Cheshire West & Chester Council

**Environmental Protection Unit**
**Public Protection Service**
The Portal, Wellington Road, Ellesmere Port
CH65 0BA

[redacted]

**Our ref**: Former BICC & Commonside

**Email**:
environmentalprotection@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

**Date**: 23 October 2026

Dear [redacted],

**RE: POTENTIAL PCB CONTAMINATION IN AND AROUND HELSBY COMMONSIDE LANDFILL SITE, ALVANLEY**

Thank you for your letters dated 18 September and 28 September 2026 with queries regarding the former BICC site at Helsby and Commonside former landfill near Alvanley.

We have set out below responses to the matters raised in your correspondence:

**Former BICC site, Helsby**

**Balfour Beatty Investigation**
The investigation works being undertaken by Balfour Beatty on the land off Freshmeadow Lane remain ongoing, with a further phase of site investigation due to commence shortly. A communications plan has been prepared, and Helsby Parish Council, local residents and other interested parties will be notified once the programme of works has been finalised.

Soil testing has already been completed within the area of the rugby pitches. We have requested that Balfour Beatty prepare a report summarising the findings of this work. Subject to any relevant considerations relating to its publication, the Council will seek to provide an update to residents and site users through our website. The data made available to the Council to date has not given rise to any concerns.

**Planning applications**
Land contamination is considered as part of the planning process for all development sites within the Mere's Edge area. Developers are required to assess potential contamination risks and, where necessary, undertake site investigations and risk assessments. This includes consideration of potential risks to controlled waters, including Hornsmill Brook, with these assessments reviewed by the Environment Agency.

The Council's environmental protection team has undertaken a review of the available information relating to developed land parcels within the former BICC area to support the work of the Member Task and Finish Group. A schedule of relevant reports and planning references can be provided if required.

With regard to planning application 24/03823/OUT, the submitted Preliminary Risk Assessment (PRA) identifies the site as being in agricultural use and acknowledges the industrial premises located to the north of the site. The environmental protection team commented on the planning application on 6 March 2026 recommending that, should planning permission be granted, the full contaminated land condition be attached, including a requirement for a PRA and subsequent site investigation. The applicant was also directed to relevant planning records associated with the adjoining land to the north and advised that PCB analysis should form part of any future site investigation. We are currently awaiting a revised version of the PRA.

The PRA identifies current and historic landfill sites within a 250-metre search radius of the proposed development. The former containment cell is recorded as being approximately 416 metres to the north-east of the site and has therefore not been identified as a potential contaminant source. Given the separation distance between the containment area and the proposed development, we concur with this conclusion.

The Council will continue to review any new information arising from ongoing investigations, including those being undertaken by Balfour Beatty. Should evidence emerge indicating the need for further assessment of land surrounding Hornsmill Brook, this will be considered in accordance with the Council's statutory duties and risk-based approach to contaminated land regulation.

In terms of future residential development within the Mere's Edge area, the majority of the remaining redevelopment land lies to the south of the former BICC factory. As Hornsmill Brook in this location is upstream of the former factory site, we would not anticipate contamination associated with the former BICC operations affecting this area.

**Commonside**

The Council is in the process of refining the scope of the next phase of investigation at Commonside with AECOM, the appointed consultants, with advice from both the UK Health Security Agency and the Environment Agency. Once this is confirmed, we will write to Helsby Parish Council and residents of Alvanley setting out what will happen and when, including an expected reporting completion date for that phase of work. It should be noted, however, that the need for further investigation will be dependent upon the results obtained and, therefore, it is not possible at this stage to provide a definitive timetable for completion of the overall project.

We recognise the importance of ensuring that communities are kept informed about matters that may affect them and we will continue to provide updates through the Council's dedicated Commonside webpage, as well as through direct communication with the Parish Councils and

residents, where appropriate. To ensure information remains relevant and meaningful, updates will be provided as substantive progress and / or key milestones are reached.

Thank you for the invitation to attend a future Parish Council meeting. The Council values opportunities to engage directly with residents and the community, and we will consider attending a meeting at an appropriate stage in the investigation, particularly when further findings are available that can support constructive and informed discussion.

If you have any further queries, please contact the environmental protection team at environmentalprotection@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Kind regards,

Environmental Protection Team

Cheshire West and Chester Council