



Ince Central Estate

Residents Group Newsletter 15

18 November 2004

Special Edition

Decision Time

The Council is fast approaching the point where they can advise residents of Ince Central Estate which areas of the estate is contaminated land.

This means that the Council is going to be in the position of advising all residents that their home will fall into one of three categories:

- Below safe levels
- Contaminated
- Requiring further investigation

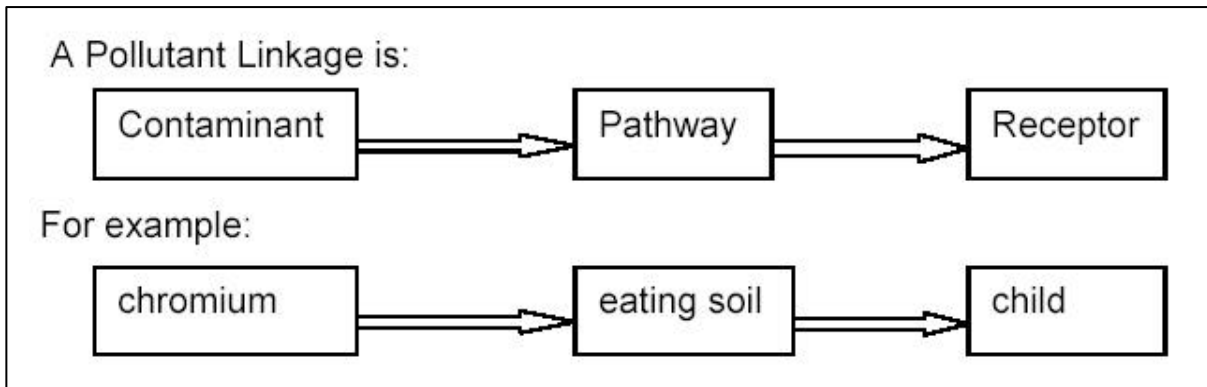
Unfortunately for some people, the information obtained from the site investigation and analysis has not provided a clear enough picture to enable the Council to take a view as to whether the land is contaminated. This will mean further investigation will have to be carried out to decide whether these areas are clear or contaminated.

Contaminated Land – The Definition

The Government has defined what is meant by contaminated land. They have delegated the decisions on which land is considered to be contaminated to Local Authorities.

Contaminated land is any land which is in such a condition that significant harm is being caused or there is a significant possibility of harm being caused; or pollution of controlled waters is being, or is likely to be, caused.

Land can only be defined as contaminated if it can be demonstrated that the contaminants can pass through to people or controlled waters. This is referred to as a pollutant linkage and can be illustrated by the diagram below.



The decision is taken after going through a process called a risk assessment. This is where a process set out by the Government is followed, part of which is where the levels of contamination are compared against guidelines that the Government has set.

Where local levels of contamination are significantly higher, this is then considered to be a risk of harm which needs to be dealt with.

There are numerous methods to deal with contaminated land and the solution is dependent upon local circumstances. On residential housing estates, the most frequently favoured approaches are removal of contaminated soil and replacement with clean or covering the soil which is called capping. As a last resort, demolition may have to be considered.

The Council and Wigan & Leigh Housing (WALH) have agreed an approach to informing residents of whether they are affected or not.

The way this will work is that in week commencing 22 November 2004 every household will receive a

letter advising as to which of the categories mentioned earlier their property falls into.

Those residents whose property is considered to be contaminated will be approached by a member of a special team being set up the Council and WALH to visit them and explain the implications of the contamination and what this means for them.

One member of this team will staff the freephone telephone line (0800 328 4375) in order to respond to initial enquiries or to make specific appointments for those people who require them.

Visiting Team

For Tenants:

Mike Sollars - WALH
 John Choudhury - WALH
 Phil Brown - WALH
 Margaret Case – WALH

For Private Properties:

Nigel Stockley - Wigan MBC
 Anees Mank - Wigan MBC

The Team will be visiting people during normal working hours and

will offer an early evening service by appointment for those people who aren't at home during the day due to other commitments.

What is the purpose of the visits?

During the initial visit the team will:

- Ensure residents understand the issues about contamination set out in the letter
- Listen to concerns
- Collect information to assess vulnerability
- Seek the views of residents on various matters
- Explain what happens
- Supply information about the contamination when requested
- Advise where to get more detailed information

The Council will soon be developing options on how they are going to remediate the contaminated areas. This is planned to take place at the Stakeholder Workshop meeting on 25th November. After this meeting, the Council will explain the possible options and seek your views on these.

The three main options being considered are:

- Removal of contaminated soil and replacement with clean soil
- Covering the contaminated soil with a 'capping' layer and inserting a physical barrier to prevent any further contact.
- Possibly a small amount of demolition, but only where there are structural considerations

In addition to the Council team advising of the outcomes, they will also collect information about your aspirations.

At a later date, the Health agencies will be conducting a survey by way of a questionnaire. This is to assist with assessing any potential health concerns and plan action and support.

Priority for Information

It is appreciated that many residents who have been advised that further investigation is needed, or that their property is not contaminated will have further questions in order feel re-assured.

However, please recognise that the priority for discussing contamination issues has to be with those people most affected and it will therefore be necessary for those residents to wait until week commencing 29 November before seeking further information.

Councillor Support

Your Ward Councillors have been kept informed and involved as the investigation has progressed.

They are committed to ensuring that your concerns and issues are heard and responded to.

The Councillors are going to be running a special Ward surgery on Wednesday 24th November from 2.00 PM to 5.00 PM. This will be held at 2 Pryce Avenue so it will be easily accessible for all residents.

Ward Councillors Contact Details

David Molyneaux
01942 495083

Joan Hurst
01942 736213

James Moodie
01942 776184

Independent Advisor

We recognise that there will be many residents who will want to discuss their concerns over what they have been told and the Temple team will be available at 2 Pryce Avenue from Monday to Friday of the week commencing 22 November and Monday to Friday of the following week.

Because many people will require more detailed technical information, Mouchel Parkman staff will also be on site.

To ensure that people can get to see us regardless of their work commitments, the office at 2 Pryce Avenue will be open from 11.00 am to 7.00 pm. Times will vary slightly from day to day and the details are set out in the box below. Any changes to these times will be displayed at the office, but if you want to make sure we will be there, please ring us on 01942 239598 and make a specific appointment. If you are unable to get to the office, but still want to talk to us, we can arrange alternative arrangements to meet your needs, including home visits.

Our support will continue whilst further site investigation work continues and whilst uncertainty over the contamination remains.

When the process of dealing with the contamination (remediation) commences, the Council will recognise the need to consider the future role of independent advice.

Residents will be involved in selecting the people/companies who will be delivering and managing the works to the estate, so they will have a say in who they wish to see providing them with various services.

Temple Attendance at 2 Pryce Avenue

Monday 22 November
11.00 am – 6.00 pm

Tuesday 23 November
11.00 am – 7.00 pm

Wednesday 24 November
11.00 am – 7.00 pm

Thursday 25 November
11.00 am – 5.00 pm

Friday 26 November
11.00 am – 5.00 pm

Monday 29 November
11.00 am – 6.00 pm

Tuesday 30 November
11.00 am – 7.00 pm

Wednesday 1 December
11.00 am – 7.00 pm

Thursday 2 December
11.00 am – 7.00 pm

Friday 3 December
11.00 am – 3.00 pm

Rumours

We mentioned rumours in the last newsletter. There have been some rumours circulating that the Resident Liaison Group knows which parts of the estate are contaminated and which are not.

This is completely incorrect. No decisions have been made as to which parts of the estate are contaminated.

Your RLG representatives are working hard to represent your best interests and will not know the results of the tests before anyone else on the estate.

Tenant and Resident Association

A suggestion was previously made about forming an association to represent the needs of the estate into the future.

This has been discussed again and it appears there is some interest in this. If initially you are interested, please let either your local resident liaison group representatives know, or tell one of the Temple Team.

The formation of such a group may be advantageous in providing more leverage with the Council, which will be important, once we enter the remediation phase.

Decanting

This is the housing term used to describe the situation when someone needs to be re-housed

from their current home to another property.

Because of the current uncertainty over the final solutions, the Council and WALH are considering various options. One of these is that some people may need to be re-housed (decanted) either temporarily or permanently.

To help and aid arrangements to cover the unusual situation at Ince, the Residents Liaison Group have identified their requirements and expectations to the Council should this need arise.

This exercise showed that the current Council approach might need to be extended to recognise the specific needs of residents at Ince, or the special circumstances that exist.

This information will be taken away and used by the Council and WALH to plan their response.

MP Visit

A meeting was held between the Residents Liaison Group, Ian McCartney MP and Councillor Jim Moodie on Friday 12th November, to keep them aware of the issues affecting local residents.

Ian found the meeting useful in ensuring he understood residents' concerns and closely questioned the Council officers who attended to get assurances that their concerns were being addressed.

He asked that some specific points to be covered in this newsletter to ensure that all residents on the estate were kept as well informed as possible.

He also gave reassurance to the RLG that he is working closely with the Council on solutions to the problem and will actively support any bids for funding that are required.

Specific questions raised by the RLG members were dealt with and have been covered elsewhere within this newsletter.

Diary Date

Health Awareness Day

Ince Town Hall

4.00 – 8.00 pm

Friday, 26 November 2004

Questions and Answers

With the decisions on contamination soon to arrive, it is appreciated that there will be a lot of tension and concerns about what this means.

To help with this, we have set out a number of questions you are likely to want answers to and provided information to help answer these. At this point we can only provide general information, but you will get more detailed information about your own home in the near future.

Q. If my property is contaminated, what happens next?

A. The Council will be making arrangements to visit you to discuss what this means and what will happen next. The Council are considering a number of different ways to deal with the contamination and will need to collect information from you to help them reach final conclusions.

Q. I have been told further investigation is needed. Why is this and what does it mean?

A. There are two reasons why this may be the case:

The first is because the approach used to collect information about the contamination is based on collecting samples from a number of properties, comparing these (averaging) with current guidelines and arriving at a conclusion as to the level of contamination in that area. Sometimes the results from individual samples are not straightforward or unusually high and are so different to the other samples that they just don't make sense. Under these circumstances, a more detailed level of sampling provides better and more reliable information.

By getting more samples, the accuracy of the true level of contamination is better defined for that area. This helps to clarify whether the true level of contamination is either below or above safe levels.

The second reason is that some of the levels being used to decide whether areas are contaminated are still under intense discussion to reach an agreement over which

level is appropriate to use. This is because there is no precise level set by Government that tells the Council when a particular site is contaminated. The Council has to take a range of factors into account to set safe levels for this estate.

Q. I am told my property is not contaminated. How can I be sure this is true?

A. The Council appreciates that residents will want a high level of certainty that their property is not contaminated. On request, you can be provided with the results of the individual test sample taken from your property.

You will need an explanation of the 'science' behind how this is used and Temple will be more than happy to provide you with this background information.

Q. When will any remediation start?

A. Until the Council clearly understands what the extent of the work is, it is difficult to set up the funding and contractual arrangements to commence work. However, certain pieces of work have already been started to get this side of things working as quickly as possible. The ideal is that work

will start as soon as possible after 1 April 2005, but this will be dependant upon the Government Department agreeing the funding.

Q. How long will all of the works take?

A. Again, this will be dependant on the type and content of the remediation work proposed and whether residents need to be moved while the works are underway. Once there is a clear picture, you will be informed as soon as possible.

Q. Will it be safe to live here while the works are being done?

A. There are lots of Health and Safety regulations that will be applied to ensure that residents are safe while the works are being carried out. The Council have already indicated that they their preferred approach is to deliver works in a 'pilot area' and closely monitor this to ensure the health and safety of local residents before embarking on the rest of the remediation.

Temple Contact Details

If anyone has any comments regarding any information,
Temple can be contacted at 2 Pryce Avenue
every Wednesday (11.00-17.00) and Thursday (10.00-15.00)
Tel 01942 239598

Alternatively, if residents need to contact Temple outside this time, they can use the
freephone number 0800 328 4375
or Temple Head Office 01825 790964.