



## **Questions about contaminated land investigations**

### **1. Why is the council investigating this area?**

Since 2000 councils are required by law to inspect their area for contaminated land. The Environmental Protection Act gives a legal definition of what contaminated land is and explains that inspection should be carried out in a reasonable way.

The Borough Council published a strategy setting out how we would carry out research to identify contaminated land. Historic maps and documents have been used together with information on where houses are located, how land is used and where environments would be sensitive to contamination in the ground.

The research has identified areas where we need to gather more information to find out if contaminated land may be a problem. These areas are places where there is a possibility that people or the environment could be affected by substances in, on or under the land.

We also will consider a site if there has been a significant change to the land such as following a major fire or spill which then may impact on local residents or the local environment.

### **2. What is the Council looking for in a site investigation?**

We are looking for evidence of contamination and may take samples to see what levels of certain contaminants are present. We are also checking to see if there are any ways that people, the environment or other receptors could be exposed to any contaminants, and whether any contaminants could escape from the site.

### **3. How could I be exposed to contamination?**

To suffer an effect from a contaminant, you would need to be exposed to it in some way. This can happen either by swallowing contaminated vegetables or soil attached to vegetables from the garden, by breathing dust or vapours, or by touching the contaminant in the soil. However, the exposure is very much dependent on the type of chemicals in the contamination and the way that you use the soil of the site.

#### **4. How will you investigate?**

We carry out a number of steps to see if there is any possibility that there is contamination in the ground and if there is any way that people or the wider environment could be harmed by the contamination. The steps are:

- Desk top study – research of maps, documents and records
- Site Walkover – to look for signs of contamination and to decide if anyone or anything would be exposed
- Detailed Inspection (risk assessment including sampling and chemical analysis if needed)
- Written report – concluding whether or not the land could fit the legal definition of contaminated land

#### **5 What happens next?**

Once we have carried out the Site Walkover, Detailed Inspection and completed the written report, a copy will be sent to the land owner and site occupier. A copy of the report will be also placed on the contaminated land page of the Borough Council's website.

The written report will determine whether the site fits the legal definition of Contaminated Land and whether further action is needed.

#### **6. I have some questions that have not been answered here, who can I contact?**

- Telephone the Environmental Quality Team on 01553 616200 during normal office hours; or
- You can email [environmentalquality@west-norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:environmentalquality@west-norfolk.gov.uk); or
- Look at our website [www.west-norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.west-norfolk.gov.uk)