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12 Culford Close,
Lower Earley,
Reading.
RG 6 3 AS

To Gillian Norton
Chief Executive,
Wokingham District Council

5th June 1998

Dear Gillian,

RE :- Contamination Shell Depot, Compton Close and 337 Wokingham Road.

You will be aware that a development of 37 houses has been proposed for the Shell depot on Wokingham Road once all the contamination has been removed from the site. There is also a situation where contamination is being investigated on Compton Close which adjoins the Shell depot. When we take into consideration the articles which have been appearing in the press on these issues, the notices which have been placed on the WDC land adjacent to the entrance to the Shell depot and the illness of Mr Fox of 337 Wokingham Road the residents of the surrounding properties are becoming more than a little concerned.

I understand that your officers are to meet with the Berkshire Health Authority to discuss various aspects of the situation including the letter from Dr Josef Kees (enclosed). I am not in any position to comment on the diagnosis of Dr Kees but in all propriety this should be taken into account and investigated. There is a report from the Environmental Risk Assessment section of WDC which refers to Mr Fox's residence as "the target". This is a rather unfortunate phrase to use and has been interpreted as alluding to Mr Fox as the target.

I can verify from visits made to the site that vegetation at the rear of Mr Fox's garden has died over a period of years and there does not seem to have been a satisfactory explanation for this occurrence. If we take into account the fact that the slope of the land from Compton Close drops down towards the premises of 337 Wokingham Road it might be reasonable to consider if some of the cocktail of contamination from Compton Close and the contamination which has to be removed from the Shell site has resulted in the residents of 337 Wokingham Road being affected.

I have also been shown a letter from the Environment Agency which states that in 1976 the National Rivers Authority reported that there was serious pollution of the river Loddon because the drains from the Shell depot had run into the public drainage system resulting in this pollution. The District Council were instructed to take action to rectify the problem. I have seen no record of what action was taken. The question arises as to how Wokingham Rural District

Council, who were responsible for the drainage up to 1974, had created a situation where the public drainage system was affected in this manner. I would like the drainage system relating to the Shell depot and its outlets to be investigated and to be given an assurance that action has been taken to rectify the position so that no chance exists that the public or the rivers can or have been polluted following the observations by the N. R. A. who were the appropriate body in 1976 and to be given a report on what action was taken. I believe that it would be not inappropriate for such a report to be sent to the members of the Environmental Services Committee. I wish to point out that it is accepted that the drain in Mr Fox's garden has been connected to the Shell depot but to what extent and to which aspect of the work undertaken on the site has never been determined.

I am not aware of the chemical elements which are on the Shell site or the garden of 337 Wokingham Road. I understand that further investigations are taking place on the soil contamination of Compton Close and that a final analysis has not yet been made. I must point out that in the report from Dr Kees he reports "chronic intoxication with heavy metals (Cadmium, Nickel, Lead, Mercury)" within Mr Fox's body; this report was done before the contamination within Compton Close was reported and similar substances have been found in the preliminary investigations which have taken place on the properties of No 7 & 8 Compton Close. I have pointed out that the land slopes towards 337 Wokingham Road from Compton Close and wish to **formally request that a report is prepared on the chemical elements found on Compton Close, the Shell depot and Mr Fox's garden to assess the possibility of consequential contamination. I would also like to have these elements compared to the report on the condition of Mr Fox recorded by Dr Kees.**

I have visited Mrs Fox (Mr Fox is unable to stay in the house) and I would like to state that with all the problems she and her family are facing she has displayed tremendous resilience in the face of this adversity. There can be no doubt that unless action is taken to resolve this situation the District Council will be faced with a position where they will have to rehouse this family. They are on the Housing list but have been unable to effect a replacement however temporary until this position has been clarified.

In cases affecting Education and Social Service provision "case conferences" are held to have difficult situations and residents complaints investigated. These are conducted before a Panel of Council Councillors who will examine the evidence, take statements from officers, the plaintiff and appropriate witnesses and be assisted by the administration secretariat and legal officers experienced in environmental law. The purpose would be to come forward with a

decision or recommendation to resolve the problem. I am not aware if such a panel exists in the Environmental Services or even if the new Unitary Council has set-up such a procedure. If it was possible for such a panel to be effected Mr & Mrs Fox would know that the Council were listening to their complaints and have the opportunity to present their case before members. I know that the County had such a procedure and can see no reason why such a panel can not be convened by Wokingham District Council.

I would be grateful if you would consider the points in my letter and hopefully be able to have the points satisfactorily clarified. I am not aware of the details of the 106 Agreement relating to the Shell depot and the decision of the Planning Agreement relating to the construction of the 37 houses. In particular I hope that it ensures that contamination measures are completed not only on the site but also on surrounding properties adjoining the depot. Until the position of Compton Close, the Shell depot and 337 Wokingham Road have been fully investigated I hope that the officers will not authorise the developers to begin construction or enter the site for any such purpose. I realise that they are anxious to begin construction but believe that the interests of my constituents and the good reputation of the Council will be affected by precipitous action.

There has been a great deal of public concern over this issue and a Public Meeting will be required to ensure that the residents of Earley are assured that the contamination has been fully investigated and measures taken to resolve all the difficulties which are currently being perceived over this issue.

Yours sincerely,



David Swindells

District Councillor

Little Hungerford Ward

cc Cllr Bob Briggs

Cllr Mrs Diana Carpenter

