



PRESS RELEASE

27th January 2012

Ripon 'Auction Mart' Development

Since 1982, the British Geological Survey (BGS) has been instrumental in making the council, residents and central government aware of the ground stability problems that affect parts of Ripon. In 1994 we raised awareness of the problems with Harrogate Borough Council planning committee leading to a Department of the Environment funded report, to which we contributed geological and subsidence hazard information.

The BGS are aware that the Auction Mart site, North Road, Ripon, is the subject of a planning application. Last year (21 November 2011) the BGS were offered copies of the site investigation information and are on record in the reply as having stated that:

'This part of Ripon is particularly problematical and very difficult to investigate and interpret, it may be a challenge to develop and some of the site may be too dangerous to build on'.

We also gave similar verbal information to previous enquiries about the site in November 2009. It is common practice for the BGS to be offered ground investigation information by developers and/or their consultants to assist us with our national geological survey programmes and we encourage the deposit of site investigation reports with the National Geoscience Data Centre ([NGDC](#)). Our advice to companies investigating Ripon and similar areas (which is also published in scientific papers) is that a phased approach to investigation should be followed at any site. This should comprise a field survey, geophysical survey (microgravity or resistivity tomography depending on site conditions) followed by intrusive investigation (drilling) to understand and assess any anomalies on the site. After the geotechnical investigation and stability assessment, we suggest the design of the site should avoid problematical areas and use robust mitigation measures (foundation design) to cope with the subsidence problems that may occur in parts of Ripon.

On 12 January 2012 the BGS were sent copies of the current site investigation reports for the Auction Mart site and on 16 January 2012 we received copies of the geophysical reports (microgravity and resistivity profiles) from an earlier study. The ground investigation report indicates some areas of concern where development should be avoided. We understand that revised site layout plans are being considered to avoid the most problematical areas (peat-filled subsidence hollows) and that more robust mitigation measures are also being considered. We have not been involved with any detailed investigation for the Auction Mart application and have not been commissioned to review any of the documents. We have, in acknowledging receipt of those documents and as part of our duty of care, made some brief comments to the ground investigation consultants on a few geological aspects of the reports.

The planning routines in Ripon and the forms that need signing place the responsibility for the investigation and mitigation measures on the 'competent person/people' (as defined in the Department of the Environment funded report). The liabilities rest with them and their insurers. There is no formal assessment or review of individual ground investigations, mitigation measures or final site layouts. We have suggested to Harrogate Borough Council that the way the planning routines are working should be reviewed, to see how effective they have been since the 1996 study, and whether any revision is required.

Related BGS web pages [gypsum](#) and [development in Ripon](#)

Ends

Reference: Symonds Travers Morgan. 1996. Assessment of subsidence arising from gypsum dissolution: *Technical Report for the Department of the Environment*. (Symonds Group: East Grinstead).



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Notes for Editors

The following are available for interview:

- [Dr Anthony Cooper](#), [karst geohazards](#), specialist is available for interview.

For additional information go to: www.bgs.ac.uk

The British Geological Survey

The British Geological Survey (BGS), a component body of the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), is the nation's principal supplier of objective, impartial and up-to-date geological expertise and information for decision making for governmental, commercial and individual users. The BGS maintains and develops the nation's understanding of its geology to improve policy making, enhance national wealth and reduce risk. It also collaborates with the national and international scientific community in carrying out research in strategic areas, including energy and natural resources, our vulnerability to environmental change and hazards, and our general knowledge of the Earth system. More about the BGS can be found at www.bgs.ac.uk.