

South Western Crescent Site Investigation



INTRODUCTION

This pack has been produced by Environmental and Consumer Protection Services (ECPS) to provide information on the investigation of the former South Western Pottery site and the former oil fuelled district heating system within South Western Crescent. It explains:

- Historical information on the past land uses of the area
- Why we are carrying out the site investigation
- What the site investigation will involve and how this will affect you
- How to contact us and how we will continue to communicate with you in the future

Map showing approximate investigation zone (outlined in red)

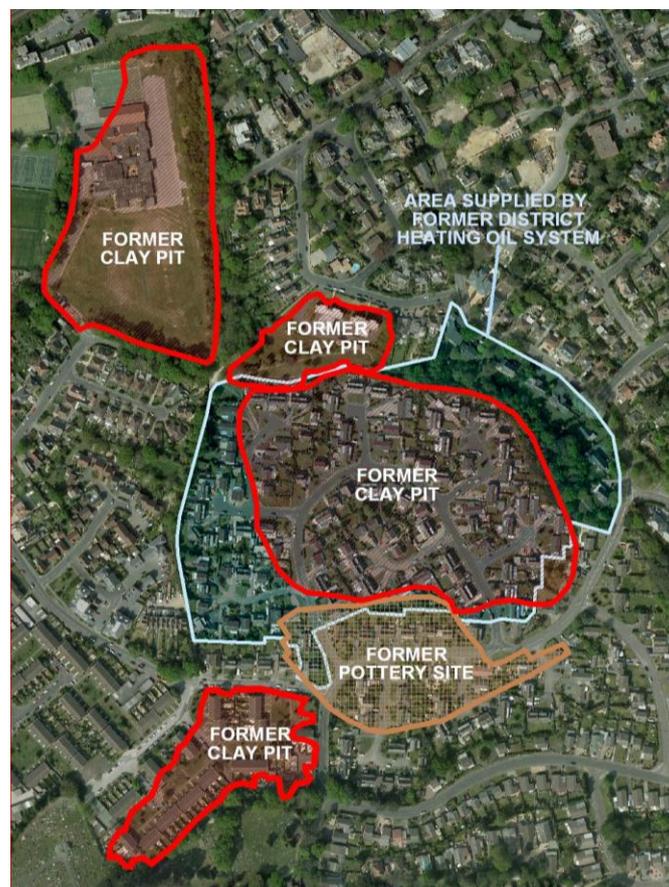


HISTORY OF THE SITE

What is the history of the site?

- It is believed that the South Western Pottery was established by George Jennings (inventor of the first public toilets) by 1847. The pottery manufactured water closets, salt-glaze drainage, sanitary pipes and sanitary ware. The pottery had its own steam locomotive that ran on a private branch line from Parkstone Station.
- Historical Ordnance Survey maps show that the pottery was present until the 1968 edition. Maps and photos show that large clay pits (which later became large ponds) were present on areas which later became South Western Crescent and Copeland Drive. A shallower area of land in the location of Baden Powell and St Peter's school is shown on the 1962 aerial photo.
- Planning permission was granted in 1968 to drain and fill the main lake and construction of the houses on South Western Crescent and Alton Road followed this in the early 1970s. Planning permission was also sought in 1973 for the erection of a "fuel oil pump room for supplying oil to the housing estate"

Figure 2: Outline of areas of clay pits (outlined in red), pottery and area understood to be fuelled by district heating oil system (outlined in blue)



Why are we investigating the site?

Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 requires the council to investigate potentially contaminated sites, including former industrial and land-filled sites. We must test for the presence of contamination in soil and groundwater in order to assess the risk to human health and the environment. If any serious risks are found then the site should be made safe and suitable for use. This type of work is routinely carried out across the country. We have already carried out similar investigations in other parts of Poole.

This area has been identified as a site of potential contamination following its operation as South Western Pottery and the filling in of associated large clay pits. An oil fuelled district heating system that also served the area is included.

A number of sites, varying in size and age, have been identified for inspection in the borough. Sites like this will be prioritised due to the large number of residential properties nearby.

Our contaminated land inspection strategy can be viewed online at www.boroughofpoole.com/contaminatedlandstrategy.

Why was the site not investigated at the time the houses were built?

The houses were built at a time when health risks sometimes associated with building on former industrial and filled sites were unknown. We now have a better understanding of the possible risks caused by building near or on previous industrial sites and areas where the ground was filled prior to building. The issue of potential contamination from the former heating system pipework has come to light more recently.

What are we looking for during the site investigation?

One potential risk from landfill sites is gases such as methane and carbon dioxide which we will be testing for. These are naturally produced when bacteria in the soil break down organic materials such as wood, paper or plants. If gases are being produced on the site many of them will migrate naturally to the surface and will vent into the atmosphere without causing a health hazard. However, it is possible that gases could build up under foundations and enter properties. In sufficiently high quantities methane can cause explosions due to it being a flammable gas if ignited. Carbon dioxide can have negative health effects such as headaches and shortness of breath. We would emphasise that these are worst case examples that you should be made aware of and we do not want to cause unnecessary alarm.

It is also possible the mix of material used to fill the former pits could cause contamination to soils. As part of the investigation ECPS will carry out surface soil sampling to identify what (if anything) is in the soil.

South Western Crescent was supplied with oil as part of a former district heating system which was closed in 1995 and the investigation will look at whether this system was properly decommissioned.

Is there a current risk to residents on site?

ECPS have consulted with the Health Protection Agency (HPA) (www.hpa.org.uk) about the investigation. They advised that you should continue to use and enjoy your houses and gardens as you normally would. In regards to the school this is an exploratory investigation and there is no reason why the playing fields should not be continued to be used as normal.

ECPS will continue to consult with the HPA throughout the investigation. We will contact you with any further information or advice.

THE SITE INVESTIGATION

Who will be undertaking the work on site?

Borough of Poole has contracted a specialist environmental consultancy, Atkins Limited, to carry out the works. They have a wide range of experience and expertise and have completed similar site investigations in residential areas. We will work closely with Atkins on this project and more information about them can be found on their website

http://www.atkinsglobal.com/areas_of_business/environment_services/land_quality/

Atkins will use specialist subcontractors to perform some of the work on site such as the drilling of boreholes (a hole drilled in the earth to look at the type of soil and collect soil samples) and digging of trial pits. There will always be a member of the Atkins team on site to supervise.

What will the works involve?

The works planned form an “exploratory” or “phase 1” investigation. Depending on the findings of the exploratory phase further detailed investigation may be needed in parts of the site at a later stage.

The exploratory works will involve:

- Digging 30 -35 hand dug pits across the site. This will enable us to look at the soils nearer the surface of the site. A soil sample will be tested at a laboratory from each location.
- Installing 24 boreholes across the site. These allow deeper soils to be sampled as well as groundwater. These will also be installed as gas monitoring wells.
- A number of vapour monitoring wells will also be installed. This will enable us to tell whether there are vapours in the soil connected to the pipework of the old district oil heating system.

Where possible, sampling will be undertaken in public spaces and verges. However, it may be necessary for some sampling to take place in private gardens. If a front or back garden is sampled, it will be with the permission of the occupier and the area

will be made good afterwards. A member of ECPS or Atkins will contact those households to arrange a suitable appointment and provide further details.

If contamination is found in some locations during the exploratory phase there may be a need to return to the site and take samples from other houses.

When will the investigations take place?

We aim to start the exploratory phase of works during November 2010. If sampling is required in your garden you will be contacted to arrange a convenient date and time.

When will I find out the results?

We hope to publish the results by the end of January 2011. The dates for the publication of results are approximate but you will be notified in writing and they will be published on the council's website www.boroughofpoole.com. If any urgent concerns are identified appropriate action will be taken immediately.

What happens after the results are published?

What happens next will depend on the results found on the site:

No or very little contamination -

In this case no further work will be required. A written confirmation will be sent to each property to confirm that no contamination is present and that we have no further concerns regarding the property.

Contamination is found -

The results could show that there are some problems caused by the past use of the site. Decisions regarding the need for more detailed assessment will be made at that time. If further action is needed we will contact you with any decisions made. Drop in sessions to discuss the results will be held depending on the results and the need for any further actions.

Who is responsible for remediation?

There is a possibility that some corrective actions might be required to ensure the continued safety of residents on site. The law states that those responsible for causing the contamination should have to pay for remediation. However, there is the possibility that such company (or companies) cannot be traced. If this happens then in some cases individual owners may be responsible for the cost of works to their properties. We are currently looking into liabilities at the site. At this stage we hope that no corrective works will be necessary but we will not know this until we have the results of the investigation.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

Is it safe for my family to use the garden of our house?

We are not aware of any immediate health risks to residents or their properties. It is likely that clean soil would have been brought into all of the gardens at the time the houses were built and our tests will check this.

We will be in constant contact with the HPA as the investigation progresses and if we become aware of any information that suggests that people are at risk then we will advise residents immediately.

Is it safe for children using the school playing fields?

We are not aware of any immediate risks to children using the school playing fields. The works are precautionary and we have no evidence that contamination is present in the school grounds.

We will stay in contact with the HPA throughout the investigation and if we become aware of any information which suggests that children are at risk we will advise the school and parents immediately.

Historical photos indicate that a clay pit was present on the school site, however there are still steep banks around the edge of the fields today indicating that the pit was not fully filled.

Is it safe to eat vegetables that grow in my garden?

We are not aware of any ill-effects suffered from people eating produce from the estate.

A cautious approach would be to wash and peel fruit and vegetables before eating them and cleaning muddy hands and shoes – this is normal practice in any case when preparing vegetables and gardening.

What will happen to the value of my property?

If the results show that the soil is clean then you will be issued a letter which confirms this. If remediation/clean up is required then this will be undertaken and a letter or certificate will be issued to state that the site is clean. Therefore there should be no long term effect to house prices.

How could this investigation affect me if I am trying to sell my property?

By investigating we will be providing reassurance and some certainty as to what is in the soil. At the moment solicitors searches often show that further information is required. By providing clarity we will help both buyers and sellers.

Will I have to move out during the works?

There is no requirement for residents to move out of their houses whilst the works are taking place.

How long will the investigation last?

All works and results from this phase should be finished and available in January 2011.

Who is paying for the investigation/Will it cost me any money?

The investigations are being funded by DEFRA (the government department responsible for the environment). You will not have to pay for any of the investigation.

What if remediation work is required but I cannot afford it?

We are still finding out who might be liable for any remediation work. Before trying to recover the costs of any remediation, the council would take into account any hardship that might be caused. At this stage we hope that no corrective work will be needed.

What is considered urgent/unsafe?

If very high levels of contamination are found in the gardens then this would be considered urgent. We would consult with the HPA for further guidance immediately.

How will serious risks be made safe?

Until we have investigated it is not possible to be sure what we will find or what, if anything, needs to be done. This would depend on the type and amount of any contamination found. However it is too early on in the investigation to say what type of work may be involved to clean up the site.

How will you gain access to my garden?

We will arrange an appointment for a convenient time for you to let the contractors into your garden to carry out sampling.

Do I have to be at home during the soil sampling?

You do not have to be at home during the sampling although you may wish to be. Photographs will be taken to ensure that your garden is left as it was before the sampling.

How can I verify the identity of the contractors coming into my garden?

You will have been contacted to arrange a date and time to allow contractors onto your property. Everyone on site will wear an identity badge. An Atkins consultant will be on site whenever work is being done. You can also telephone ECPS on 01202 261700 to confirm the identity of the staff on site.

Can I refuse to allow a bore-hole sample to be taken in my garden?

At this stage we do not know exactly where the consultants will be sampling but it is likely that they will want to sample some private gardens. If this is the case ECPS will contact individual occupiers to ask if samples can be taken. At this point we do not need to sample every garden so it is fine if you do not want samples taken.

CONTACT US

If after reading this information pack you have further questions or require more information please do not hesitate to visit us at one of the drop in sessions or contact one of our team:

Website

www.boroughofpoole.com

Further details on the investigation can be found by looking for “South Western Crescent Site Investigation” on the website’s A-Z.

Email

environment@poole.gov.uk

Telephone

01202 261700

Office Hours 8.30 – 5.15 Monday to Thursday and 8.30 – 4.45 Friday

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We can give you help to read
or understand this information



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www.boroughofpoole.com/accessibility