

## 8.0 COMAH RISK ASSESSMENT

### 8.1 INTRODUCTION

There is a large concentration of heavy industry in the Widnes area and in particular the chemicals industry. Many of these sites contain hazardous substances and thus have the potential for significant environmental incidents to occur, which implicitly pose a risk to the health and safety of site occupiers and neighbouring sites within the potential zone of influence of such incidents. For large installations that fall under the *Control of Major Accidents and Hazards Regulations 1999* (which is determined by chemical type and inventory), these so called COMAH sites have certain legal obligations. In particular, it is a legal requirement of all top tier COMAH sites that they undertake a detailed risk assessment of all potential accidental chemical releases from their installation and the possible resultant consequences of such releases. From this risk assessment an appropriate emergency response plan must be developed to deal with such incidents. These COMAH reports are formally lodged with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and the local authority. The Local Authority must also have an off-site emergency response plan for such sites. Furthermore there is an explicit need for consultation on any proposed development within the defined consultation zone for each COMAH installation.

There are also a large number of so called “lower tier” COMAH installations that carry lesser inventories of hazardous substances. These too can require consultation to be entered into but the defined zones are much smaller.

The latest version of the plan *Halton Borough Council Major Accident Plan* identifies 6 sites in particular that are registered as top tier COMAH sites (i.e. satisfy the upper threshold criteria set out in the *Control of Major Accidents and Hazards Regulations 1999*). The identified sites are:

- Bayer Crop Science UK Limited, Widnes;
- INEOS Chlor Limited, Runcorn;
- INEOS Fluor Limited, Runcorn;
- Ineos Vinyls Limited, Runcorn;
- Ineos Enterprises Limited, Runcorn; and
- Tessengerlo Limited, Widnes

The Tessengerlo Limited site in Widnes has recently ceased operating, however we understand that the COMAH designation remains in place.

Each of these sites has a 1km consultation zone which requires amongst other things that any development proposals within the consultation zone take into account the potential risks that the COMAH installation may have on the development and visa versa (i.e. could some incident on the development site trigger a major incident on the COMAH site).

Halton Borough Council's authority-wide emergency response plan that characterises the nature of hazards within the authority's administrative area and the appropriate emergency contacts and actions required in the event of a major incident occurring within the area. As part of the Halton Borough Council Emergency Plan it is the responsibility of the Borough Council Emergency Co-ordinator to co-ordinate the *District Off-Site Emergency Centres* (DOSEC) team. In theory this team is responsible for co-ordinating and dealing with the off-site emergency response at the designated DOSEC in the event of a major incident, whilst the site based emergency response team deals with the on-site situation.

The DOSEC has two functional responsibilities:

- communication; and
- strategy.

A diagram detailing the communication and co-ordination pathways in an emergency incident is presented in *Figure 8.1* overleaf.

### 8.2 ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

The Top Tier COMAH sites are required to have an Emergency Response Plan that has to be agreed with the authorities and tested periodically. In the case of the Regional High Bay Distribution site, the proposed development lies close to a number of potentially hazardous installations. *Figure 8.2* at the rear of this report section shows the Installations identified by Halton Borough Council in close proximity to the Regional High Bay Distribution site.

The plan shows two lower tier COMAH installations on the Regional High Bay Distribution Centre site itself, associated with AHC. These designations relate to former activities that took place on the site and are no longer valid. The Westlink Group Ltd. has confirmed with the Local Authority,

AHC and the Health and Safety Executive that these designations are no longer applicable as there are no COMAH activities on the AHC site.

The assessment involved an initial screening of the development site in relation to the designated consultation zones. As can be seen from *Figure 8.2*, only the Tessengerlo facility has a consultation zone that extends on to the Regional High Bay Distribution Centre site. Although the Tessengerlo COMAH registration is still active, the site itself ceased manufacturing and closed in 2006 and the plant has since been demolished. The Tessengerlo site can therefore be discounted from the assessment. None of the other potentially hazardous Installations have consultation zones that encroach onto the development site. The closest zone is approximately 50m to the south west, for an Installation operated by Betz Dearborn Ltd. Given this, further consideration of COMAH activities in relation to the development site is not considered to be necessary.

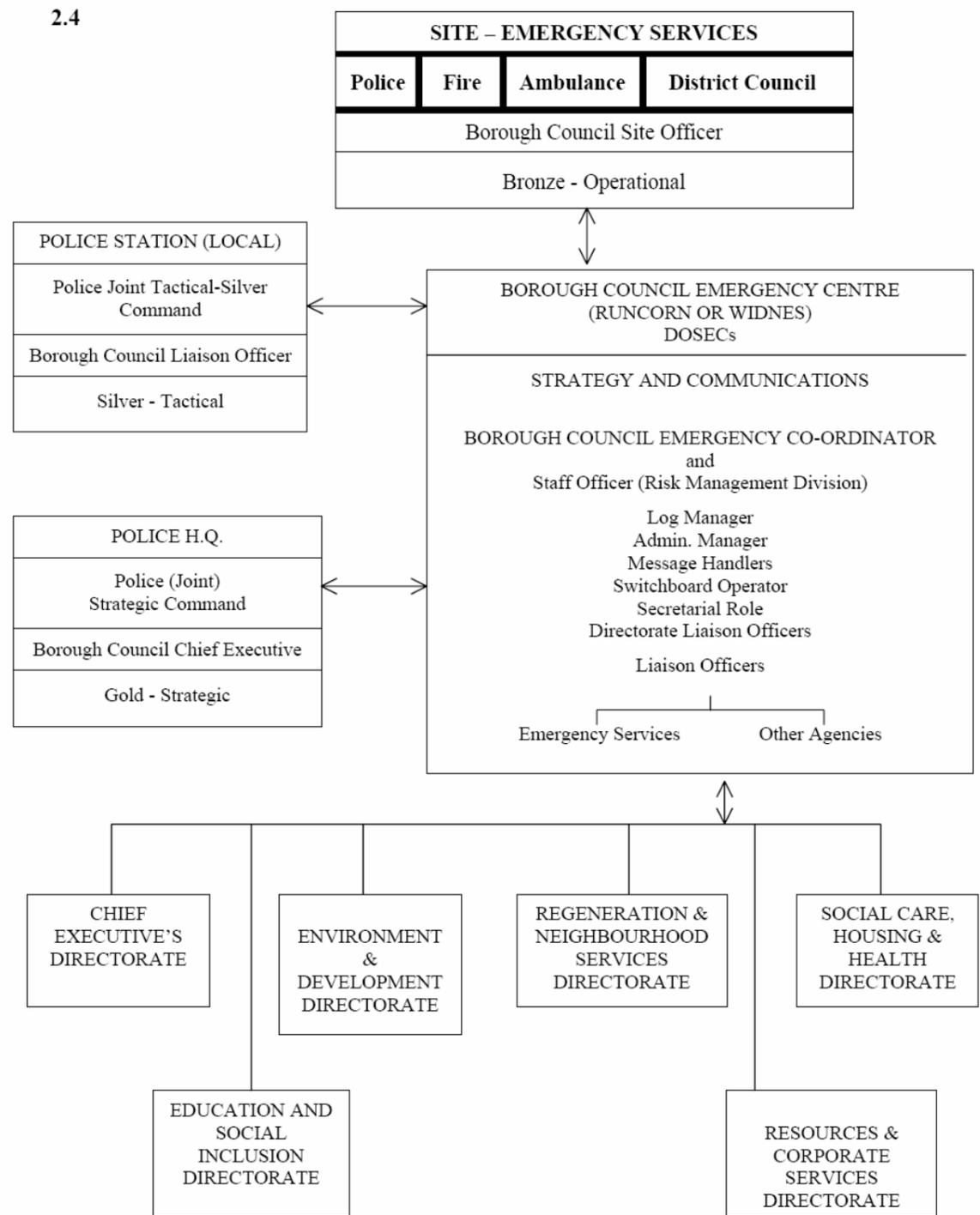


Figure 8.1 – Halton Borough Council Emergency Plan Co-ordination Flow Chart.

### 8.3 BASELINE CONDITIONS

There are a number of top tier COMAH sites in the Widnes area, however none are considered to warrant assessment in relation to the proposed development site. This is due to the fact that the only COMAH site which has a consultation zone extending onto the development site (Tessengerlo) is no longer operational. There are a number of lower tier COMAH sites in the surrounding area, but again none of the consultation zones extend onto the development site.

There are no activities on the AHC site that in themselves warrant COMAH status (although the handling of chemicals on the site formerly gave rise to it having two lower tier COMAH designations).

### 8.4 ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

No assessment of impacts and mitigation measures is required since there are no COMAH sites that are considered likely to impact upon the development site, based upon the Local Authority's designated consultation zones (see *Figure 8.2*).