

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is going on?

The site is being remediated or "cleaned up" as a statutory requirement under Part IIa of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and to allow redevelopment of the site in accordance with a recently granted conditional planning consent. (Information provided by: Environment Agency)

2. What was the site?

Until recently, the site was occupied by Bayer CropScience and has a long history of agrochemical production, such as pesticides and herbicides since the 1940s. The site is owned by Bridgemere UK PLC. The site has conditional planning permission for redevelopment. (Information provided by: Environment Agency)

3. Who is working on site?

Harrow Estates plc, have employed a specialist remediation contractor, Vertase FLI, to undertake the remediation works. Vertase FLI are a nationally based specialist contractor with experience of remediating similar sites throughout the UK. Atkins Plc, an environmental and engineering consultancy, are also present on site to provide independent validation and monitoring of the works being undertaken by Vertase FLI. (Information provided by: Environment Agency)

4. What is remediation?

Remediation is a process whereby the soil and groundwater is cleaned up to make it suitable for proposed future use. The predominant remediation technique being used on the site is called 'Bioremediation'. (Information provided by: Environment Agency)

5. What is bioremediation?

Bioremediation is a natural process using microorganisms already present in the soil to degrade contaminants to harmless by-products. (Information provided by: Environment Agency)

6. What are the nature of the works?

Briefly, the remediation works involve excavating contaminated soils before processing and treatment. The excavation activity is an essential part of the process allowing access to the soils so that contaminants can be effectively and efficiently treated. Soils are processed using screens (these are mechanical sieves/shredders breaking up the soil to enable treatment). Once screened, soils are transported within the site to a separate area of the site for covering and treatment. Contaminated groundwater is collected from the excavations and treated in the water treatment plant. Once treatment is complete and laboratory analysis confirms this, the soils will be returned to the ground. (Information provided by: Environment Agency)

7. When will work be complete?

The work will take approximately 80 weeks in total. They are due to be completed in September 2011. (Information provided by: Vertase FLI)

8. Why does the site smell?

The remediation process requires the soil to be excavated. There are odours associated with the contaminants in the soil. As these contaminated soils are dug they can release odours that had previously been trapped underground. (Information provided by: Environment Agency)

9. Is the air being checked?

As part of the conditions imposed by the planning permission and Environmental Permit a comprehensive regime of environmental monitoring is in place. Part of this monitoring programme includes monitoring air quality. Air quality is monitored both on and off site. These include fixed locations, locations in response to complaints and at random locations. The results of this monitoring are forwarded to the Environment Agency and the Environmental Health department of South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC). The Health Protection Agency (HPA) has been providing assistance with interpreting the results. (Information provided by: Environment Agency)

10. What chemicals are being released into the air and are they harmful?

The chemicals expected to be present include a range of chemicals broadly classed as volatile organic compounds (VOCs). Air quality monitoring has been carried out both onsite and at the boundary of the site for a number of these compounds. From the available monitoring data assessed by the HPA, it is unlikely that emissions from the site are going to cause any short term health effects due to the direct effect of the chemicals themselves (such as runny nose, sore throat, breathing difficulties etc) or indeed any longer term health effects, however if you do have any concerns about your health, please see your family doctor or NHS Direct (Information provided by: Health Protection Agency)

11. Are the odours causing or going to cause health effects?

The human nose is very sensitive to odours, and many substances that are perceived as odorous are usually present at levels below which there is a direct harmful effect. Odours can however cause annoyance amongst the population possibly leading to stress and anxiety. Some people may experience symptoms such as nausea, headaches or dizziness, as a reaction to odours even when the substances that cause those smells are themselves not harmful to health. It cannot be excluded that some resident's symptoms may be as a result of their reaction to particular odours and it remains our recommendation that all efforts are taken to reduce off-site odours to as low as is reasonably practical. Consult your family doctor or NHS Direct if you are concerned about any effects on your health. (Information provided by: Health Protection Agency)

12. What is being sprayed around the boundary?

There is a deodoriser system being used at the site to help control the unpleasant smells being released from the soil during excavation works. There are nozzles mounted along the fence line around the site that spray a fine mist of water and a dilute deodoriser. These are non-toxic and pose no harm to passers-by or to local residents. They are very similar to air fresheners and odour neutralisers used in the home. The contractor has been using a variety of perfumes, which so far have included "Pine", "Bubble Gum" and "Summer Fruits". (Information provided by: South Cambridgeshire District Council)