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Southall Gasworks site – Update on seven point plan

Dear Virendra,

I wanted to write to provide an update on the seven-point action plan on the Southall Gasworks site that I set out on becoming leader, which seeks to address concerns regarding odours and public health arising from the development works and improve quality of life locally.

1. New, public legal advice on a statutory abatement notice

This advice has been commissioned. I have committed to making this advice public once it is available, and am hopeful that this will be in the near future. It is very clear to me, as it is to the community, that the legal powers that councils and other regulatory bodies have to regulate and control what happens when brownfield sites, like Gasworks, are redeveloped, are far too limited. I have therefore asked that, as part of the wider legal advice, our legal counsel provides an opinion on what legislative change might be helpful in order to strengthen and clarify those powers.

2. Get independent air quality monitoring in place to provide transparency for local residents

Ealing Council has negotiated that the developers should fund fully independent air quality monitoring in the areas around the Gasworks site. The procurement process for this work has now been completed and a contract awarded to Ricardo AEA. As part of the procurement process, campaigners at Clean Air for Southall and Hayes (CASH) were provided with anonymised details from the shortlisting interviews, and their feedback from this was taken into account in the final decision making process.



I am determined that this independent monitoring delivers genuine transparency and easily accessible information for local residents, so I am delighted that the successful tender will be able to provide near-real time air quality data for local people to access online, above and beyond the provision of regular monitoring reports. Berkeley Group will have no involvement with, or ownership of the data.

Ricardo AEA have now commenced the work to identify the locations for the specialist monitoring equipment to be located, as well as ordering the equipment, much of which will need to be sourced from overseas.

This work will take a little time, but the contractors are well aware of our desire to get the monitoring up and running as swiftly as possible and we are working with them to ensure this is the case. I'll provide a public update on the timeline as soon as possible.

3. A comprehensive low emissions strategy for the developed site

The council has now received a draft low emissions strategy for the developed Gasworks site from the independent consultants tasked with producing it. This will set out an ambitious package of measures to minimise the emissions from heat, power and transport for the site as the new residents start to move in.

These aim to ensure that the Gasworks development meets national targets on greenhouse gas emissions and on air quality, as well as minimising the impact on existing communities.

We intend to use these as the basis of a charter under which both Ealing Council and the developer, Berkeley Group, will commit to implementing the recommended measures and can be held accountable to.

Early work is also underway to design a comprehensive Southall wide air pollution action plan, which will examine actions the council can take and encourage to deal with air pollution across the town.

4. An independent complaint monitoring process and making it easier to make complaints

We have been working closely with the developers of the OdourCollect app to identify how we can ensure it can be an effective tool for residents to report odours. For this to be the case, we need to ensure that complaints logged via the app can be sent to the council in real time, to allow for speedy investigation.

In order for complaints to be effectively used to support a future statutory abatement process, they must be inspected and witnessed by a professionally qualified environmental health officer.



We have very nearly reached the point where this will be possible, and I am meeting with OdourCollect this week to see what I can do to help get this over the line, as well as to promote the use of the app once real-time reporting is in place.

Further, I know that local residents have expressed concerns about the speed at which the Council is able to respond to individual complaints about odours in Southall, and about not always being able to get a speedy response via Ealing's main phone contact line.

To help to address this, we have now recruited a new environmental protection officer, dedicated to Southall and based in Southall. They will be able to be on-site rapidly when any complaints over odour, dust or noise occur, hopefully meaning that we will be better able to identify sources of such nuisances and take any appropriate follow-up action.

The dedicated officer will have a direct line on which local people will be able to contact them, and we will be publicising this when they start work. In order to provide all-hours cover, we are also looking to appoint a second dedicated officer for the area.

5. To meet and work with Centric Lab to advocate for incorporating compound stressors in how public health professionals understand the impact of factors such as structural inequality on community health.

I recently met with Centric Lab to discuss their very helpful report on Southall and I am hoping that we can also involve their expertise to help secure both legislative change in this vital area.

I am committed to taking forward the conversations that we have begun with them on their work on compound stressors and mental health, including with Kings College and UCL, and will be writing to them this week to set out the council's response to each of their report's recommendations.

6. Launch an urgent review of Berkeley Group's sponsorship of council events and activities

I'm able to report that while Berkeley Group were a sponsor of Ealing in London for the 2020/21 financial year (representing a payment of £25,000), they did not renew that sponsorship for the 2021/22 financial year and so the council is not currently in receipt of any such funding.



Berkeley Group also provided sponsorship for the borough's Christmas lights in 2020. The Council will not take any further sponsorship from Berkeley Group, and we are in the process of closing down the Ealing in London brand.

I am determined to ensure that the Council's future dealings with developers are transparent, arms-length and do not give rise to concerns that it is privileging the relationship with developers above that with residents.

7. To begin a programme of lobbying with government to obtain the powers we need

As mentioned on point 1, I have asked for legal advice on what changes to the law are needed to improve the ability of councils and other regulatory bodies (like the Environment Agency) to control and monitor developments on brownfield sites.

We believe that the Planning Bill, which we expect the government to introduce into the Commons shortly, will provide an opportunity to seek to pursue amendments to the law which could strengthen local authority powers in this area. I have already held early discussions with the shadow front bench on this issue, and would obviously want to work closely with yourself, as well as with other interested MPs and peers from all parties.

8. Other areas of work

I am also very aware that residents continue to have concerns over soil on the site and potential health impacts from any residual contamination. I appreciate that there is a desire locally to see whether a similarly independent process can be introduced for soil sampling as we are doing for air quality. I have commissioned scoping work on this and hope to be able to say more shortly.

You will also be aware that I have written to the Mayor of London to ask that the Area Opportunity Framework for Southall is rescinded. We will soon be engaging residents across the Borough in conversations around our future Local Plan, setting out a long-term vision for our seven towns, including Southall.

I hope the above is of assistance and I will of course continue to keep you informed of further developments. However, please do let me know if you have any queries that have not been addressed.

Yours sincerely,



Councillor Peter Mason
Leader of the Council