

From Trisha McCrae, Resident of Hauxton, to the Environmental Services Portfolio Holder:

“The day to day checks and monitoring are being done on site by the contractor, who is working for the developer and are then overseen by Atkins who are also financially involved with the developer.

“With the present problems in mind this is hardly seen as a true independent and transparent process.

“In order to give the public some sort of confidence will South Cambridgeshire District Council now order the developer to pay for an objective independent expert in this field to be employed to do the required testing.

“Can this also include analysing the minor chemicals and components on site because as at present only the top 10 are being done.”

The Council has already taken all appropriate steps to secure the benefit of independent expert advice by way of the legal obligation creating a duty of care from both the Contractor (Vertase) and the Consultants (Atkins). Atkins is one of the leading environmental consultancies in the UK. They have and will continue to act impartially and independently in their role of specialist consultant for the remediation works at the Hauxton site. They have a continual site presence to oversee the remediation work that Vertase are carrying out. Analysis of all samples taken from site are also analysed by an independent and accredited laboratory.

Regarding the monitoring of soil and water samples, there has been extensive site investigation and risk assessments undertaken to establish a set of Contaminants, a procedure set out in industry guidance. It is these contaminants of concern that are routinely analysed in soil and water throughout the remediation process. In addition, condition 4 of the planning consent requires additional samples to be taken and analysed for any further contaminants that have not previously been identified to ensure that no new contaminants are being missed. The analysis of all samples is carried out by an independent and accredited laboratory.

The analysis of the tubes used to monitor the air quality around the site are also sent to an independent and accredited laboratory. The laboratory reports the 10 compounds with the greatest concentration. Based on testing to date, it is unlikely that further significant compounds would be detected. The current monitoring reports include the top ten contaminants for each location. This method ensures that any substance that may not be expected is identified. We are sampling for all potential compounds but only the top ten in each location are reported because the remainder are at or below detection levels.

All sample analysis results are posted on the joint website pages accompanied by the Health Protection Agency's comments once they have been reviewed.

Supplementary Question, asked at the Council meeting

“I agree that Atkins is a big company. The first sentence of their methodology statement says that they have never done a cocktail like that at Hauxton before -- effectively letting them off the hook. Vertase says differently, says that the chemicals are more concentrated on site than in the village: this is not true. Benzothiazole levels are the same in the village as on site and sometimes higher. Vertase says one thing, the actual reports say otherwise. The public deserve to know that this is not simply a group of financially intertwined interests being more important than them.”

How much would it cost to do this right and save both reputations and possibly the future viability of the site?

The site works are being carried out in line with best practice and all agencies involved are working together to ensure that all measures are put in place to minimise the effect on the local community.

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Ms McCrae subsequently submitted monitoring results for benzothiazole to Councillor Ellington (appended to the minutes).

Councillor Ellington responded in writing as follows:

In the month 3 report Vertase state that, "The site related VOCs detected at these locations are significantly reduced in concentration from those monitoring locations adjacent to the site." The paragraph prior to this, not referenced by Ms McCrae, states "The analysis indicates that the majority of the VOCs detected are around the baseline, except for Toluene and Tetrachloroethylene which continue to be slightly raised above the baseline values...". Therefore, Toluene and Tetrachloroethylene are considered to be site related VOCs.

In this context, Benzothiazole is not classed as one of the site related VOCs, the likely source of this compound is understood to originate at a location offsite. It is known that benzothiazole may originate from the wear and tear of vehicle tyres and is found in road dust (Rogge etc 1993).

For clarification, the baseline (measurements taken prior to works commencing) and month 3 concentrations of the site related VOCs and Benzothiazole have been plotted on the attached graph. The concentrations of Benzothiazole, both near to and further from the site, are in keeping with the concentrations of compounds noted during the baseline VOC monitoring. The site related VOCs, i.e. Toluene and Tetrachloroethylene, are significantly reduced in concentration at both Church Lane and Queens Drive in the month 3 data set compared to those levels measured at the site boundary.