Building Type:	No
4.3	Indicators of movement in the following: Roads, Kerbs, Pavements, Masonry Fences, and/or Ground Surfaces Is there significant movement in any of the above?	No

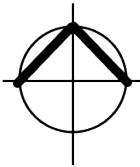
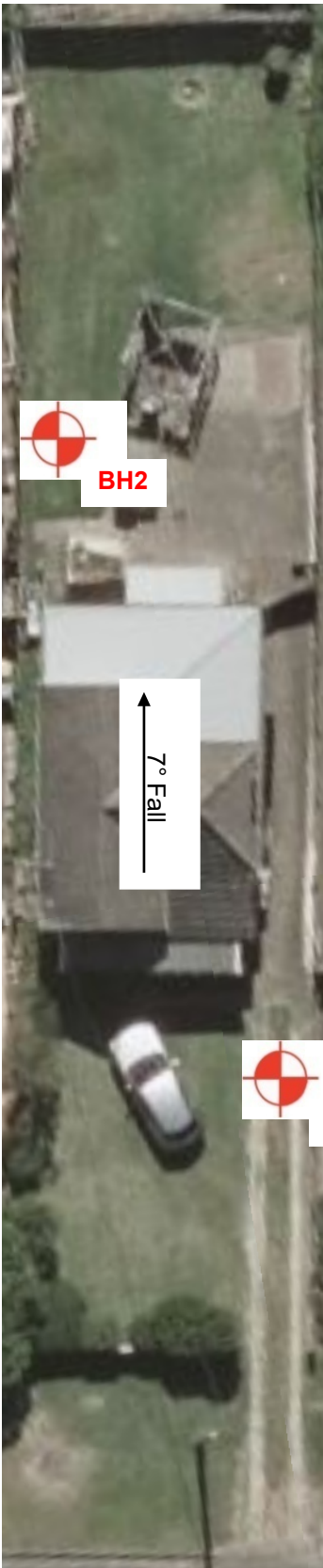
5.1 FIELD LOG

Water	PP (UCS) Unconfined	Samples	Depth	Material Origin	FILL Depth	Classification Code	Material Description	Moisture	Density / Consistency
No water observed	100 200 300 400			FILL		CI	Silty Gravelly CLAY trace Sand Brown	Moist m≈Wp	Soft
	59 kPa		0.5						
	49 kPa			NATURAL		CI	Silty Sandy CLAY Grey Mottled Brown	Moist m≈Wp	Stiff
	78 kPa		1.0						
	176 kPa								
	294 kPa		1.5						
	400 kPa			ROCK		DW	ROCK		
	400 kPa								
			2.0				End Bore 1.9m		
			2.5						

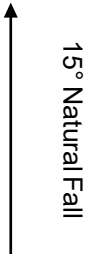
5.2 FIELD LOG

Water	DCP Blows/100mm				Samples	Depth	Material Origin	FILL Depth	Classification Code	Material Description	Moisture	Density / Consistency		
	10	20	30	40										
No water observed	1						TOPSOIL		ML	Sandy SILT Brown	Moist m≈Wp	Very Soft		
	1													
	1						NATURAL		CI	Silty Sandy CLAY Brown	Moist m≈Wp	Soft		
	1													
	40					0.5				End Bore (Hand Auger) 0.4m				
						1.0								
						1.5								
						2.0								
						2.5								
Water Table UTP - Unable to penetrate DCP - 9kg Dynamic Cone Penetrometer PP - Pocket Penetrometer														
SAND – Density Index vs Approx. Penetrometer results							SILTS & CLAY – Cu vs Approx. Penetrometer results				MOISTURE			
DENSITY	Density Index	DCP Blow Count (blows/100mm)		CONSISTENCY		Undrained Shear Strength (kPa)	DCP Blow Count (blows/100mm)							
VL Very Loose	< 15 %	< 1		VS Very Soft	0 – 12		< 1		D Dry					
L Loose	15 – 35 %	1 – 3		S Soft	12 – 25		1 – 2		M Moist					
MD Medium Dense	35 – 65 %	3 – 9		F Firm	25 – 50		2 – 3		W Wet					
D Dense	65 – 85 %	9 – 15		St Stiff	50 – 100		3 – 5		W _P Plastic Limit					
VD Very Dense	> 85 %	> 15		VSt Very Stiff	100 – 200		5 – 8		W _L Liquid Limit					
				H Hard	> 200		> 8		m Moisture					

6.0 LOCATION SKETCH



NORTH



7.0 COMMENTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

All footing excavations should be inspected prior to installation of structural steel and pouring of concrete by Ideal Geotech or a suitably experienced geotechnical consultant to confirm that the founding conditions are as described in this report.

All excavated material transported off site should be classified in accordance with NSW EPA 2014 - Waste Classification Guideline Part 1; Classifying Waste.

This report is indicative of the subsurface conditions in the locations shown at the time of testing, and does not consider any proposed cut or fill that may/may not take place after attendance.

Any fill placed should be in accordance with AS3798.

Cut and fill that is greater than 400mm may alter the classification to a "P"; and affect the Ys stated in this report.

Ideal Corp recommends retesting and issuance of a new report to reflect such earthworks after completion.

Arrange a footing inspection

To arrange a footing inspection for this site please [click here](#) or scan the QR code.



Site Notes:

visible surface rock both front and back of property.
Wind classification has been revised after review

8.0 CERTIFICATION

The attachment of the signature below is to certify that this report has been compiled in accordance with Australian Standards AS2870-2011, AS1726-2017, AS3798-2007 and AS4055-2021.

Yours Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Opacic', written in a cursive style.

Miles Opacic BE (Civil)

9.0 REPORT CONDITIONS & LIMITATIONS

CONDITIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- This is a site classification report in accordance with AS-2870-2011 and should be sufficient for a qualified person to design footings for structures covered under the scope of this standard.
- This site classification was completed by an experienced soil technician and does not make any allowance for any possible mine subsidence within the building envelope.
- The advice given in this report is based on the assumption that the test results are representative of the overall subsurface conditions. However, it should be noted that actual conditions in some parts of the building site may differ from those found in the boreholes. If excavations reveal soil conditions significantly different from those shown in our attached Borehole Log(s), Ideal Geotech must be consulted and excavations stopped immediately.
- Any sketches in this report should be considered as only an approximate pictorial evidence of our work. Therefore, unless otherwise stated, any dimensions or slope information should not be used for any building cost calculations and/or positioning of the building. Dimensions on logs are correct.

REPORT LIMITATIONS

The investigations addressed in this report are not intended nor designed to locate all possible ground conditions on the site. It is not possible to identify all possible ground conditions. Further, one site may have a variety of ground conditions and, the ground conditions actually identified by the testing articulated in this report may change, even over very short periods of time.

This site has not been checked for previous dams or waterways (or adjacent to). If this condition does exist, it may cause abnormal moisture conditions over and above the 'P' classification noted on the report.

The advice and recommendations contained in this report are based on the test results obtained from the samples tested, and on the assumption that those test results are representative of the overall ground conditions of the entire site. The actual conditions in some parts of the site might differ from those tested. If excavation reveals ground conditions that vary from those outlined in our findings in this report and the advice contained in this report may differ significantly and must be revisited. If this occurs, Ideal Geotech must be consulted before any further work is carried out on the site, Ideal Geotech should be engaged for a supplementary report and updated recommendations.

The scope and relevance of the advice provided in the report is subject to restrictions and limitations. Ideal Geotech did not perform a complete assessment of all possible conditions or circumstances that may exist on the site. If a service is not expressly indicated that means it has not been provided, and the reader should not assume that it has been. If a matter is not specifically addressed then Ideal Geotech has not made a determination in relation to it, and the reader should not assume that it has.

Where data and information has been supplied by the client or a third party, the accuracy of the advice and recommendations in this report is dependant upon the accuracy of that data and information. Ideal Geotech is not responsible for verifying the accuracy of data or information provided to it by third parties. Ideal Geotech is not liable nor responsible for inaccurate advice provided upon reliance of incomplete or inaccurate data supplied by third parties.

10.0 ABOUT YOUR REPORT

The methods of description and classification of soils and rocks used in this report are based on Australian Standards AS1726-2017 (Geotechnical Site Investigations), and AS2870-2011 (Residential Slabs and Footings) where appropriate.

In general, descriptions cover the following properties – soil, or rock type, colour, strength or density, and moisture. Identification and classification of soil and rock involves judgement and the company infers accuracy only to the extent that it is common in current geotechnical practice.

Soil types are described according to the dominant particle size and behaviour as set out in AS 1726-2017.

Cohesive soils are classified on the basis of strength (consistency) either by the use of a pocket penetrometer, or DCP equipment.

Non cohesive soils are classified on the basis of relative density usually based on insitu testing like DCP's.

The site classification is determined as per AS2870-2011, and the report provides sufficient information for a qualified person to design footings for structures covered under the standard.

The Classification of 'P' on a report is due to any of the following:

- a) The bearing strength is less than
 - a. 100kPa for strip and pad footings
 - b. 50kPa for beams and slab panels and support thickenings for slab construction
- b) Excessive foundation settlement that may occur due to loading on the foundations
- c) The site contains uncontrolled or controlled fill
- d) The site may be subject to mine subsidence, landslip, collapse activity or coastal erosion
- e) The site may be subject to moisture changes due to site conditions more severe than normal site conditions
- f) The site may be subject to other factors resulting in foundation movement beyond the reactive soil movements resulting from moisture changes due to the normal site conditions

The site classification is determined using table 2.1.1 from AS2870-2011

Site Class	Foundation	Characteristic surface movement
A	Most sand and rock sites with little or no ground movement from moisture changes	
S	Slightly reactive clay sites, which may experience only slight ground movement from moisture changes	0 - 20mm
M	Moderately reactive clay or silt sites, which may experience moderate ground movement from moisture changes	20 - 40mm
H1	Highly reactive clay sites, which may experience high ground movement from moisture changes	40 - 60mm
H2	Highly reactive clay sites, which may experience very high ground movement from moisture changes	60 - 75mm
E	Extremely reactive sites, which may experience extreme ground movement from moisture changes	> 75mm
P	Sites which include filled sites (refer to AS 2870-2011), soft soils, such as soft clay, silt or loose sands; landslip; mine subsidence; collapsing soils; soils subject to erosion; reactive sites subject to abnormal moisture conditions or sites which cannot be classified otherwise.	

The presence of fill materials can often be determined only by the inclusion of foreign objects (eg Bricks, steel, dead grass, tree roots, etc) or by distinctly unusual colour, or texture. Identification of the extent of fill materials will also depend on investigation methods and frequency. Where natural soils similar to those at the site are used for fill, it may be difficult with limited testing and sampling to reliably determine the extent of the fill.

The presence of fill materials is usually regarded with caution as the possible variation in density, strength, and material type is much greater than with natural soil deposits. Consequently, there is an increased risk of adverse engineering characteristics or behaviour.

If the fill has been deemed as 'controlled fill', the site classification of 'P' may be altered (as per AS2870-2011 2.5.3). Controlled fill is material that has been placed and compacted in layers by compaction equipment within a defined moisture range to a defined density requirement in accordance with AS3798-2007.

In this report soil logs where 'topsoil' has been logged, it is defined as "a poorly compacted superficial soil containing some organic matter, usually darker than underlying soils" Good building practice dictates that all heavy organic deposits be scrapped clear of the building envelope during the site preparation stage, and we assume this will be done.

Unless specifically stated, we have not considered the possibility of ASS.

Portable Dynamic Cone Penetrometers

Portable Dynamic Cone Penetrometer (DCP) tests are carried out by driving a rod into the ground with a falling weight hammer and measuring the blows for successive 100mm increments.

The DCP composes a Cone of 20mm diameter with 30 degree taper attached to steel rods of smaller section.

The cone end is driven with a 9kg hammer falling 510mm. The test was initially developed for pavement subgrade investigations and empirical correlations of the test results with Californian Bearing Ratio have been published.

Pocket Penetrometer

A pocket penetrometer is a small handheld gauge containing a small rod which is pushed into the soil and the resistance is measured. Generally pocket penetrometers give a reading of the undrained compressive shear strength of the soil. The small rod attached to the gauge penetrates the soil 6.4mm

The soil sample must be undisturbed and due to the primitive nature of the test, a number of tests should be conducted and the average taken.

Unified Soil Classification System

Major division			Group symbol	Typical name	Classification criteria	
Coarse-grained soils (More than 50% retained on No. 200 ASTM Sieve)	Gravels 50% or more of coarse fraction retained on No. 4 ASTM sieve	Clean gravels	GW	Well-graded gravels and gravel-sand mixtures, little or no fines.	Classification on the basis of percentage of fines. Less than 5% passing No. 200 ASTM sieve GW, GP, SW, SP. More than 12% passing No. 200 ASTM sieve GM, GC, SM, SC. 5% to 12% passing No. 200 ASTM sieve Border-line classification requiring use of dual symbols.	U = D_{60}/D_{10} greater than 4 $C_c = D^2_{30}/(D_{60} \times D_{20})$ between 1 and 3.
			GP	Poorly-graded gravels and gravel-sand mixtures, little or no fines.		Not meeting both criteria for GW.
		Gravels with fines	GM	Silty gravels, gravel-sand-silt mixtures.		Atterberg limits plot below A-line or plasticity index less than 4.
			GC	Clayey gravels, gravel-sand-clay mixtures.		Atterberg limits plot above A-line or plasticity index less than 4.
	Sands More than 50% of coarse fraction passes No. 4 ASTM sieve	Clean sands	SW	Well-graded sands and gravelly sands, little or no fines.		U greater than 6 C_c between 1 and 3.
			SP	Poorly-graded sands and gravelly sands, little or no fines.		Not meeting both criteria for SW.
		Sands with fines	SM	Silly sands, and-silt mixtures.		Atterberg limits plot below A-line or plasticity index less than 4.
			SC	Clayey sands, sand-clay mixtures.		Atterberg limits plot above A-line or plasticity Index Greater than 7.
Fine-grained soils (50% or more passes No. 200 ASTM Sieve)	Sils and Clays (Liquid limit 50% or less)	ML	Inorganic silts, very fine sands, rock flour, silty or clayey fine sands.	Check Plasticity Chart		
		CL	Inorganic clays or low to medium plasticity, gravelly clays, sandy clays, silty clays, lean clays.			
		OL	Organic silts and organic silty clays of low plasticity.			
	Sils and Clays (Liquid limit greater than 50%)	MH	Inorganic silts, micaceous or diatomaceous fine sands or silts elastic silts.			
		CH	Inorganic clays of high plasticity, fat clays.			
		OH	Organic clays of medium to high plasticity.			
	Highly organic clays	P _t	Peat, muck and other highly organic soils.		Fibrous organic matter, will char, burn, or glow, Readily identified by colour, odour, spongy feel and fibrous texture.	

Note: Boundary classification: Soils possessing characteristics of two groups are designated by combinations of group symbols - for example, GW-GC, well-graded, gravel sand mixture with clay binder.

Soil Descriptions

Rock Descriptions

Rock Material Weathering Classification

Term	Symbol	Definition
Residual Soil	RS	Soil developed on extremely weathered rock; the mass structure and substance fabric are no longer evident; there is a large change in volume but the soil has not been significantly transported.
Extremely weathered rock	XW	Rock is weathered to such an extent that it has 'soil' properties, i.e. it either disintegrates or can be remoulded in water.
Distinctly weathered rock	DW	Rock strength usually changed by weathering. The rock may be highly discoloured, usually by ironstaining. Porosity may be increased by leaching or may be decreased due to deposition of weathering products in pores.
Slightly weathered rock	SW	Rock is slightly discoloured but shows little or no change of strength from fresh rock.
Fresh Rock	FR	Rock shows no sign of decomposition or staining.

- Notes: 1. The above criteria generally apply and variations will be noted on the Engineering Borelogs.
 2. Extremely weathered rock is described in terms of soil engineering properties.
 3. Highly weathered (HW) and moderately weathered (MW) can be used in place of DW if more weathering detail is applicable.

Strength is based on the point load strength index, corrected to 50mm diameter — $I_s(50)$. Field guide is used if no tests are available. (Ref. International Society for Rock Mechanics (ISRM) procedures as described in Int T. Rock Mech. Min. Sci and Geomech. Abstr. Suggested Method for Determining Point Load Strength, Vol.22 No.2 1985 pp.51-60).

Strength of Rock Material

Term	Letter symbol	Point load index (MPa) $I_{s,50}$	Field Guide to Strength
Extremely low	EL	≤ 0.03	Easily remoulded by hand to a material with soil properties.
Very low	VL	$>0.03 - \leq 0.1$	Material crumbles under firm blows with sharp end of pick; can be peeled with knife; too hard to cut a triaxial sample by hand. Pieces up to 3cm thick can be broken by finger pressure.
Low	L	$>0.1 - \leq 0.3$	Easily scored with a knife; indentations 1 mm to 3mm show in the specimen with firm blows of the pick point; has dull sound under hammer. A piece of core 150mm long by 50mm diameter may be broken by hand. Sharp edges of core may be friable and break during handling,
Medium	M	$>0.3 - \leq 1.0$	Readily scored with a knife; a piece of core 150mm long by 50mm diameter can be broken by hand with difficulty.
High	H	$>1 - \leq 3$	A piece of core 150mm long by 50mm diameter cannot be broken by hand but can be broken by a pick with a single firm blow; rock rings under hammer.
Very high	VH	$>3 - \leq 10$	Hand specimen breaks with pick after more than one blow; rock rings under hammer.
Extremely high	EH	>10	Specimen requires many blows with geological pick to break through intact material; rock rings under hammer,

Foundation Maintenance and Footing Performance: A Homeowner's Guide



CSIRO

BTF 18
replaces
Information
Sheet 10/91

Buildings can and often do move. This movement can be up, down, lateral or rotational. The fundamental cause of movement in buildings can usually be related to one or more problems in the foundation soil. It is important for the homeowner to identify the soil type in order to ascertain the measures that should be put in place in order to ensure that problems in the foundation soil can be prevented, thus protecting against building movement.

This Building Technology File is designed to identify causes of soil-related building movement, and to suggest methods of prevention of resultant cracking in buildings.

Soil Types

The types of soils usually present under the topsoil in land zoned for residential buildings can be split into two approximate groups – granular and clay. Quite often, foundation soil is a mixture of both types. The general problems associated with soils having granular content are usually caused by erosion. Clay soils are subject to saturation and swell/shrink problems.

Classifications for a given area can generally be obtained by application to the local authority, but these are sometimes unreliable and if there is doubt, a geotechnical report should be commissioned. As most buildings suffering movement problems are founded on clay soils, there is an emphasis on classification of soils according to the amount of swell and shrinkage they experience with variations of water content. The table below is Table 2.1 from AS 2870, the Residential Slab and Footing Code.

Causes of Movement

Settlement due to construction

There are two types of settlement that occur as a result of construction:

- Immediate settlement occurs when a building is first placed on its foundation soil, as a result of compaction of the soil under the weight of the structure. The cohesive quality of clay soil mitigates against this, but granular (particularly sandy) soil is susceptible.
- Consolidation settlement is a feature of clay soil and may take place because of the expulsion of moisture from the soil or because of the soil's lack of resistance to local compressive or shear stresses. This will usually take place during the first few months after construction, but has been known to take many years in exceptional cases.

These problems are the province of the builder and should be taken into consideration as part of the preparation of the site for construction. Building Technology File 19 (BTF 19) deals with these problems.

Erosion

All soils are prone to erosion, but sandy soil is particularly susceptible to being washed away. Even clay with a sand component of say 10% or more can suffer from erosion.

Saturation

This is particularly a problem in clay soils. Saturation creates a bog-like suspension of the soil that causes it to lose virtually all of its bearing capacity. To a lesser degree, sand is affected by saturation because saturated sand may undergo a reduction in volume – particularly imported sand fill for bedding and blinding layers. However, this usually occurs as immediate settlement and should normally be the province of the builder.

Seasonal swelling and shrinkage of soil

All clays react to the presence of water by slowly absorbing it, making the soil increase in volume (see table below). The degree of increase varies considerably between different clays, as does the degree of decrease during the subsequent drying out caused by fair weather periods. Because of the low absorption and expulsion rate, this phenomenon will not usually be noticeable unless there are prolonged rainy or dry periods, usually of weeks or months, depending on the land and soil characteristics.

The swelling of soil creates an upward force on the footings of the building, and shrinkage creates subsidence that takes away the support needed by the footing to retain equilibrium.

Shear failure

This phenomenon occurs when the foundation soil does not have sufficient strength to support the weight of the footing. There are two major post-construction causes:

- Significant load increase.
- Reduction of lateral support of the soil under the footing due to erosion or excavation.
- In clay soil, shear failure can be caused by saturation of the soil adjacent to or under the footing.

GENERAL DEFINITIONS OF SITE CLASSES

Class	Foundation
A	Most sand and rock sites with little or no ground movement from moisture changes
S	Slightly reactive clay sites with only slight ground movement from moisture changes
M	Moderately reactive clay or silt sites, which can experience moderate ground movement from moisture changes
H	Highly reactive clay sites, which can experience high ground movement from moisture changes
E	Extremely reactive sites, which can experience extreme ground movement from moisture changes
A to P	Filled sites
P	Sites which include soft soils, such as soft clay or silt or loose sands; landslip; mine subsidence; collapsing soils; soils subject to erosion; reactive sites subject to abnormal moisture conditions or sites which cannot be classified otherwise

Tree root growth

Trees and shrubs that are allowed to grow in the vicinity of footings can cause foundation soil movement in two ways:

- Roots that grow under footings may increase in cross-sectional size, exerting upward pressure on footings.
- Roots in the vicinity of footings will absorb much of the moisture in the foundation soil, causing shrinkage or subsidence.

Unevenness of Movement

The types of ground movement described above usually occur unevenly throughout the building's foundation soil. Settlement due to construction tends to be uneven because of:

- Differing compaction of foundation soil prior to construction.
- Differing moisture content of foundation soil prior to construction.

Movement due to non-construction causes is usually more uneven still. Erosion can undermine a footing that traverses the flow or can create the conditions for shear failure by eroding soil adjacent to a footing that runs in the same direction as the flow.

Saturation of clay foundation soil may occur where subfloor walls create a dam that makes water pond. It can also occur wherever there is a source of water near footings in clay soil. This leads to a severe reduction in the strength of the soil which may create local shear failure.

Seasonal swelling and shrinkage of clay soil affects the perimeter of the building first, then gradually spreads to the interior. The swelling process will usually begin at the uphill extreme of the building, or on the weather side where the land is flat. Swelling gradually reaches the interior soil as absorption continues. Shrinkage usually begins where the sun's heat is greatest.

Effects of Uneven Soil Movement on Structures

Erosion and saturation

Erosion removes the support from under footings, tending to create subsidence of the part of the structure under which it occurs. Brickwork walls will resist the stress created by this removal of support by bridging the gap or cantilevering until the bricks or the mortar bedding fail. Older masonry has little resistance. Evidence of failure varies according to circumstances and symptoms may include:

- Step cracking in the mortar beds in the body of the wall or above/below openings such as doors or windows.
- Vertical cracking in the bricks (usually but not necessarily in line with the vertical beds or perpend).

Isolated piers affected by erosion or saturation of foundations will eventually lose contact with the bearers they support and may tilt or fall over. The floors that have lost this support will become bouncy, sometimes rattling ornaments etc.

Seasonal swelling/shrinkage in clay

Swelling foundation soil due to rainy periods first lifts the most exposed extremities of the footing system, then the remainder of the perimeter footings while gradually permeating inside the building footprint to lift internal footings. This swelling first tends to create a dish effect, because the external footings are pushed higher than the internal ones.

The first noticeable symptom may be that the floor appears slightly dished. This is often accompanied by some doors binding on the floor or the door head, together with some cracking of cornice mitres. In buildings with timber flooring supported by bearers and joists, the floor can be bouncy. Externally there may be visible dishing of the hip or ridge lines.

As the moisture absorption process completes its journey to the innermost areas of the building, the internal footings will rise. If the spread of moisture is roughly even, it may be that the symptoms will temporarily disappear, but it is more likely that swelling will be uneven, creating a difference rather than a disappearance in symptoms. In buildings with timber flooring supported by bearers and joists, the isolated piers will rise more easily than the strip footings or piers under walls, creating noticeable doming of flooring.

Trees can cause shrinkage and damage



As the weather pattern changes and the soil begins to dry out, the external footings will be first affected, beginning with the locations where the sun's effect is strongest. This has the effect of lowering the external footings. The doming is accentuated and cracking reduces or disappears where it occurred because of dishing, but other cracks open up. The roof lines may become convex.

Doming and dishing are also affected by weather in other ways. In areas where warm, wet summers and cooler dry winters prevail, water migration tends to be toward the interior and doming will be accentuated, whereas where summers are dry and winters are cold and wet, migration tends to be toward the exterior and the underlying propensity is toward dishing.

Movement caused by tree roots

In general, growing roots will exert an upward pressure on footings, whereas soil subject to drying because of tree or shrub roots will tend to remove support from under footings by inducing shrinkage.

Complications caused by the structure itself

Most forces that the soil causes to be exerted on structures are vertical – i.e. either up or down. However, because these forces are seldom spread evenly around the footings, and because the building resists uneven movement because of its rigidity, forces are exerted from one part of the building to another. The net result of all these forces is usually rotational. This resultant force often complicates the diagnosis because the visible symptoms do not simply reflect the original cause. A common symptom is binding of doors on the vertical member of the frame.

Effects on full masonry structures

Brickwork will resist cracking where it can. It will attempt to span areas that lose support because of subsided foundations or raised points. It is therefore usual to see cracking at weak points, such as openings for windows or doors.

In the event of construction settlement, cracking will usually remain unchanged after the process of settlement has ceased.

With local shear or erosion, cracking will usually continue to develop until the original cause has been remedied, or until the subsidence has completely neutralised the affected portion of footing and the structure has stabilised on other footings that remain effective.

In the case of swell/shrink effects, the brickwork will in some cases return to its original position after completion of a cycle, however it is more likely that the rotational effect will not be exactly reversed, and it is also usual that brickwork will settle in its new position and will resist the forces trying to return it to its original position. This means that in a case where swelling takes place after construction and cracking occurs, the cracking is likely to at least partly remain after the shrink segment of the cycle is complete. Thus, each time the cycle is repeated, the likelihood is that the cracking will become wider until the sections of brickwork become virtually independent.

With repeated cycles, once the cracking is established, if there is no other complication, it is normal for the incidence of cracking to stabilise, as the building has the articulation it needs to cope with the problem. This is by no means always the case, however, and monitoring of cracks in walls and floors should always be treated seriously.

Upheaval caused by growth of tree roots under footings is not a simple vertical shear stress. There is a tendency for the root to also exert lateral forces that attempt to separate sections of brickwork after initial cracking has occurred.

The normal structural arrangement is that the inner leaf of brickwork in the external walls and at least some of the internal walls (depending on the roof type) comprise the load-bearing structure on which any upper floors, ceilings and the roof are supported. In these cases, it is internally visible cracking that should be the main focus of attention, however there are a few examples of dwellings whose external leaf of masonry plays some supporting role, so this should be checked if there is any doubt. In any case, externally visible cracking is important as a guide to stresses on the structure generally, and it should also be remembered that the external walls must be capable of supporting themselves.

Effects on framed structures

Timber or steel framed buildings are less likely to exhibit cracking due to swell/shrink than masonry buildings because of their flexibility. Also, the doming/dishing effects tend to be lower because of the lighter weight of walls. The main risks to framed buildings are encountered because of the isolated pier footings used under walls. Where erosion or saturation cause a footing to fall away, this can double the span which a wall must bridge. This additional stress can create cracking in wall linings, particularly where there is a weak point in the structure caused by a door or window opening. It is, however, unlikely that framed structures will be so stressed as to suffer serious damage without first exhibiting some or all of the above symptoms for a considerable period. The same warning period should apply in the case of upheaval. It should be noted, however, that where framed buildings are supported by strip footings there is only one leaf of brickwork and therefore the externally visible walls are the supporting structure for the building. In this case, the subfloor masonry walls can be expected to behave as full brickwork walls.

Effects on brick veneer structures

Because the load-bearing structure of a brick veneer building is the frame that makes up the interior leaf of the external walls plus perhaps the internal walls, depending on the type of roof, the building can be expected to behave as a framed structure, except that the external masonry will behave in a similar way to the external leaf of a full masonry structure.

Water Service and Drainage

Where a water service pipe, a sewer or stormwater drainage pipe is in the vicinity of a building, a water leak can cause erosion, swelling or saturation of susceptible soil. Even a minuscule leak can be enough to saturate a clay foundation. A leaking tap near a building can have the same effect. In addition, trenches containing pipes can become watercourses even though backfilled, particularly where broken rubble is used as fill. Water that runs along these trenches can be responsible for serious erosion, interstrata seepage into subfloor areas and saturation.

Pipe leakage and trench water flows also encourage tree and shrub roots to the source of water, complicating and exacerbating the problem.

Poor roof plumbing can result in large volumes of rainwater being concentrated in a small area of soil:

- Incorrect falls in roof guttering may result in overflows, as may gutters blocked with leaves etc.

- Corroded guttering or downpipes can spill water to ground.
- Downpipes not positively connected to a proper stormwater collection system will direct a concentration of water to soil that is directly adjacent to footings, sometimes causing large-scale problems such as erosion, saturation and migration of water under the building.

Seriousness of Cracking

In general, most cracking found in masonry walls is a cosmetic nuisance only and can be kept in repair or even ignored. The table below is a reproduction of Table C1 of AS 2870.

AS 2870 also publishes figures relating to cracking in concrete floors, however because wall cracking will usually reach the critical point significantly earlier than cracking in slabs, this table is not reproduced here.

Prevention/Cure

Plumbing

Where building movement is caused by water service, roof plumbing, sewer or stormwater failure, the remedy is to repair the problem. It is prudent, however, to consider also rerouting pipes away from the building where possible, and relocating taps to positions where any leakage will not direct water to the building vicinity. Even where gully traps are present, there is sometimes sufficient spill to create erosion or saturation, particularly in modern installations using smaller diameter PVC fixtures. Indeed, some gully traps are not situated directly under the taps that are installed to charge them, with the result that water from the tap may enter the backfilled trench that houses the sewer piping. If the trench has been poorly backfilled, the water will either pond or flow along the bottom of the trench. As these trenches usually run alongside the footings and can be at a similar depth, it is not hard to see how any water that is thus directed into a trench can easily affect the foundation's ability to support footings or even gain entry to the subfloor area.

Ground drainage

In all soils there is the capacity for water to travel on the surface and below it. Surface water flows can be established by inspection during and after heavy or prolonged rain. If necessary, a grated drain system connected to the stormwater collection system is usually an easy solution.

It is, however, sometimes necessary when attempting to prevent water migration that testing be carried out to establish watertable height and subsoil water flows. This subject is referred to in BTF 19 and may properly be regarded as an area for an expert consultant.

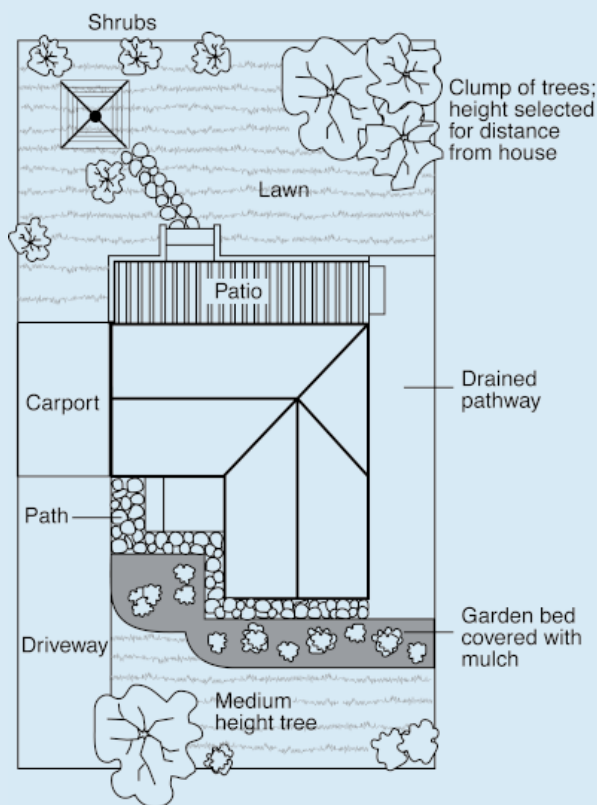
Protection of the building perimeter

It is essential to remember that the soil that affects footings extends well beyond the actual building line. Watering of garden plants, shrubs and trees causes some of the most serious water problems.

For this reason, particularly where problems exist or are likely to occur, it is recommended that an apron of paving be installed around as much of the building perimeter as necessary. This paving

CLASSIFICATION OF DAMAGE WITH REFERENCE TO WALLS		
Description of typical damage and required repair	Approximate crack width limit (see Note 3)	Damage category
Hairline cracks	<0.1 mm	0
Fine cracks which do not need repair	<1 mm	1
Cracks noticeable but easily filled. Doors and windows stick slightly	<5 mm	2
Cracks can be repaired and possibly a small amount of wall will need to be replaced. Doors and windows stick. Service pipes can fracture. Weathertightness often impaired	5–15 mm (or a number of cracks 3 mm or more in one group)	3
Extensive repair work involving breaking-out and replacing sections of walls, especially over doors and windows. Window and door frames distort. Walls lean or bulge noticeably, some loss of bearing in beams. Service pipes disrupted	15–25 mm but also depend on number of cracks	4

Gardens for a reactive site



- Water that is transmitted into masonry, metal or timber building elements causes damage and/or decay to those elements.
- High subfloor humidity and moisture content create an ideal environment for various pests, including termites and spiders.
- Where high moisture levels are transmitted to the flooring and walls, an increase in the dust mite count can ensue within the living areas. Dust mites, as well as dampness in general, can be a health hazard to inhabitants, particularly those who are abnormally susceptible to respiratory ailments.

The garden

The ideal vegetation layout is to have lawn or plants that require only light watering immediately adjacent to the drainage or paving edge, then more demanding plants, shrubs and trees spread out in that order.

Overwatering due to misuse of automatic watering systems is a common cause of saturation and water migration under footings. If it is necessary to use these systems, it is important to remove garden beds to a completely safe distance from buildings.

Existing trees

Where a tree is causing a problem of soil drying or there is the existence or threat of upheaval of footings, if the offending roots are subsidiary and their removal will not significantly damage the tree, they should be severed and a concrete or metal barrier placed vertically in the soil to prevent future root growth in the direction of the building. If it is not possible to remove the relevant roots without damage to the tree, an application to remove the tree should be made to the local authority. A prudent plan is to transplant likely offenders before they become a problem.

Information on trees, plants and shrubs

State departments overseeing agriculture can give information regarding root patterns, volume of water needed and safe distance from buildings of most species. Botanic gardens are also sources of information. For information on plant roots and drains, see Building Technology File 17.

Excavation

Excavation around footings must be properly engineered. Soil supporting footings can only be safely excavated at an angle that allows the soil under the footing to remain stable. This angle is called the angle of repose (or friction) and varies significantly between soil types and conditions. Removal of soil within the angle of repose will cause subsidence.

Remediation

Where erosion has occurred that has washed away soil adjacent to footings, soil of the same classification should be introduced and compacted to the same density. Where footings have been undermined, augmentation or other specialist work may be required. Remediation of footings and foundations is generally the realm of a specialist consultant.

Where isolated footings rise and fall because of swell/shrink effect, the homeowner may be tempted to alleviate floor bounce by filling the gap that has appeared between the bearer and the pier with blocking. The danger here is that when the next swell segment of the cycle occurs, the extra blocking will push the floor up into an accentuated dome and may also cause local shear failure in the soil. If it is necessary to use blocking, it should be by a pair of fine wedges and monitoring should be carried out fortnightly.

This BTF was prepared by John Lewer FAIB, MIAMA, Partner, Construction Diagnosis.

should extend outwards a minimum of 900 mm (more in highly reactive soil) and should have a minimum fall away from the building of 1:60. The finished paving should be no less than 100 mm below brick vent bases.

It is prudent to relocate drainage pipes away from this paving, if possible, to avoid complications from future leakage. If this is not practical, earthenware pipes should be replaced by PVC and backfilling should be of the same soil type as the surrounding soil and compacted to the same density.

Except in areas where freezing of water is an issue, it is wise to remove taps in the building area and relocate them well away from the building – preferably not uphill from it (see BTF 19).

It may be desirable to install a grated drain at the outside edge of the paving on the uphill side of the building. If subsoil drainage is needed this can be installed under the surface drain.

Condensation

In buildings with a subfloor void such as where bearers and joists support flooring, insufficient ventilation creates ideal conditions for condensation, particularly where there is little clearance between the floor and the ground. Condensation adds to the moisture already present in the subfloor and significantly slows the process of drying out. Installation of an adequate subfloor ventilation system, either natural or mechanical, is desirable.

Warning: Although this Building Technology File deals with cracking in buildings, it should be said that subfloor moisture can result in the development of other problems, notably:

The information in this and other issues in the series was derived from various sources and was believed to be correct when published.

The information is advisory. It is provided in good faith and not claimed to be an exhaustive treatment of the relevant subject.

Further professional advice needs to be obtained before taking any action based on the information provided.

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