

## Inspection of potentially contaminated sites in Camden

Part IIA of Environmental Protection Act 1990 is the primary legislation for dealing with contaminated sites. Section 78B of the Act states:

“every local authority shall cause its area to be inspected from time to time for the purpose of

- identifying contaminated land
- ...to decide whether land...should be designated as a special site”

At the start of the detailed inspection stage, the Council will have identified an area of land where there is the possibility that a pollutant linkage exists. This means there is the likelihood of a contaminant present, a receptor on site and a pathway for the contamination to affect the receptor. We will have decided that the area of land needs a more detailed look into circumstances on the land.

At the end of the inspection process the Council will have information to decide whether or not the land needs to be determined as Contaminated Land. See policy note on determining sites as contaminated land.

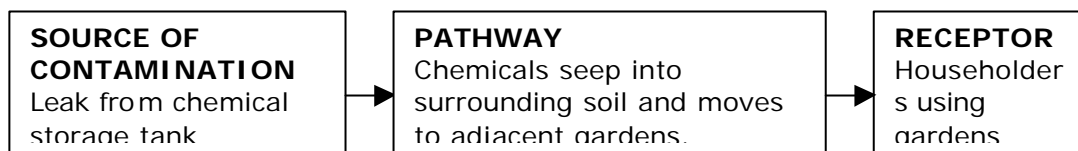
Government guidance requires us to publish an inspection strategy to show how we identify land in the Borough where contamination is causing unacceptable risks to human health and the wider environment. We published our strategy in July 2001. Our Contaminated Land Strategy and Strategy Review documents (available on the website) explain how we are carrying out duties under the legislation to inspect the Borough for land that might be contaminated land. The 2003 Review of the Strategy documents detail the approach we are taking to prioritise potential sites for further investigation. In summary, our approach is to deal with the most pressing problem sites first. We prioritise sites where people are living and are more likely to be exposed to contamination that may be present in the ground.

Detailed inspection of land in Camden will only take place when we are satisfied that there is a strong possibility that people are likely to be exposed to contamination present on the site (that a pollutant linkage exists). Section 78A of the Act defines contaminated land as:

“Contaminated land is any land which appears to the local authority ..to be in a such a condition, by reasons of substances in, on or under the land, that

- Significant harm is being caused or there is the significant possibility of harm being caused; or
- Pollution of controlled waters is being caused.”

Example of a pollutant linkage



A detailed inspection will involve a site visit from the Council's Environmental Health Team and possibly an environmental consultant employed on behalf of the Council. During the site visit the officer will confirm the current land use of a site e.g. that there are gardens present on site. This will confirm whether there is the possibility for people to be exposed to any contamination that may be present e.g. from growing vegetables in the garden to eat. Further visits might be needed and samples of soil may be taken for analysis.

The results of soil samples taken will be compared against Government Soil Guideline Values (SGVs) for different contaminants. Where an SGV is exceeded further risk

assessment will be carried out. The risk assessment process is necessary to determine whether or not the soil sample results and contamination concentrations identified are significant i.e. is the concentration found on site high enough to potentially (or actually) cause a health impact to people living on or using the site? The Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities is clear in that it states that any risk assessment must be carried out following the statutory guidance and it must be scientifically based.

For further information on the inspection process refer to

**Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR), Circular 02/2000, Environmental Protection Act 1990: Contaminated Land, 20<sup>th</sup> March 2000.**

**Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH): Local Authority Guide to the Application of Part IIA, Sections C1 - C3. July 2001**