

**REPORT TO:** Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board  
**DATE:** 23 January 2008  
**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director, Environment  
**SUBJECT:** Contaminated Land Strategy 2008 - 2013  
**WARDS:** Boroughwide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 To consider the issues facing contaminated land and the proposed strategy for the next five years.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

**Members note the report and the issues facing contaminated land remediation and approve the attached strategy and action plan (Appendix 1) as the basis for consultation.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 The contaminated and brownfield sites in the borough are detailed in the National Land Use Database (NLUD) 2007 document which was submitted to ODPM in April 2007 and on the Council's own large database.

3.2 Contamination is a major issue for Halton and there are not many new developments, large or small, carried out without some form of remediation being necessary. Over the past three years over 35 ha. of land have been remediated.

3.3 The funding for remediation work is constantly changing, as are the outputs required to justify that funding. Recent schemes have utilised funding from a wide variety of sources including the North West Development Agency, Defra, NRF, Landfill Tax Credits and the Council's own capital programme. With this in mind it is hard to predict which future works will be eligible for funding. What is certain is that all schemes are costly and getting more costly as tighter environmental regulations and land fill taxes start to bite.

3.4 Council officers are currently working with English Partnerships (EP) to explore new ways of facilitating brownfield remediation. One idea being explored is the possibility of swapping green field development for brownfield remediation. This could be done using a gearing of say 1 acre of green field released for the remediation of 2 acres of brownfield. The cost of the remediation would fall to the developer of

the green field site and in Halton's case the remediation of the brownfield would bring green space back into the heart of communities. This idea would require a change in national planning policies and is likely to be controversial. However, the overall effect would be energy saving, beneficial to the environment and economic. It would work particularly well in Halton as we have a high proportion of brownfield sites that are not suitable for hard end use and very few sites for greenfield development. English Partnerships have recently indicated that they would like to trial this idea in Halton and are working with Council officers to try to facilitate this.

#### **4.0 STATUTORY DUTIES OF THE COUNCIL**

- 4.1 Under provisions contained within Part IIA of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 every Local Authority has a requirement to actively look for contaminated land within its borough. Halton has a strategy document, the Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy (Appendix 2), prepared and implemented by Environmental Health and Planning, which sets out how the Council will go about collating and reviewing information, deciding which sites are contaminated and how remediation will be enforced.
- 4.2 The strategy has a number of drivers but the fundamental one is to assess the risk or potential risk of significant harm to the health of residents as a consequence of the contamination. As such the shared improvement target falls within the health priority. Contaminated land was highlighted in the recently commissioned study into factors affecting health in Halton as a potential cause of ill health for residents in certain wards.
- 4.3 We have subsequently created a large database of information about land in the Borough, compiled from both internal records and from external sources. A method of interpreting and assessing this data has been jointly developed with the other Merseyside Authorities, allowing the identification of potentially contaminated land based on past and present land use and the overall environmental setting of each site.
- 4.4 The method used was also designed to assign an element of risk assessment to the identified areas, which has allowed the sites to be divided into high, medium and low risk sites. This prioritisation work to date has mapped out some 200 sites within the high and medium risk categories.
- 4.5 A major factor in progressing the Strategy is the resource that the Environment Agency has available. The Environment Agency is a consultee and key partner in the regulation of contaminated land and also, on behalf of DEFRA, judges the suitability of Local Authority bids for funding to undertake investigations and remediation.

#### **5.0 2008-9 WORK PROGRAMME**

- 5.1 The main piece of work due to start in 2008-9 will hopefully be the start of the remediation of the Golf Course. This, however, is fully dependant on the release of funding from Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). Recently £188,000 has been received from Defra to carry out further design and evaluation of the remediation strategy prior to the start of the main works.
- 5.2 Other work will include assisting in the design and remediation of development sites within the EDZ (such as on Venture Fields) and for the 3MG Strategic Railfreight Park.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **6.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

None

### **6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

The work related to the Widnes Waterfront and 3MG projects will develop contaminated land for employment .

### **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

The remediation of contaminated land will help improve the environment which in turn will contribute towards a Healthy Halton.

### **6.4 A Safer Halton**

None

### **6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

The proposals are fully in accord with this priority.

## **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

Individual projects are risk assessed, the main risk is the availability of funding which is generally external funding subject to a bidding process.

## **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

None

## **9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

Appendix 1 – Contaminated Land Strategy 2008-2013 attached

Appendix 2 – Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy 2006 attached

National Land Use Database HBC Planning Dept. Contact - Ann Moyers