



Ince Central Estate Newsletter Number 2 27 November 2003

Dear Resident,

Progress on Site

By Tuesday 25th November the drilling contractors had completed 39 of the 64 boreholes planned in and around the estate. This is slightly ahead of the programme. Surface water samples have been taken from the Leeds and Liverpool Canal and sent for testing to check whether any contamination has reached the canal.

This week the contractors will commence drilling landfill gas boreholes to the rear of the odd-numbered properties on The Grove. A branch canal that cut off from the main Leeds and Liverpool Canal ran behind these properties and was infilled during the 1960's. We need to check to find out whether the infill materials beneath the ground are producing any gases.

Surface water samples are to be taken later this week from the drainage ditch to the rear of The Grove.

Early Soil Sampling Results Received

The consultants Wardell-Armstrong have received the results of the laboratory tests on the soil samples from the first set of boreholes at:

1. Rear of 45 Greenfield Avenue
2. Side of 33 Greenfield Avenue
3. Car park front of 14-16 Pryce Avenue
4. Car park front of 17-19 Pryce Avenue
5. Side of 50 Greenfield Avenue
6. Rear of 66 Greenfield Avenue
7. Rear of 18 Leaway
8. Rear of 34 Leaway
9. Land adjacent to 19 The Grove
10. Land at front of 166 Ince Green Lane

The results from boreholes 1 to 8 have revealed that each borehole has at least one contaminant beneath the ground that is above the recommended level allowed in the regulations. The results from boreholes 9 and 10 at The

Grove and Ince Green Lane have shown limited amounts of contaminants and, subject to further investigation, may not present a serious problem.

The soil sampling results show that the mix of contaminants is different in each of the boreholes and that there is no consistency in the soil contamination across the northern end of the estate. Three samples have shown high levels of coal tar, a substance not usually found on housing estates. The Environment Agency has been working with us on this and will provide us with advice about how to deal with the contamination once the full extent is known.

What happens next?

Since we have found contaminants under the ground at eight of the boreholes it is planned to test soil samples from surface level around each of those and other boreholes. This will tell us whether there is any contamination at ground level in any of those locations.

The consultants, Wardell-Armstrong, need to gather the results of all the borehole tests to find out the full extent of the land contamination. Given the results that we have now received, we have decided to drill 4 additional boreholes on the east side of the estate in the Anderton Street and Bird Street area. We had not originally planned to drill any boreholes in that area but Wardell-Armstrong has suggested that we should check the soil in those areas to make sure that their investigation has fully covered the estate.

We will be contacting 4 residents in those areas in the next few days to ask if we can drill in their gardens. We are sure that we will receive the same co-operation that we have received from residents elsewhere on the estate.

It is too early yet for Wardell-Armstrong to be able to advise us how the contamination can be dealt with. They need to obtain a full picture of the problem and also want to take water samples over a period of four weeks from each of the standpipes that are being placed in some of the boreholes. That will help them to find out if the water is affected by the contaminants in the ground and whether the water is passing into any watercourses nearby.

Drinking water tests

United Utilities have provided the full results of the tests carried out on the samples of drinking water taken from the empty property at 91 The Grove and from 94 Greenfield Avenue, 16 Kingsway, 20 Meadway and 9 Loeminster Place. The results confirm that the water quality is fine and well within the drinking water quality standards. We will report the results of any further water sampling by United Utilities as and when we receive them.

Air Quality

In the last newsletter we mentioned that our expert consultant engineers, Wardell Armstrong of Leigh, had taken samples to monitor the air quality inside two empty houses at 44 The Grove and 1 Meadway. Those results were due on 19th November but the laboratory has been unable to meet that deadline. We apologise for the delay but are confident that we will be able to report the results in the next newsletter.

Vegetable Testing

Wardell-Armstrong has suggested that we carry out some further tests on vegetable samples. We will be contacting the residents that offered samples previously and would be interested in samples from any other residents that still have vegetables and/or herbs in their gardens.

Health Advice

Senior officers from the Ashton Leigh and Wigan Primary Care Trust have examined the latest soil sampling results and continue to recommend that residents follow the Do's and Don'ts advice issued with our original letter. They will continue to monitor results as we receive them and we will let you know if we receive any new advice from health professionals.

Local doctors have not reported any patients attending with medical problems that could be associated with this investigation.

Information and Communications

The first meeting of the residents liaison group was held on Wednesday 26th November. The resident members of the group are:

Brian Hibbert 22 The Grove - tenant
Julie Hoare 14 Loeminster Place - owner
Lorraine Pritchard 89 Bird Street - tenant
Ann Sneddon 9 Loeminster Place - owner

The residents were given the latest soil sampling results and advised about progress with the investigation. They were concerned that the contamination had been found to affect a wider area of the estate and wanted to know what was likely to happen when all the results of the investigation are known. They felt that the majority of residents would not want to move from their homes if the contamination could be dealt with.

A list of the questions raised by residents and the answers provided by Ward Councillors and officers is attached, for your information.

I realise that this is a difficult time for residents as you have to deal with the uncertain position until the investigation is completed. I am sorry that this situation has arisen but can assure you that Wigan Council, Wigan and Leigh Housing and the other agencies working with us all have your health and safety as our priority. We are also taking on board the views of the Residents Group that we should seek a solution that would not involve residents having to leave their homes if that is possible.

Realistically, it is likely to be early in the new year before we have all the results and recommendations from the investigation. Once we are in a position to share the full results and the proposals for remedying the problem we will do so and you will be given every opportunity to comment on those proposals. It's a big task and I hope that you can bear with us as the investigation proceeds across the estate.

We will be issuing another newsletter in a fortnight to provide you with a further progress report on the investigation. In the meantime, if you have any questions or concerns do not hesitate to contact Phil Brown or Mike Sollars from the Advice Team at Ince Town Hall who will be pleased to assist you. They can be contacted during normal office hours 9.00am to 4.30pm and an answerphone service is available outside office hours. The freephone telephone number is 01942 – 828436.

Peter Gee
Chief Executive
Wigan and Leigh Housing

Residents Group Meeting – Wednesday 26th November 2003

Questions and Answers

- Q.** Why are you drilling more boreholes in some parts of the estate than in others?
- A.** We are drilling more boreholes in the area near the canal because those properties were the last that were built and that area was considered to be more likely to be affected by contamination. We are also drilling a large number of boreholes behind the odd numbered properties on The Grove because a branch canal ran behind those properties. It was filled in during the 1960's and we want to find out if any gas is being created by those infill materials.
- Q.** Why are you drilling boreholes on one side of some streets and not on others?
- A.** The borehole positions have been mapped out in a grid across the estate. These boreholes will give us an indication whether there is any contamination in each section of the estate. We do not have to drill on both sides of every street, particularly in some of the smaller streets.
- Q.** Are there likely to be any long term effects on people who have been eating things that have been grown in the ground on the estate?
- A.** We are carrying out tests on vegetables grown on the estate to find out whether it is possible for any of these contaminants to transfer to people through the vegetables. The tests that we have carried out so far have not shown any evidence that this is happening. The Ashton Wigan and Leigh Primary Care Trust are advising us on all health issues. They have told us that digesting the chemicals presents the greatest risk to health and they have not yet identified any health problems in the community that could be related to the chemicals that have been found in the land. We plan to carry out further tests on vegetables and herbs in the near future.
- Q.** There is a smell of gas in Greenfield Avenue at the bottom of Kingsway. What could that be?

A. It may well be from the drains but we will investigate to find out what is causing the smell in that area. Residents should report any unusual smells to the Advice Team.

Q. Can the chemical contamination go worse over time?

A. It is likely that the materials have stayed as they are and it is unlikely that they will deteriorate.

Q. Is the contamination adding to or causing the subsidence in the area?

A. It is too early to say at this stage but we will be find out whether the contamination is affecting the structure of properties as part of the investigation.

Q. Will the drilling cause subsidence to the properties?

A. The drilling does not take place close enough to the houses to cause any subsidence or structural damage.