

**PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDERS ON 22 JULY 2010
AND
ORAL AND WRITTEN RESPONSES PROVIDED**

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From Councillor Deborah Roberts to the Environmental Services Portfolio Holder:

"In the light of the public concern regarding unpleasant physical symptoms being experienced in and around Hauxton as well as the generally obnoxious odours being emitted day after day which are destroying the quality of life for so many residents of South Cambridgeshire and which goes against all the supposed values of SCDC will the council now take control of this situation, distance itself from the developers and their contractors, demand truly independent monitoring / evaluation, look at alternative methods of remediation that would not allow the airborne pollution to occur and thereby be seen to be acting in the public interest rather than as partners in the development of the former chemical works?"

Thank you for your question. I am aware that there has been extensive dialogue between yourself and officers on the technical aspects of this site. Having read those communications, I believe that this Council does have control of the situation and are acting in the public interest to achieve the successful remediation of this site. Our officers are leading the multi agency group of organisations involved in the site that is working to ensure that all measures are put in place to minimise the effect on the local community. However, in order to do this, we must work closely with the site developers and contractors to find appropriate solutions.

The Health Protection Agency's advice, following review of all current air monitoring, is that emissions from site are unlikely to cause any health effects to the local residents. The human nose is very sensitive to odours and some can cause a reaction in individuals.

The Council has already taken all appropriate steps to secure the benefit of independent expert advice by way of a legal obligation creating a duty of care (collateral warranty) from both the Contractor (Vertase FLI) 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 as 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.

When assessing the remediation application, costs were not a consideration to the council. The application was assessed on technical merit and on the basis of whether the methodology proposed would address the significant pollutant linkages that exist on the site. Both the Environment Agency and this Council considered that the remediation methodology put forward, i.e. excavation and treatment, was the only method that would satisfactorily address the contamination at the former Bayer site. The soil material needs to be excavated because the contaminants cannot be effectively treated in the ground due to the geology and the nature of some of the contamination. The current methodology for the treatment of excavated soil is comprehensive and appropriate to ensure a solution for all material that may be found on site.

It has been suggested that tents should be used to minimize emissions during the excavation phase. This is one of the options that have been considered, however, it is only a practical solution for small-scale remediation work. The Bayer site is a 20 acre site with substantial excavations which are carefully excavated, logged, exposed to the remediation process and returned to refill the original excavation site, tenting is not practical or manageable on such a large scale excavation and therefore all other

best practice procedures have been put in place to minimise the odour created from the works.

Supplementary question, asked at the Council meeting:

Councillor Roberts produced a jam jar of water she said had been drawn from ten yards outside the site boundary wall, and asked if any Executive Members and senior officers would smell or taste it. The Environmental Services Portfolio Holder offered to have the water sent for analysis.

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.

The Council has already taken all appropriate steps to secure the benefit of independent expert advice by way of duties 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.

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.

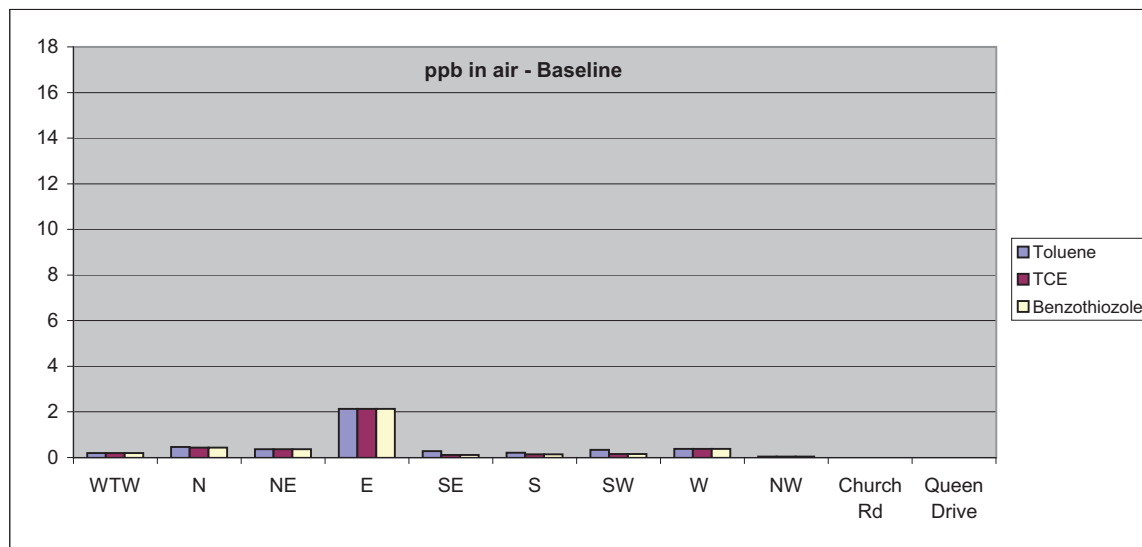
In this context, Benzothiazole is not classed as one of the site related VOCs, the likely source of this compound is understood to originate at a location offsite. It is known that benzothiazole may originate from the wear and tear of vehicle tyres and is found in road dust (Rogge etc 1993).

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.

Site related VOCs - Toluene and Tetrachloroethylene

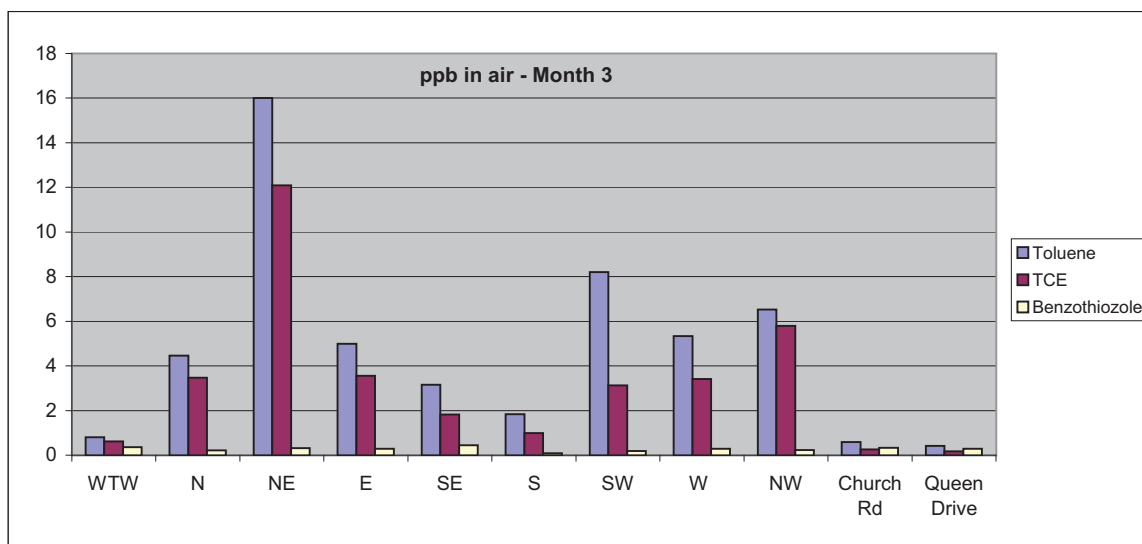
Estimated ppb in air Baseline			
Measurement point	Toluene	TCE	Benzothiozole
WTW	0.2	0.2	0.2
N	0.46	0.44	0.44
NE	0.36	0.36	0.36
E	2.13	2.13	2.13
SE	0.28	0.11	0.11
S	0.21	0.14	0.14
SW	0.34	0.15	0.15
W	0.38	0.38	0.38
NW	0.04	0.04	0.04
Church Rd			
Queen Drive			

Figures in bold italics indicate compound not detected in top 10, i.e concentration less than the 10th compound.
Concentration of 10th compound used as a conservative estimate.



Estimated ppb in air Month 3			
Measurement point	Toluene	TCE	Benzothiozole
WTW	0.8	0.61	0.36
N	4.46	3.47	0.21
NE	16	12.09	0.31
E	4.99	3.55	0.29
SE	3.15	1.82	0.44
S	1.83	0.99	0.09
SW	8.2	3.12	0.18
W	5.33	3.41	0.28
NW	6.52	5.8	0.23
Church Rd	0.59	0.26	0.33
Queen Drive	0.41	0.17	0.29

Figures in bold italics indicate compound not detected in top 10, i.e concentration less than the 10th compound.
Concentration of 10th compound used as a conservative estimate.



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From Linda Bland, resident of Hauxton, and Rob Thomas, resident of Harston, to the Environmental Services Portfolio Holder:

"It appears that at the end of all this aggravation South Cambridgeshire District Council and the Environment Agency will sign the job off .

"If some years down the line, remembering that know one to date will give a 100 % guarantee that everything here is OK, if we were to experience another Corby like scenario will the responsibility not be fairly and squarely down to South Cambridgeshire District Council and the Environment Agency ?"

At Corby the Local Authority was not only the Planning Authority but was also the relevant landowner and had accepted legal responsibility for the decontamination and remediation works which it failed to carry out in a safe way. At Hauxton, South Cambridgeshire District Council is not the landowner and has no contractual /land ownership responsibilities/liabilities in relation to the decontamination and remediation works. The District Council's legal responsibilities are limited to its two roles as (i) Local Planning Authority in terms of it regulating the planning conditions, and (ii) in terms of its duty to inspect its area to detect any statutory nuisances and to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to investigate any complaint of a statutory nuisance.

The long-term responsibility will remain with the landowner carrying out the decontamination and remediation works. Once the remediation process is complete there will be a minimum of at least six months monitoring to ensure that the works have been successful. At the end of this period Atkins will submit a full report to the Council detailing the works undertaken and the results of all sampling and analysis undertaken to verify the achievement of the target levels. Approval of this Verification Report does not give 100% guarantee that everything is OK. That responsibility remains with the landowner and with the authors of the Report. If any initial Verification Report does not demonstrate the effectiveness of the remediation works, and the Council is not satisfied, it will not be approved and no residential development will be permitted until a Verification Report is produced which does demonstrate the necessary effectiveness.

Supplementary question, asked at the Council meeting:

"What kind of insurance policy does the Council have and does it provide for claims against individual councillors?"

The Environmental Services Portfolio Holder replied that, as previously stated, the Council was not the landowner and the responsibility remained with the landowner and the remediation works provider.

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From Dr Charles Turner on behalf of the Cam Valley Forum to the Environmental Services Portfolio Holder:

In their Remediation Method Statement discussing "Contaminants of concern" Vertase noted:

(A) The recommended targets produced by Atkins are certainly protective of all identified receptors However, for the avoidance of doubt we do not believe these targets are achievable through the use of readily available and commercially viable remediation technologies or without significant export of contaminated materials off site. (Page 60, Section 18.1)

(B) It does mean that some material will be replaced at the site that does not meet the present generic criteria (Page 14, Section 6.4).

Which are, and what is the nature of the chemicals that cannot be remediated - or not to the target levels - and so will be replaced and, more importantly, what measures will be taken to isolate them to ensure the safety of humans and groundwater?

The statements quoted from the Remediation Method Statement need to be read in the context of the sections from which they have been taken. These sections set out the possibility of reviewing the numbers that were used for the computer model to calculate the target levels for remediation. The numbers currently used are very conservative estimates, however, through the excavation and remediation process more accurate numbers will be measured on site and these can be used in the models to produce new targets.

Any proposed changes to the remediation targets following such a review of the computer model would have to be submitted and agreed as set out in condition 2 of the planning consent.

The Remediation Method Statement correctly identifies that some contaminants are more treatable than others. South Cambridgeshire District Council and the Environment Agency will not accept the replacement of any soil that does not comply with agreed remedial targets. Any soils that, after extensive treatment, still have contaminant concentrations exceeding the agreed targets will need to be exported off site to a suitable licensed landfill. This is covered in the Remediation Method Statement to ensure that the treatment of excavated soil is comprehensive and that there is an appropriate option for all material that may be found on site.

Supplementary question, asked at the Council meeting

"In a letter to the Council from GTA Grimley in a report to Natural England, the cover system was designed to be protective to human health and must not be breached. In a response from Claire Sproats, the human health targets are limited to the top 1 metre. There must be some materials affecting human health and getting into the drainage system - do you regard as satisfactory the solution / remediation strategy which accepts that there are contaminants underneath and a cover on top?"

The Portfolio Holder provided the following written response:

The remediation strategy involves excavating all material from the site. The methodology for the treatment of excavated soil is comprehensive and appropriate to ensure a solution for all material that may be found on site. No material will be replaced which does not meet with the agreed target concentrations. If, despite

treatment, some material cannot achieve the agreed targets then this material must be sent off site to a suitably licensed landfill.

The remedial targets for all material replaced at the site have been calculated to be protective of controlled waters (groundwater and surface water). Targets specifically calculated to be protective of human health have also been used for material being placed in the top 1m of the site as this is considered the depth of soil that future residents are most likely to have contact with. In the top 1m, the most stringent of the two targets is therefore used to ensure both human health and controlled waters are protected. It is the case for many contaminants that the controlled water target is much lower than the target concentrations for human health.

Prior to redevelopment taking place, the site level has to be raised for flood protection purposes. Therefore, once remediation work has been completed and all the treated material has been replaced, additional material will be brought to site. This material will also have to be tested prior to importation.

The remediation being undertaken will effectively remove all significant pollutant linkages from the site and has been designed in accordance with CLR11 Model Procedures for the Management of Land Contamination, which sets out the basic methodology for establishing a preferred method for remediation.

From William Garfit, resident of Harlton, to the Environmental Services Portfolio Holder:

"As the owner of the old gravel pit site opposite the former Bayer site at Hauxton, I have serious concern for those who work here. They are exposed all day to the obnoxious smells and volatile chemicals in the air since remediation commenced in March.

"My daughter, Jackie Williams, proprietor of the Organic Health shop on our site, has had to be rushed to hospital on three occasions with severe breathing difficulties. She has never suffered breathing difficulties in her life before but occupational asthma has now been diagnosed and I am very concerned about her future health. She has had to close her shop as she is advised by the hospital doctors to keep away from the area.

"Mr and Mrs Noble run Cambridge Farm Machinery Company. They and their employees suffer symptoms such as sore throats and dry coughs, headaches, tingling lips and numb tongues. Much work on modern agricultural machinery needs to be done outside. However they are driven to operate in the workshop with the roller doors shut.

"At home in the village they, like so many residents of Hauxton, have to keep windows closed and are unable to sit in the garden.

"They are expected to exist like this for another 15 months.

"Would members of the South Cambridgeshire District Council tolerate these living and working conditions for themselves and their families?"

I acknowledge that residents appear to be affected by the remediation process and the Council continues to work with all organisations involved to do everything possible to reduce the odours from the site.

The issue of asthma isn't a straightforward one and the HPA cannot comment on individual cases. However, in general it remains the HPA's opinion that there is no reason to suspect emissions from the remediation works at Hauxton are sufficient to cause asthma. In individuals with pre-existing asthma, episodes can be triggered by contaminants in the air. Such contaminants might include volatile organic substances or odours but any effect would depend upon their chemical composition, the levels and duration of exposure and an individual's sensitivity to odour. The main substances of concern for asthma triggers are allergens and irritant gases, which are present in the air from a variety of sources including natural and human activities. It is unlikely that emissions from the remedial works at Hauxton would trigger asthma. It is likely that other potential sources of asthma triggers (e.g. plant pollen, traffic) are more important factors.

Supplementary question, asked at the Council meeting:

"Open remediation is not appropriate. I invite the Leader and Deputy Leader to visit Hauxton and the homes of those affected. If SCDC officers lived there, would you tolerate these conditions? I repeat my invitation: would you and the Council be happy to live and work in these conditions?"

The Portfolio Holder replied that many individuals had said that they would be happy to visit, noting that the work had to be done and the site had to be remediated.

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From Martin Goldman, resident of Great Shelford, to the Environmental Services Portfolio Holder [Question rejected by the Chairman prior to the meeting, but answered by the Portfolio Holder on the day]:

"South Cambridgeshire District Council granted a licence for the so-called remediation at the Hauxton Bayer Crop Science site and consulted residents in Hauxton and Harston. In this matter, it did not consult or inform people in Grantchester, Barton, Coton, Haslingfield, Newton, Whittlesford, Stapleford, The Shelfords, Trumpington, south Cambridge and further afield."

For any planning application, this Council has a duty to consult owners of adjoining land, either directly or by the posting of a notice on site. In addition the practice is that it consults with the relevant Parish Council where the site lies within its area. Consultations for the remediation application included the Parish Councils of Hauxton, Haslingfield, Great Shelford and Harston who were identified as the immediate neighbours. Four site notices were erected around the site and publication put in two places in the Cambridge Evening News on 19th December 2006. Both the remediation and development application were discussed in planning committee on two occasions and public minutes were published following these meetings.

Supplementary question – accepted by the Chairman as the substantive question

"The council has said and written much about working to ensure its residents have a good quality of life by looking after them, and their environment."

"Its constitution claims that it is "committed to ensuring that South Cambridgeshire continues to be a safe and healthy place for you and your family".

"It has powers to stop this nuisance to its residents' quality of life. Why is it not doing so?"

South Cambridgeshire District Council has powers available to it in respect of statutory nuisance. We can only operate within the regulatory framework which requires us to make our judgements on the ordinary normal person. When investigating any complaint of disturbance, several factors need careful consideration by the Environmental Health Officer in determining whether the source is likely to constitute a statutory nuisance. Considerations to which the test of an ordinary normal person will be applied include location, time, duration, frequency, convention, importance to the community of activity and difficulty in avoiding external effects of activity.

Investigations have been undertaken at locations where complaints have been received, at all times of the working day during variable weather conditions, as well as early in the morning, at night and on weekends. If a statutory nuisance is established then South Cambridgeshire District Council must serve an abatement notice in accordance with the council's enforcement policy. However the Council is limited to the extent of enforcement action we can take at Hauxton due to the existence of the environmental permit. Any enforcement action for statutory nuisance would have to be approved by the Secretary of State for the Environment, as the primary enforcement body is the Environment Agency in its regulation of the environmental permit.

In the last fortnight I have asked for officers to undertake a review of the evidence of nuisance in respect of this site and the Principal Environmental Health is satisfied

that the Council's procedures have been followed and at this time there is not a statutory nuisance on the grounds of odour.

From Linda Whitebread on behalf of the South Cambridgeshire Green Party to the Environmental Services Portfolio Holder:

"I was surprised to see that the Council and other public bodies are sharing a website with the contractors carrying out the remediation work, rather than taking a more detached and regulatory stance. It also appears that the contractors are doing their own monitoring. Are these normal practices, and if so, how do the public bodies confirm that the measurements made by the contractor are done correctly?"

The website you refer to is hosted and controlled by this Council as a means of providing information about the Bayer site to local residents. Whilst the developer and contractor share information, such as site photographs etc, they have their own web pages in relation to the site through their respective company's websites.

It is normal practice for contractors to monitor their own work and this is a requirement of their Environmental Permit, which is regulated by the Environment Agency. The monitoring is verified by Atkins as an independent consultant and all of the analysis is carried out at an independent and accredited laboratory. All of the results are provided to this Council, the Environment Agency and the HPA for review, in addition they are all published on the dedicated website. SCDC and the Environment Agency also carry out random visits to monitor and validate procedures as well as any complaints.

Supplementary question, asked at the Council meeting:

"All agree that the land needs to be cleaned up and it is a legitimate of the Council to require the developer to make sure the work is done before permission is granted to build houses. However, we are not happy with the shared website. It creates a conflict of interests. It is unfortunate to say that Council officers are working closely with contractors and are happy with the spot checks. The perception is that the Council is hand-in-glove with the developers. Will the Council consider detaching itself from the developers, using a separate website with a link to the contractor?"

The Environmental Services Portfolio Holder noted Ms Whitebread's concerns and said that the Council was willing to consider these suggestions and would see if it were practical for all concerned to implement.

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From Jackie Williams, resident of Little Eversden, to the Environmental Services Portfolio Holder:

"As the owner of an organic food business in Church Road, Hauxton who has had to go to A&E twice in May and be seen by paramedics on a third occasion with breathing problems confirmed by A&E Doctors as being due to chemical inhalation, I would like S.C.D.C. to tell me if they consider the cocktail of chemicals being released from the Bayer Site to be safe for a pregnant woman to breath in approximately 48 hours per week? I am particularly concerned about research that shows that in some instances two toxic chemicals mixed together can be one thousand times more toxic than one of the original chemicals. Please bear this in mind before commenting on the safety of an unborn child."

The Health Protection Agency has advised us that they do not expect an appreciable increase in the risk of cancers or birth defects to be caused by emissions from the remediation activities at this site. Their assessment is based on the results of air monitoring data at the site boundary. The current scientific view is that the probability of any health risk from exposure to mixtures of chemicals present at low levels is likely to be small. Furthermore, when there is exposure to multiple chemicals that cause toxicity in the same way, the combined effects are likely to be no greater than the additive effect. Only two chemicals, toluene and tetrachloroethylene have consistently been detected by the monthly monitoring at the site boundary. Even if these two chemicals were to cause toxicity in the same way, there would be no reason to expect adverse health effects, since the levels detected are many times below the levels required to cause ill health.

I have been advised that the multi agency group working on the management of Hauxton issues remain open to receiving any relevant evidence to the contrary of this opinion.

Supplementary question, asked at the Council meeting:

"We keep getting told that the chemicals are safe and there are no side effects. I have twice been to A&E and 1 time seen by paramedics: I do not consider this safe. Would you take such risks?"

The Environmental Services Portfolio Holder replied that she was not qualified to answer personally, but that the Health Protection Agency (HPA) advice was that there was no risk that they were able to identify.

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From Councillor Hazel Smith to the New Communities Portfolio Holder:

"I was concerned to read in the Cambridge News that Dr Bard had decided to slow down even further the preparation of the Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan document (GTDPD). Policies on provision for this sizeable minority of the residents of South Cambs are referred to in our main LDF documents which were adopted many years ago now. We have looked into the needs of local Gypsies and Travellers at local and regional level to justify with evidence the numbers of pitches we were going to have to provide, just on the basis of families growing up and getting independent plots of their own. We know that the trajectory of new plots required was 69 from 2006 to 2011, another 27 up to 2016 and a further 31 to 2021 under the slimmed-down figures. As the RSS has now been abolished and neighbouring authorities in the East of England are now not having to make provision the need will be greater, perhaps up to half as much again.

"We have given permanent consent to 40 I know of, or perhaps a few more, up to now. There is also temporary consent to around 60 plots, many of them in Milton ward, and the GTDPD is now unlikely to be adopted in time for the end of the temporary permissions which have been given.

"Travellers have a justified expectation that this authority should have a proper policy, and tell them once and for all whether they can expect to be able to stay on their own land. Planning applications are increasingly likely to succeed on appeal, the longer we are without a credible strategy for providing for this community's needs. What is the administration's plan for the policy in this area?"

I am well aware of the importance of planning for the needs of our Gypsies and Travellers, who account for 1% of South Cambs population. The Council has been working for some time on the preparation of a Gypsy and Traveller DPD in view of the level of need for new pitches in the district, and two rounds of public consultation have already been undertaken.

Unfortunately, just as we were making progress towards a further round of consultation leading to the preparation of a draft DPD, the significant changes being made by the new Government have meant that we have had to slow down that work. It is unfortunate, but there are good reasons for it.

Members will recall that the Gypsy and Traveller DPD was aiming to meet the targets for pitch numbers set out in the East of England Plan. Members will also know that on 6th July, regional spatial strategies were revoked by the Secretary of State, meaning that they no longer form part of the development plan. As a consequence, we do not currently have an agreed target to provide for and it will be for the District Council through its plan making to identify a local target.

However, it is important to realise that the impact of the loss of the East of England Plan could be particularly significant on South Cambridgeshire, as the high levels of need identified for the district in the 2006 Needs Assessment (the Cambridge Sub Region Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment 2006) was to be spread across the region, to aid choice, and speed up delivery. This gave us a lower target in the RSS than could have been the case simply using our local Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs assessment.

Also relevant is that the new Government proposes to introduce changes to the planning system in the UK. This will include a change to the LDF system, which we

anticipate will be introduced in draft in the Decentralisation and Localism Bill in November.

The Government has said it intends to give local communities greater say in planning decisions that will affect their local areas. They say that targets for numbers of pitches will now be set locally. They also say that local authorities should reflect local need and historic demand.

Recent guidance from the CLG advises that needs assessments will continue to provide a good starting point. At the same time they say that local authorities are not bound by them.

My judgement is that we need to proceed with caution during this period of uncertainty to make sure that any plan we prepare is likely to be found sound by independent Inspectors. CLG says that regulations and guidance for Gypsy and Traveller provision will be reviewed in due course.

The Council will therefore now need to consider what is an appropriate target, that is transparent and can be defended, taking account of local need and historic demand, and any other relevant factors. This is likely to include the practicalities of delivering the number of new sites identified. This will need to be considered in the context of wider changes to the planning making system which will affect how we make plans in the future.

For all these reasons, we consider the appropriate way forward is for the work on the Gypsy and Traveller DPD to now progress more slowly whilst we wait for the new government to produce the much needed guidance on how we should plan for the needs of our Gypsies and Travellers. Members should however be reassured that work is continuing to explore how needs can be met, and how sites can be delivered.

From Councillor Sebastian Kindersley to the Planning Portfolio Holder:

"Would the Portfolio holder please advise Council what the Administration's position is on Local Enterprise Partnerships? In particular I am interested to know with whom the Council expects to work; what the anticipated timeline for this is and what discussions have so far taken place."

On 29th June, the Secretaries of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, and for Communities and Local Government wrote to local authorities and business leaders requesting outline proposals from partnerships of local authorities and businesses for Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP's) by 6 September.

The Government's stated expectation is that Local Enterprise Partnerships will be about setting the right conditions for growth and business, tackling issues such as planning and housing, local transport and infrastructure priorities, employment and enterprise and the transition of the low carbon economy. Supporting small business start-ups will be important. The Government has also said that Partnerships will work closely with academic institutions and that tourism will be important in some areas.

It is expected that Partnerships will focus on supporting and enabling the private sector.

The Council expects to work with the city council, the county council, the business and academic communities (especially these two) to submit a proposal for a LEP by 6 September. Discussions with these and other parties is ongoing, with the next high level meeting arranged for 28 July.

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To: Local Authority Leaders and Business Leaders
Cc: Local Authority Chief Executive Offices

29 June 2010

Dear colleague,

Local enterprise partnerships

We are writing to you to invite you to work with the Government to help strengthen local economies. The Coalition Government is committed to reforming our system of sub-national economic development by enabling councils and business to replace the existing Regional Development Agencies. The purpose of this letter is to invite local groups of councils and business leaders to come together to consider how you wish to form local enterprise partnerships.

We are working with the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) to enable this transition. We are reviewing all the functions of the RDAs. We believe some of these are best led nationally, such as inward investment, sector leadership, responsibility for business support, innovation, and access to finance, such as venture capital funds. Some of their existing roles are being scrapped, such as Regional Strategies. The forthcoming White Paper on sub-national economic growth will set out our approach in more detail.

Separate arrangements will apply in London, where discussions are currently underway with the Mayor of London on how we can further decentralise powers, particularly in the context of the abolition of the Government Office for London.

We are determined that the transition from the existing RDAs be orderly, working to a clear timetable.

Meanwhile, we are keen to encourage local businesses and councils to work together to develop their proposals for local enterprise partnerships. We want to encourage a wide range of ideas, and to aid that, we would suggest some parameters.

Role

We anticipate that local enterprise partnerships will wish to provide the strategic leadership in their areas to set out local economic priorities. A clear vision is vital if local economic renewal is to be achieved. The Coalition Government is determined to rebalance the

economy towards the private sector. We regard local enterprise partnerships as being central to this vision.

Partnerships will therefore want to create the right environment for business and growth in their areas, by tackling issues such as planning and housing, local transport and infrastructure priorities, employment and enterprise and the transition to the low carbon economy. Supporting small business start-ups will therefore be important. They will want to work closely with universities and further education colleges, in view of their importance to local economies, and with other relevant stakeholders. In some areas, tourism will also be an important economic driver. Further details will be set out in the forthcoming White Paper.

Governance

To be effective partnerships, it is vital that business and civic leaders work together. We believe this would normally mean an equal representation on the boards of these partnerships and that a prominent business leader should chair the board. We would, however, be willing to consider variants from this, such as where there is an elected mayor responsible for the area, if that is the clear wish of business and council leaders in the partnership area. The governance structures will need to be sufficiently robust and clear to ensure proper accountability for delivery by partnerships.

Size

We have been concerned that some local and regional boundaries do not reflect functional economic areas. We wish to enable partnerships to better reflect the natural economic geography of the areas they serve and hence to cover real functional economic and travel to work areas.

To be sufficiently strategic, we would expect that partnerships would include groups of upper tier authorities. If it is clearly the wish of business and civic leaders to establish a local enterprise partnership for a functional economic area that matches existing regional boundaries, we will not object. We will welcome proposals that reflect the needs of every part of England, not least areas that are economically more vulnerable. Government is keen to work closely with and through capable local enterprise partnerships which meet these criteria.

Going forward

As set out in the Budget, we will publish a White Paper later in the summer, which will set out the Government's approach to sub-national growth. Legislation to abolish RDAs and enable local enterprise partnerships was announced in the Queen's speech and is expected to be introduced to Parliament in the autumn.

We would therefore welcome outline proposals from partnerships of local authorities and businesses, reflecting the Coalition Government's agenda, as soon as possible, and no later than 6 September.

Yours sincerely

A stylized, handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'Vince Cable'.

The RT Hon Dr Vince Cable MP
**Secretary of State for Business,
Innovation and Skills
and President of the Board of Trade**

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'Eric Pickles'.

The RT Hon Eric Pickles MP
**Secretary of State for
Communities and Local Government**

From Councillor Douglas de Lacey to the Planning Portfolio Holder:

“Will the Portfolio Holder please tell us how it is possible that an upgrade of a perfectly-functioning planning website, on which many Parish Councillors rely to fulfil their duties, can take over three weeks rather than the three milliseconds which switching systems in the 21st century would normally be expected to take?”

I agree that the changing or switching of websites takes but a moment. However the work being undertaken is much more than this and involves the closure of the existing planning database, the extraction of data and all related records back to 1948. This was then sent to our new supplier Swift LG where the data has been converted for import back into the new planning system.

This work was scheduled to take two weeks and I can confirm it has been completed successfully. Testing of the data has taken place and the system went live on Monday.

The planning service is acutely aware of the disruption to customers and has minimised this by clear scheduling of work and taking mitigating actions including interim working arrangements that allow members to be kept up to date with records of submitted applications, whilst at the same time publishing as much information as possible to the public. Please note that:

- All records that existed on the website prior to 2nd July have been fully maintained on the site, including notifications of decisions and details of any amendments. Only new applications were not appearing.
- For new applications, staff were validating these applications manually and creating a list that was regularly circulated to members via email. As soon as the new system was available, staff commenced uploading these applications so that they are available on the new search page as soon as it is turned on, which will be by the 26th July at the latest. Newly received applications are also being entered simultaneously to ensure no continuing delay to application detail availability.
- Parish Councils were informed of the planned procedure at the forum held on 14th June, prior to the transition commencing and although there were some concerns, in general Parish Councils expressed understanding, because the manual system was to be introduced.
- Periods for consultations are unaffected by the transition between systems.
- Work to connect the new database with the new Swift webpages is underway and we expect to be live in the next day or two.

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From Councillor Jose Hales to the New Communities Portfolio Holder:

“Could the portfolio holder explain to members what this council’s policy is now regarding housing provision numbers given, that the Regional Spatial Strategy policy has now been abolished?”

Shortly after the Secretary of State abolished the Regional Spatial Strategies for England, this question was answered in part by the Chief Planning Officer at the Department for Communities & Local Government who wrote to all local planning authorities to explain the practical implications of the Secretary of State’s decision and to provide guidance on how local planning authorities should proceed during the transitional period before the government’s new planning system comes into effect at the end of 2011. The Chief Planning Officer’s letter was put on the Council’s web-site on day it was received – 6th July.

In reply to the question, the letter explains that the planning policies which will remain in force are the Council’s adopted Development Plan Documents and the saved policies from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003. The housing numbers that do apply are now only to be found in the Council’s Core Strategy which was adopted in January 2007 (20,000 homes 1999 – 2016), pre-dating the Regional Spatial Strategy which was not adopted until May 2008 (23,500 homes 2001 – 2021).

This information and the links to both the Council’s Core Strategy and the Structure Plan ‘saved policies’ are on the Council’s web-site and this information was included in the July Planning Policy Update which is sent to all Parish Councils and to members.

The housing numbers in our Core Strategy are based on the 2003 Structure Plan which was developed locally and endorsed by all of the Districts as well as the County Council. Those housing numbers were produced by local forecasts of the growth of the local economy and local population and are the houses that we all agreed would be needed to ensure the continued prosperity of the area and to stop houses becoming unaffordable to more local people. Based on those housing numbers we have an agreed development strategy which all Councils in Cambridgeshire have signed up to and, through the Joint Development Control Committees, we are actively delivering

Looking to the future once the new local planning system is in place, housing numbers will be found in the new style Local Plans and will be based once more on forecasts of prospects for our local economy and population growth. We are already working with partners to begin the developing the evidence needed and I am looking forward to working with our local communities to develop the new local plans.

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