

Labour councillors South Hindley Urban Village update 2nd Feb 2018

Anyone who has lived in the area for any length of time will probably have heard talk of 'buried asbestos' from the old Turner Brothers factory. We certainly have and so, with the health and safety of our residents as our main concern, we have been determined from the outset to get the appropriate assurances that, should any buried asbestos exist, it can be removed safely. That is why, in a meeting with senior officers from the council and representatives from Peel Holdings in late 2016, we insisted that relevant ground work investigations take place.

Those investigations took place in 2017 and a 22-page Non-Technical Executive Summary of the results was published earlier this month. The full document is available on the Wigan Council website and we recommend that any concerned residents read it in its entirety. However, from our perspective and in terms of acquiring the appropriate reassurances on behalf of our residents, the key paragraph contained within the document is:

“The investigation results do not indicate any “show-stopper” issues with respect to development of the site, nor any associated risks of unsuitable levels of exposure to neighbouring residents and site workers/contractors from asbestos or other contaminants of concern.”

At this stage, we still have questions about the methodology behind the ground work investigations and will be raising those questions at a meeting that is scheduled to take place within the next month.

However, ahead of that meeting, and in light of some recently acquired information that appeared to prove that asbestos was once buried in 'South Hindley', a query was raised with the council to ascertain why the recent ground works did not discover the alleged 'buried asbestos'. The response received was that the information most likely refers to the 'known' burial of asbestos that occurred within the Turner Brothers factory grounds and nowhere near the land that is planned for redevelopment.

To seek further clarification, we arranged a meeting with Phil Eccles who is the Environment, Health and Safety Manager of Electric Glass Fiber UK Ltd, formerly known as PPG Industries (UK) Limited. (it has been sold to Nippon Electric Glass Co., Ltd., Japanese glass manufacturer, in 2016.)

The company occupying the land formerly owned by Turner & Newall.

Accompanied by the Managing Director of Electric Glass Fiber UK and armed with a thick dossier of historical documents pertaining to the site, Phil informed us that there had indeed been a vast amount of buried asbestos at the Turner Brothers factory. However, as a condition of the sale to PPG in the 1980's, a three-month project was commissioned to remove all the asbestos at a cost of over a million pounds. This was completed in 1989.

The documentation showed that the project, conducted by the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, also included extensive ground investigations across the factory site to ensure there was no asbestos or other contaminants beyond the area from where 'known' asbestos had been removed.

Of course, receiving assurances that Electric Glass Fiber UK 's land is free from any buried asbestos does not preclude the possibility of buried asbestos existing outside of Electric Glass Fiber UK 's boundaries. However, given Turner Brothers adopted practice of burying asbestos within their own land at that time, it does not seem likely that they would have buried asbestos on the other side of the railway. Notwithstanding this, if anyone in the community possesses evidence that asbestos is buried within the redevelopment area, please let us have it and we will ensure that appropriate actions are taken.

Please note, we have been given assurances that the groundworks phase of the South Hindley development will almost certainly employ precautionary mitigation measures to ensure and maintain the health and safety of operatives and neighbouring residents, assess suitability for materials re-use, and help ensure that waste disposal legislation is adhered to.

Furthermore, it has been recommended that, prior to development, the volume and spatial extent of the Made Ground present beneath the site be fully delineated and environmentally evaluated with greater sampling density.

It is imperative that the assurances and recommendations contained within the ground investigations report are fully adopted and we will be endeavouring to make sure that this happens.

As previously stated, our other main concern in relation to the South Hindley development is the additional traffic that will be put on our already congested roads and we are continuing, along with our MP, to fight for the infrastructure to be put in place before any houses are built.

Proud to serve you,

Hindley & Hindley Green Labour Councillors