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Environment Agency

Department of Markets & Consumer Protection
City of London Corporation
PO Box 270 Guildhall
London
EC2P 2EJ

Our ref: NE/2006/000160/SD-03/IS1-L01

Date: 29 July 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

City of London – Draft Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy 2021 - 2030

Thank you for consulting us on the City of London – Draft Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy 2021 – 2030. We are pleased to see that you are providing an update to the previous City of London Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy published in 2015.

We note that the contaminated land strategy is aligned with Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the relevant updated statutory guidance published in 2012 and the City Plan 2036 – Shaping the Future City – City of London Local Plan Draft submission Report

This update also provides timescales for ongoing review of datasets, review of sites identified with potential contaminant linkages and to provide subsequent updates of the strategy. We agree that with the City Corporation's position with that only land that poses and unacceptable risk to human health or the environment should be determined as contaminated under Part 2A and that development management should remain the primary route for regulating land affected by contamination. Based on the above we are happy to support this strategy.

Whilst we are pleased with the strategy overall we have several specific observations to correct and improve some of the sections.

Section 6.2 Geology, Hydrogeology and Hydrology

Section 6.2.2
We are very pleased to see specific reference to bored foundations extending into the Thanet Sand formation. Deep penetrations through the London Clay do increase the risk to the deeper more sensitive groundwater bearing aquifers by potentially creating preferential migration pathways for contaminants present in shallow soils. We are glad this has been highlighted.

Section 6.2.3

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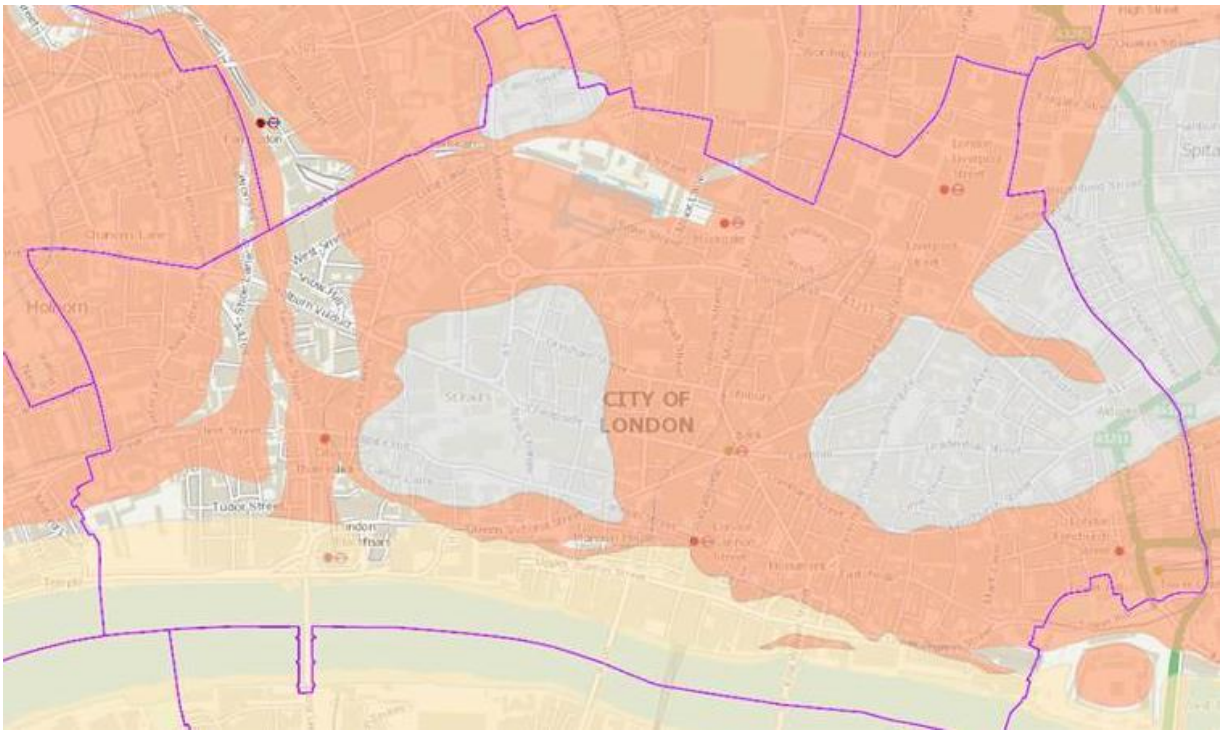
Section 6.2.3 discusses the protection provided by the London Clay to deeper aquifers. Whilst we welcome a section on this we feel that some words are missing and recommend that the third sentence should read as follows:

"…The London Clay confines the underlying soils (Lambeth Group, Thanet Sands and Upper Chalk) which are considered collectively to be a Principal Aquifer, largely preventing infiltration from above."

Across large areas of the London Basin hydrogeological testing has shown continuity between the Thanet Sands and the Chalk meaning contamination of the Thanet Sands is likely to impact on the more strategically important (and therefore sensitive) Chalk. The Lambeth Group is much more heterogeneous but in some places does comprise of permeable soils and is in hydraulic connectivity with the underlying Thanet Sands and Chalk. Due to this we often collectively consider these deposits to be a Principal Aquifer. Strictly speaking however, the Lambeth Group and Thanet sands are classified as Secondary A Aquifers.

Section 6.2.4

The drift deposits described in this section have been incorrectly described. The majority of the area is underlain by the Taplow Gravel Formation (Secondary A Aquifer). The River Thames and the southern fringe of the area adjacent to the river is underlain by Alluvium (Secondary (undifferentiated) Aquifer). The Langley Silt Member is (Secondary (unproductive) Aquifer) is also present centrally and towards the east of the area. We have provided an extract from the Environment Agency's in house GIS mapping layer below – this is based on the most recent BGS geological mapping data.



Key

Unshaded areas = no information
Pale orange areas = Taplow Gravels Formation (Secondary A Aquifer)
Pile grey areas = Langley Silt Member (Unproductive)
Pale yellow area = Alluvium (Secondary undifferentiated Aquifer)

This information is available via Defra's MAGIC website.

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Section 6.2.6
Our records show that water for drinking is identified in the licence description for the Lombard Street and Bank of England private abstractions. The rest appear to be predominant used for heating and cooling water.

Alignment of document with other City of London Policy

We have also checked the City Plan 2036 – Shaping the Future City – City of London Local Plan Draft submission Report (City of London Corporation dated March 2021) to see if it aligned with the draft Contaminated Land Strategy.

We welcome the specific reference to "addressing land contamination" in Strategic Policy S1 (in the context of site development). We also welcome Policy HL4 (Contaminated Land and Water Quality); this policy establishes the expectation that developers will undertake detailed site investigations and the requirement to undertake remediation or provide mitigation where potential risks to human health of environmental receptors is identified. Section 4.1.37 also encourages the use of pre-application discussions to identify particular issues related to environmental protection.

Final comments

Thank you for contacting us regarding your draft Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy 2021 - 2030. Should you have any queries regarding this response, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

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