The former Turner Brothers Asbestos site land quality assessment

September 2016
Introduction

The former Turner Brothers Asbestos (TBA) site measures approximately 30 hectares and is situated 1km north west of Rochdale town centre, at National Grid Reference 388400 414600.

The privately-owned site is situated in a valley and comprises of woodlands in the north. There is a pathway which roughly cuts across the site, north to south on the western edge of the factory site called Woodland Road. The main factory area comprises of extensive tarmac and disused factory buildings that are becoming increasingly derelict. The River Spodden flows from north to south then east through the southern margin of the site, there is also a reservoir associated with the works on the western edge of the site.

History

1890  Site is largely open fields. Mill recorded as ‘Clod Mill’ in the south west corner of the site. Harridge Mill (with associated rail sidings) and ‘Tenters’ in the north.

1910  South western part of the site expanded and recorded as ‘Asbestos & India Rubber Works’. Harridge Mill in the north is recorded as disused.

1920  Harridge Sidings in the north expanded.

1960s  The site in the south expanded to its present day extent.

1990s  Asbestos materials ceased to be manufactured at the site. Buildings occupied by various small tenants.

2008  Tenants all vacated site.

2013  Suspected arson attack in February causes significant damage to the structure of the older buildings.

2013  Some buildings demolished and those left targeted by vandals.

2014  Further fire in January, cause unknown.
The legal perspective

Although the council does not own the site, it wants to work with the owner to find a solution for its future. The landowner in consultation with the council is carrying out a site investigation which is looking at potential environmental issues and the future of the site. Before any changes can be made to the site, planning permission will be needed and these investigations are needed before any permissions can be considered.

This investigation will support the council and site owners to find a long-term beneficial and sustainable use for this site.

Investigation objectives

The investigation will provide the site owners with more information to fill the gaps in the knowledge gained from previous investigations. It can then support the development of a full site model for possible land use options.
Your questions answered

Who will undertake the work and when?

RSK specialist consultants will start the land quality assessments on 3 October 2016.

Before any intrusive onsite activity there will be a period of engagement with stakeholders and baseline air monitoring undertaken.

The site work will take about three weeks and will be followed by a period of monitoring lasting several months. Then the necessary reports will be completed and submitted.

What exactly will be done?

The works will be undertaken in line with industry guidance on dealing with potentially contaminated land. This follows Environment Agency advice for dealing with such sites. The works will comprise of an assessment of the site which will include:

• Review of existing information made available prior to works
• Provision of an updated Conceptual Site Model (CSM)
• Topographic survey
• Ecological survey
• Geophysical survey for old mineshafts
• Air quality monitoring and sampling
• Pre-demolition building survey to ascertain the status of the buildings
• Ground investigation survey of the ground by various excavation methods
• Collection of soil, groundwater and river water samples
• Testing and analysis of samples
• Assessment of the findings
• Preparation of factual and interpretive report including the provision of a sustainable options appraisal for the site
This project is the first part of developing a strategy for the reuse of the site in a safe and sustainable manner. This will feed into the social and economic development of the region and improve the quality of life for local people.

What precautions will be in place to protect the public whilst the works are undertaken?

RSK operates in the UK to OHSAS 18001 and ISO 14001 certified Safety, Health and Environmental Management System (SHEMS). RSK is committed to the health and safety of its employees and those potentially affected by its work, and to maintain the health and safety reputation of its clients. RSK embraces strict health and safety procedures including but not limited to industry guidance outlined in CAR-SOIL 2016, which provides comprehensive details about working with asbestos impacted materials. A planned scope of the proposed work, including a programme and all mitigation measures will be provided to the council prior to any on site activity, together with site specific method statements and risk assessments.
What happens next?

Following the investigations the reports will be prepared by the consultants and issued to the land owner and local authority for review, the site owner can then assess options for a sustainable future for the site.

If the land owner is paying for the investigation, how can it be independent?

This investigation is undertaken at the cost of the land owner who appoints a consultant to undertake the work. The consultant will work to strict professional standards with multiple layers of peer review being undertaken both internally and by an international team of experts for fibrous minerals risk assessment (C&IH, USA). Renowned international asbestos specialists will be involved in the project on all aspects of the works before presenting the reports to the council for review.

Due to the site’s size, history and potential complex environmental issues the council has secured, at no cost, an expert from the Homes and Community Agency (HCA) to assist in the review of the reports.

The site has a long history of industrial use including asbestos manufacture and dumping, surely the land will be too contaminated for any use that involves human occupation?

Just because a site has been used for industrial purposes does not mean it can’t be brought to a useful and sustainable standard. There have been previous investigations into the site, but these have not covered all aspects of the site condition.

This investigation is therefore necessary to develop a complete site model, assess possible future uses and what work is required to make the site safe for those potential end uses.
Isn’t the council undertaking an air quality assessment at present, what are the results?

An air quality assessment started in August 2015, due to previous fire incidents and to obtain further information on the local environment. This assessment is on-going and is due to close later this year; the council’s monitoring will continue during and after this investigation to provide further independent evidence of the air quality around the site.

Wasn’t there unauthorised dumping undertaken on the site, how is that going to affect this investigation?

There has been material brought from other areas and deposited onto this site without the correct permissions; this is the subject of an investigation by the Environment Agency. The site owner has informed the necessary authorities that the dumping was done without their knowledge or permission.

In response to this the council has taken extra air quality samples around the dumped material so it is included in the air quality assessment. The dumped material will also be assessed as part of the investigation.
For further information:

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