

Knotweed Survey

Development Plot

Gnoll Road, Goedrgraig, Pontardawe, Swansea.



Client: Mr Mike Woods

Via Email: mikewoods@active-property-solutions.co.uk

Clean Ground Partners

Thank you for your instruction to survey the above property which we re-visited two weeks ago.

Over the past 13 years we have surveyed over 4,300 properties and are listed by Natural Resources Wales as Knotweed Eradicators. We are registered Waste Carriers in the event that infective material needs to be removed from site.

We are aware of the guidelines prepared by RICS, the Welsh Assembly and the Environment Agency/Natural Resources (Wales) regarding the surveying and treatment of properties that may be affected by Japanese Knotweed and take these and our long experience of dealing with this invasive plant into account when preparing our report.

In particular we have taken notice of the Environment Agency's Code of Practice on managing Knotweed on Development Land

History

We first surveyed this property in early 2019 when due to the very overgrown nature of the site, access was difficult and parts completely impenetrable.

We provided a report and were given the go ahead by the previous owner. During 2019 we carried out 5 scheduled treatments, but owing to the disruption caused by Covid and the presence of new security fencing, we failed to gain access on the two occasions we attempted to continue treatment in 2020. We did attempt to contact the owner, not knowing the property had changed hands.

Attempts to obtain payment for the treatments went unanswered and at the end of 2020 we decided that as the owner had failed to honour his side of the contract, it was no longer valid.

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The Development Site

The land comprises a roughly triangular area sloping towards the East between the upper and lower sections of the winding Gnoll Road. It has an upper frontage of approximately 65 metres along Graig Road.



Aerial view of Gnoll Site Jan 2019

Development plot outlined in **Yellow**

Blue: Neighboring plot under treatment By Clean Ground Partners

Red: areas of Knotweed on or within 7 metres of Development plot

The plot is bounded on the East and West by sections of Gnoll Road and to the North by a well-maintained Public Footpath. The plot is about 200 sq m. (approximately 0.2 hectare) in area.

There is a similar development on the other side of the Public Footpath and we have been treating this plot for some time. The Knotweed there is all but eliminated.

Because the site has an Easterly aspect it benefits from the warmth of the morning sun.

Although much of the land had been cleared in the distant past, by 2019 it had been allowed to revert to a wild overgrown state. There were patches of thin saplings as well as a number of specimen trees and several large areas of Japanese Knotweed. We carried out 5 herbicide treatments during 2019 and were looking forward to continuing our planned eradication in 2020 and following years.

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We understand that during 2020 a considerable amount of clearance and earthmoving took place. Whilst this has made access easier, our survey last week showed that it has had the unfortunate effect of spreading the Knotweed Rhizomes far from their original wide distribution and effectively infected the whole site. A further problem caused by the burial of rhizomes is that they will continue to emerge at varying intervals depending on depth of burial and size.

Japanese Knotweed thrives on disturbed soil and growth tends to accelerate after disturbance.

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Proposed Development

We have seen plans showing that the site will be developed for 4 units of domestic housing

We would recommend construction by concrete slab technique rather than traditional trench foundations.

Japanese Knotweed will not penetrate good quality concrete although it can take advantage of cracks or joints. In over 4,300 investigations carried out in the past 13 years we have only encountered one property actually affected by Knotweed. In this case an inexperienced builder erected housing on a large **untreated** patch of Knotweed. Even in this case no damage occurred as the new growth was treated promptly inside the property.

Provided any source of infection is eradicated by a continued program of treatment over a number of years we foresee no risk to any building constructed on a concrete slab.

The Knotweed on the site itself should be treated before construction begins and its location marked and machinery kept out of the area by fencing as recommended by the Code of Practice.

We would advise that the contractors be informed of precautions to be taken and that our representative be present at groundwork excavation stage.

We would ensure that any rhizomes uncovered are safely lifted and taken for disposal either at a licensed tip *or to a designated area of the site* where inspection and treatments may continue.

However, it is recommended that because of the presence of Japanese Knotweed no contaminated soil is taken off site. If this is inevitable, only licensed contractors should be involved. Fortunately the tip at Pwll Watkin (Rhyd y Fro) (some 5 miles away) is one of the few licensed tips in South Wales able to accept such waste. Clean Ground Partners are licenced Waste Carriers in the event that infective material needs to be removed from site.

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Management Objectives

To eradicate all Japanese Knotweed on site and within 7 metres outside site boundaries.

To provide a safe environment for the building and subsequent sale of dwellings erected on this site.

To prevent the spread of Japanese Knotweed from its current distribution on this site.

To prevent the export of Japanese Knotweed contamination from this site.

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Knotweed Investigations

Historical satellite photographs dating back to 2000 show that Japanese Knotweed has grown over this site for more than 13 years. In about 2006 the site had been cleared and some excavations made. Thereafter the land appeared to have been abandoned and has become progressively more and more overgrown.

In 2019 our physical survey showed that there was a considerable amount of Knotweed on this site. We conservatively estimated that of the approximately 2,500 square metres occupied by this plot, some 250 square metres (10%) was covered with Japanese Knotweed.

Because of the earth movement that has taken place we consider that 70-80% of the site is now contaminated.

PHOTOS TAKEN IN 2019



Knotweed on lowest part of site under concrete walls



Knotweed across footpath (within 7 metres of Development site)

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Large stand of well established Knotweed at top right hand corner of site



Knotweed along top boundary

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Knotweed Looking toward Bus Shelter



Knotweed alongside bus shelter

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PHOTOS TAKEN WINTER 2020/21

When Knotweed had died back



Close examination shows that Knotweed surviving initial treatments has been spread and is colonising areas where none previously present.

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The Problem

Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica* var *japonica*, *Reynoutria japonica* or *Polygonum cuspidatum*) is a non-native invasive species of plant. It was introduced into the United Kingdom as an ornamental garden plant in the mid-nineteenth century and now it has spread across the UK, particularly along watercourses, transport routes and infested waste areas.

Specific problems caused by Japanese Knotweed are:

- Damage to building foundations
- Damage to retaining wall structures
- Damage to paving and tarmac areas
- Reduction in land values
- Shelter for vermin

The rhizome system may extend to, and beyond, a depth of at least 2metres vertically and 7metres laterally from a parent plant and, *according to the advice of the Environment Agency, the area of infestation should be regarded as 7 metres horizontally from the nearest growth of **Japanese Knotweed** that can be seen.*

To determine exactly how far the rhizomes have spread, one would need to dig a series of test pits and examine them carefully. In our experience the Environment Agency's guidelines, of extending the probable area of contamination by 7 metres.

Knotweed is a serious problem plant and any eradication program needs to be pursued with equal determination

We regard the cost of digging out, transport and charges incurred in disposing of the many tons of contaminated soil to be disproportionate and if possible the contamination be contained on site.

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Our Recommendation

To be effective any treatment needs to be applied to as large an area of foliage as possible and *we would strongly advise that clearing of the plot should not take place except during the dormant season (Nov to end April)* in order to allow shoots to develop to the point where herbicides would become effective. Provided contract acceptance can be provided in time we would undertake to carry out an initial clearance of Knotweed as soon as possible to allow easy access to the Knotweed shoots which will be developing in April and May.

Once the shoots have sufficient foliage. (usually by mid May) we would start applying approved herbicides and would continue to revisit every month/6 weeks throughout the 2021 season.

This schedule of visits and treatments will continue as long as Knotweed is seen to be viable. If no Knotweed is seen on 3 consecutive 4/6 weekly visits the frequency of visits will be reduced. This process will continue for a 5 year period even after building work is finished and divided into individual plots.

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Among the services Clean Ground Partners can provide are:

- Preparing a Knotweed Management Plan for Planning Purposes
- Training site personnel in identifying Japanese Knotweed and ensuring that they are aware of their responsibilities under various relevant legislation, including but not limited to:

The Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 Section 14(2) (WCA 1981)

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 (EPA 1990)

The Hazardous Waste Regulations 2005 (HWR 2005)

The Waste Management Licensing Regulations 1994

- Identifying person or persons to be responsible for site operations

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QUOTE:

KNOTWEED ERADICATION

To treat all Japanese Knotweed on the above site and continue treatments until such time as all Knotweed is eradicated within the five year contract period.

Once the Knotweed is under control we will inspect the site at least annually and will treat any regrowth that might occur within the 5 year period at no further cost to yourselves.

We can provide onsite supervising of excavations/demolitions. Such time will be charged at our standard rate

Our quotation to carry out the above £12, 300

We would require £500 on acceptance of our quotation and a further £1,000 at the end of June 2021. The balance will become payable in November 2021 at the end of the Knotweed season.

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HERBICIDE TREATMENT

We would ideally start treatment in Spring 2021 as soon as given the go ahead.

The proprietors of the Clean Ground Partnership carry Public Liability insurance to the value of £1 million pounds.

All partners are qualified to apply Herbicides and have undertaken the necessary additional training and certification to allow application of herbicide in or close to watercourses.

Please contact the undersigned to discuss any queries

We are in the process of eradicating Japanese Knotweed from development sites for such clients as Gwalia Housing, Berwyn Slate Co. (Llangollen), TRJ Ltd., CME Ltd, Felinfoel Brewery Estates, and the Church in Wales.

D.N.Gabe Thomas

Senior Partner

26th January 2021