

# Oxford Chalk Pit – Questions and Answers

18 June 2024

## **Why has the Council closed the Chalk Pit to the public?**

The site has been closed for health and safety reasons after we identified potentially life threatening hazards.

In recent years, sink holes have appeared and in September 2023, the site was partially closed as a safety precaution while we investigated the cause of the problems.

We brought in an independent surveyor and using ground-penetrating radar, they found widespread evidence of potentially large underground cavities, filled with water. Many of the cavities are dangerously close to the surface.

Additional fencing, signage and regular site inspections are in place to mitigate the potential hazards on site.

## **How long will the site be closed for?**

Further investigations need to be carried out to determine how best to manage the site going forward. We are arranging for additional specialist surveys to take place to provide further advice and recommendations. This will happen as soon as possible. But we regret, we cannot advise on the timelines at this time.

The public right of way between Tudor Drive and Station Road, around the edge of the Chalk Pit, currently remains open and is being monitored by KCC's Public Rights of Way team.

## **Will the Scout Hut close?**

Given the recent structural problems with the Scout Hut, and the discovery of nearby cavities, we are taking a precautionary approach. The Scout Hut has not been closed at present. However, until the additional surveys are completed, we cannot confirm whether there is any risk and has therefore advised the Scouts to take precautionary measures when accessing the site until more is known. Our surveyors will return to the Scout Hut site as a matter of urgency.

## **I live adjacent to the Chalk Pit, what should I do?**

We are undertaking surveys on the land within our ownership. Unfortunately we cannot offer advice to private landowners and anyone with concerns should seek their own advice. They may wish to contact a surveyor (to carry out a ground survey), and / or their insurance company.

## **Is the Council proposing to sell the site to developers?**

No, we do not have any intention to develop either the Chalk Pit or Scout Land. The site is in our current local plan as an open space and continues to be so in our new local plan.

**Who do I contact if I see people accessing the site?**

Please contact our Countryside Team on 01732 227000 or [emailcountryside@sevenoaks.gov.uk](mailto:emailcountryside@sevenoaks.gov.uk).