

Airports

Industry Profiles, together with the Contaminated Land Research Report series, are financed under the Department of the Environment's contaminated land research programme.

The purpose of these publications is to provide regulators, developers and other interested parties with authoritative and researched advice on how best to identify, assess and tackle the problems associated with land contamination. The publications cannot address the specific circumstances of each site, since every site is unique. Anyone using the information in a publication must, therefore, make appropriate and specific assessments of any particular site or group of sites. Neither the Department or the contractor it employs can accept liabilities resulting from the use or interpretation of the contents of the publications.

The Department's Contaminated Land Research Report series deals with information needed to assess risks; procedures for categorising and assessing risks; and evaluation and selection of remedial measures.

General guidance on assessing contaminated land and developing remedial solutions which is complementary to the Department's publications is provided by the Construction Industry Research and Information Association (CIRIA).

Acknowledgements

The Department of the Environment is grateful to the members of the Interdepartmental Committee on the Redevelopment of Contaminated Land (ICRCL), and the following individuals and organisations for assistance in the compilation of this profile:

Mr D L Barry (WS Atkins Environment)

Mr P A Chave (Head of Water Quality, National Rivers Authority)

Dr M R G Taylor (Consultants in Environmental Sciences Limited)

DOE Industry Profile

Airports

	Page
Preface	(iii)
1. Background	1
2. Processes	1
2.1 Fuelling activities	2
2.2 De-icing operations	2
2.3 Airline servicing and maintenance	3
2.4 Other airport operations	3
2.5 Waste management	4
3. Contamination	4
3.1 Factors affecting contamination	5
3.2 Migration and persistence of contaminants	6
4. Sources of further information	7
Annex Potential contaminants	9
Table 1 Main groups of contaminants and their probable locations	11

This profile is based on work by J F Scientific and was prepared for publication by the Building Research Establishment.

Preface

DOE Industry Profiles provide developers, local authorities and anyone else interested in contaminated land, with information on the processes, materials and wastes associated with individual industries. They are not definitive studies but they introduce some of the technical considerations that need to be borne in mind at the start of an investigation for possible contamination.

Every site is unique. Investigation of a site should begin with documentary research to establish past uses. Information on the site's history helps to focus a more detailed investigation. This knowledge needs to be supplemented by information on the type of contamination that may be present and where on site it may be found. Profiles give information on the contamination which might be associated with specific industries, factors that affect the likely presence of contamination, the effect of mobility of contaminants and guidance on potential contaminants.

The date when industrial practices first commenced on a site and its location are important clues in establishing the types of operations that may have taken place, so each profile provides a summary of the history of the industry and its likely geographical spread within the United Kingdom.

Profiles should be read with the following reservations in mind:

- individual sites will not necessarily have all of the characteristics described in the profile of that industry;

- practices can vary between sites and change over time;

- as practices change, problems of possible contamination may also change;

- the profile may refer to practices which are no longer followed, and may omit current practices which avoid contamination.

The risks presented by contaminated sites depend on the nature of the contaminants, the targets to which they are a potential threat (such as humans or groundwater) and the routes or pathways by which they reach these targets. The current or proposed use of a site and its environmental setting are crucial in deciding whether treatment is necessary and if so, the methods to be used. Some sites may not need treatment.

The information in profiles may help in carrying out Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) assessments for work on contaminated land - see Health and Safety Guidance Note HS(G) 66 *Protection of workers and the general public during the development of contaminated land*, Health and Safety Executive, 1991, and *A guide to safe working practices for contaminated sites*, Construction Industry Research and Information Association, 1995.

Note: the chemical names given to substances in this profile are often not the modern chemical nomenclature, but the names used historically for those substances.

Airports

1. Background

This profile deals with land and facilities licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) for air passenger and freight transport and for flying training.

Under The Air Navigation Order 1995 the CAA licenses 'aerodromes'. There are at present 142 licensed aerodromes in the United Kingdom. This profile, however, employs the word 'airport' rather than aerodrome because it has wide usage in everyday speech.

The size of the airport often determines the range of activities that are undertaken there. Much of the material in this profile is relevant to all airports but it has been written with a medium-sized airport, handling between 2 and 3 million passengers a year, particularly in mind. To put this into context, Heathrow, the biggest airport in the United Kingdom, handles 40 million passengers a year, and Teesside, the twentieth largest airport, handles about a third of a million passengers a year.

A medium-sized airport normally occupies about 700 acres (about 300 hectares), with approximately 75% of the area comprising runways, taxiways and grassed areas, open car park areas, and aprons to accommodate parked aircraft. The remaining 25% of airport land is occupied by the airport administration facilities, terminals and all other leased facilities, including those of the airline companies and support organisations.

Many of the activities described in this profile also take place at military airfields ('airfield' is largely a military expression) and at private flying clubs.

Over 700 former civilian airports and military airfields have been closed. Many have been put to new uses, including agriculture, parks, housing and industry.

2. Processes

The key activities essential for efficient airport operation include:

- fuelling
- de-icing
- aircraft servicing and maintenance
- other airport operations including fire control.

Secondary activities include catering, freight handling, car parking, car hire and site leasing for non-airport uses such as industrial estates. These tenancies can be quite extensive and the activities may have only a tenuous link with normal airport activities.

2.1 Fuelling activities

Airports normally use three types of fuel:

- aviation kerosene (used for jet engines)
- aviation gasoline (used for piston engines)
- diesel (used for airport supply vehicles and boiler fuel for space heating).

Fuels are stored and supplied from on-site depots. They are normally operated by the major oil companies.

The size of fuel depots varies considerably, but a depot for a medium-sized airport typically occupies 3 hectares of land and consists of the following:

- aviation kerosene (6 tanks, each of 800 000 litres capacity)
- aviation gasoline (2 tanks, each of 400 000 litres capacity)
- diesel (1 tank, of 150 000 litres capacity).

Fuel transfers to the depot are carried out at a dedicated island relatively close to the storage tanks. Fuel at small and medium-sized airports is delivered by road tankers. At large airports storage tanks may be filled via a pipeline from an oil company's distribution centre.

A normal fuelling operation of an aircraft involves loading 10 000 to 30 000 litres of fuel. However, an inter-continental Boeing 747 requires 200 000 litres of fuel. Fuel is dispensed to aircraft by tankers of approximately 40 000 litres capacity. In some of the larger airports fuel is dispensed to the apron via an underground network of pipes.

There are substantial controls on fuel quality. Filters control the presence of fine particles or water, and any unsatisfactory samples are transferred to a holding tank prior to being reprocessed.

Sub-surface drainage passes via interceptors into the main airport drainage system.

Fuel for airport and space heating is provided from underground or above ground storage tanks for diesel and petrol. Smaller tanks of diesel may also be distributed across the airport. Normally these facilities are used to fuel a fleet of airport vehicles, including cars, light vans, coaches, fork-lift trucks and a wide variety of other vehicles ranging from agricultural tractors to snow blowers.

2.2 De-icing operations

At the first sign of ice or frost, de-icing chemicals, which include glycol, urea and acetate-based formulations, are applied to the runways and aircraft. It is normally the responsibility of the airport company to ensure that all runways are free of ice, whilst the individual airline companies de-ice their own aircraft. In the past, urea and glycol-based products predominated. Urea is applied initially in granular form and at lower temperatures is sprayed with either water or a glycol solution. Urea is being replaced by calcium and magnesium acetate-based products. Urea granules may be stored in a hopper on site.

2.3 Airline servicing and maintenance

2.3.1 Hangars and ancillary workshops

Hangar facilities are used for a wide range of servicing and maintenance activities. Similar activities may be carried out on the airport aprons.

Aircraft fuselages are cleaned in the hangars. Wastewater effluent, together with washes from adjacent engine maintenance and ancillary workshops, are collected in large catch-pits set in the hangar floor. These are normally emptied by a waste disposal contractor at regular intervals and disposed of to landfill. The pits are ventilated to the atmosphere to allow evaporation of volatile organic compounds. Aircraft fuselages may also be cleaned outside on the aprons, where the significant volumes of wash water generated are directed to the main airport drainage system.

Sheet metal workshop activities involve the fabrication of new aircraft panels, air-stairs and thrust reversers. Chemicals in use will normally include small volumes of, for example 'aluminium etch' primer paint, which is used as a corrosion inhibitor.

The composite repair workshop carries out the maintenance of aircraft elements such as radome and roof panels, which are generally made of carbon fibres, *Kevlar* materials and fibreglass. Process chemicals used may include resins and organic solvents, for example acetone and toluene.

The electrical workshops may use cleaning fluids such as 1,1,1-trichloroethane.

Engine maintenance involves stripping down the engines prior to servicing certain components and rebuilding. The maintenance workshops normally use solvent-based cleaning agents, including chlorinated solvents. The hydraulics workshop will test and refurbish all components containing hydraulic fluids.

The safety, trim and seating workshops are concerned with maintenance and testing. The major products used in such workshops include a toluene-based fabric stripper for removing glued fabric from surfaces, and an ester and ketone-based fabric adhesive. Toluene may also be used to prepare inflatable items for patching.

2.3.2 Wheel, tyre and brake workshops

The wheel, tyre and brake workshops are concerned with the complete maintenance, testing and overhaul of these components. Wheels are washed with caustic cleaners, treated with rust remover, and subjected to blasting with tiny plastic particles prior to painting.

2.4 Other airport operations

2.4.1 Fire control

Fire-fighting chemicals include foam concentrates, powders and halon gases. Foam concentrates are film-forming, fluoro-protein chemicals which are stored in 25 and 200 litre drums, as well as aboard each fire engine. Foam concentrates are applied as aqueous solutions of 1-6%. Application rates are of the order of about 4500 litres per minute (1000 gallons per minute). Some fire-fighting chemicals are used as a dry powder. Halon gases are stored aboard the fire engines in pressurised units and reserve stocks are kept on the airfield.

These chemicals are used to extinguish practice fires during training, as well as in real emergencies. Run-off of fuels and foam concentrates are directed to the airport's interceptor system.

All surface water from the runways is normally collected by a drainage system prior to discharge to the local watercourses, sewers or soakaways. Soakaways are likely to have been more prevalent on older sites. Fire-fighting foams have a de-oxygenating effect on watercourses and are increasingly being treated via reed beds and separators prior to release.

2.4.2 Other operations

Weed killers may be applied to control growth in paved areas. Some areas of the airport may have spent cartridges from bird-scaring activities.

2.4.3 Related activities

Administration buildings include offices, canteens, security and customs facilities. These exist at a scale consistent with the function and traffic throughput of the airport. None of these activities are inherently contaminative but they can affect the scale of transport needs and, for example, conventional commercial solid waste arisings.

Car leasing is an important activity associated with larger airports, with facilities for fuelling and servicing. Cargo handling may involve the use of bonded and other warehouses relating to conventional aircraft cargo. In addition to consumable alcohols and tobacco these may comprise fruit and vegetables, newspapers, car components and other general cargo. Refrigeration plant for either airport or airline goods also exists at many airports.

2.5 Waste management

Sewage is collected from passenger aircraft by truck and discharged to a cess pit on site, prior to pumping to the local sewage treatment system.

Airport solid waste disposal is normally carried out under contract, and refuse compactor units are usually distributed around the airport site.

The quality of waste management has changed significantly in recent years to match the more rigorous environmental controls. In the past, workshop wastes may have been disposed of on site in landfills or by incineration on a burning ground. At airports which served wholly, or in part, as military stations during wartime, the disposal of waste organic materials from engine and airframe maintenance was uncontrolled. Areas around hangars may have been subject to such disposal practices.

Other wastes may have arisen from refurbishment works and therefore may include asbestos-based materials used in cladding or insulation.

3. Contamination

The contaminants on a site will largely depend on the history of the site and on the range of materials produced there. Potential contaminants are listed in the Annex and the probable locations on site of the main groups of contaminants are shown in

Table 1. It is most unlikely that any one site will contain all of the contaminants listed. It is recommended that an appropriate site investigation be carried out to determine the exact nature of the contamination associated with individual sites.

3.1 Factors affecting contamination

The functions of particular chemicals have a significant bearing on the risks of the ground being contaminated. Runway and apron de-icing operations, for example, will by definition require that chemicals are applied to the ground surface. Thus the primary sources of such contaminants would generally be the associated drainage systems, especially soakaways. Where the concrete in treated areas is damaged, or where there are open joints between concrete slabs, the chemicals may have penetrated the ground more extensively. Airports subject to heavier and more prolonged frosts are more likely to be affected by such de-icing operations.

The movement of fuels both for aircraft and other airport vehicles, during transport, storage or fuelling operations, could give rise to ground contamination resulting from spillages and leaks. These risks are particularly significant in the case of underground tanks and pipelines.

Where fires have occurred, and in areas where fire drills are conducted, there is a risk of contamination by fire-fighting chemicals and fuels.

Chemical storage areas are potential sources of contamination. Soakaways near aircraft servicing and maintenance facilities are likely to have accumulated many of the contaminants, particularly on older sites. Even where piped drainage systems exist, catch pits/interceptors may not have been maintained effectively. Therefore, such features may have contributed to ground contamination in areas away from the original source areas.

Waste disposal areas may have received a wide range of materials, ranging from workshop wastes to canteen and office wastes. Workshop wastes include partly empty drums, oily materials or spoiled chemicals. Canteen and office wastes include biodegradable materials which could give rise to the generation of landfill gases (methane and carbon dioxide). This may present a hazard if waste has been landfilled within the airport.

Buildings and pipework may have used asbestos-based insulation or fire protection materials. Such materials may have been removed during the life of the facility and disposed of on site, especially before the current rigorous environmental controls were applied. In the past, asbestos wastes may have resulted from the maintenance of, for example, aircraft brakes.

Many airports have electricity substations and transformers (as well as standby diesel generators) and there may be contamination due to spillage or leakage of oils containing polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

Sources of heavy metal contamination are negligible on airports sites unless particular industrial activities were carried out on any associated industrial estates.

3.2 Migration and persistence of contaminants

The most likely potential contaminants are the wide range of hydrocarbon fuels, oils, and de-icing agents, together with the solvents used in cleaning activities on site, particularly the chlorinated hydrocarbons. These are highly mobile liquids and may migrate to contaminate a wide area. Volatile components of fuels will evaporate, reducing the amount which infiltrates the ground.

Free hydrocarbon product, for example, released at the surface or leaking from an underground structure, will flow downwards under the influence of gravity. Some hydrocarbon will be adsorbed on to soil particles and be retained in soil pores, giving rise to a soil-gas (vapour) fraction. The higher the organic matter and clay content of the soil, the greater the degree of adsorption and hence the lower the contaminant mobility. Therefore the greatest degree of migration will occur in coarse-grained sands and gravels which have little organic content. Less soluble compounds which become adsorbed on to clay or organic matter will provide on-going sources of water pollution long after the source has been removed, by continuing to desorb in to the groundwater.

On encountering groundwater, non-chlorinated hydrocarbons will normally disperse on the surface and migrate laterally in the direction of groundwater flow. The volatile components will diffuse into the overlying soil mass and migrate as a vapour front ahead of the free product. Lateral movement of hydrocarbons, either in the free or dissolved phase, may also affect surface waters.

Liquids denser than water, for example chlorinated solvents, will sink through the groundwater until they encounter an impermeable barrier where they will spread out. The direction of migration may be inconsistent with groundwater flow. Migration of such contaminants is therefore largely dependent upon the hydrogeological and geological characteristics of the site.

Biodegradation processes in soils can be influenced by a number of factors, namely moisture content, oxygen concentration and pH, acting separately or in combination. For example, low moisture content reduces microbiological activity, while high moisture content can reduce oxygen penetration and possibly lead to anaerobic soil conditions. Such conditions enhance the biodegradation of some materials, eg chlorinated compounds, while aerobic conditions are needed to biodegrade many oils. Also, low pHs tend to reduce the bacterial population and encourage fungal activity; at pHs lower than 5, microbiological activity is much reduced. The presence of heavy metals also inhibits micro-organisms. Consequently, at high concentrations in soil, even relatively non-persistent compounds may not biodegrade readily. The greater the degree of chlorination of organic compounds, the less volatile the compound and the more resistant it is to microbiological degradation processes under normal conditions.

Owing to their low water solubility and low volatility, PCBs do not generally present a major threat to groundwater but their tendency to bio-accumulate in the fatty tissue of organisms and subsequently transfer along food chains means that even very low concentrations may present a hazard to ecosystems. PCBs can be adsorbed onto stream sediments for example, where they may form a long-term source of contamination.

Widespread contamination of the site may occur through wind-blown dispersion of surface waste deposits containing loose asbestos fibres. Asbestos is not biodegradable and will persist in the soil.

4. Sources of further information

4.1 Organisations

For information concerning airports in the United Kingdom the following organisations should be consulted:

Civil Aviation Authority Central Library
Ground Floor
Aviation House
Gatwick Airport South
RH6 0YR

4.2 Sources of further information concerning the activities described in this profile

Civil Aviation Authority. *United Kingdom Aerodrome Index. CAP 481. 6th Edition.* CAA, 1992.

Department of Transport. *Transport Statistics GB 1978-1988.* HMSO.

Introduction to Civil Aviation. TANEJA, Lexington, 1989.

United Kingdom and Ireland Directory. Flight International Directory, 1993/1994

Willis S and Holliss B. *Military airfields in the British Isles 1939-1945 (Omnibus Edition).* 1987.

Information on researching the history of sites may be found in:

Department of the Environment. *Documentary research on industrial sites.* DOE. 1994.

4.3 Related DOE Industry Profiles

Chemical works: coatings (paints and printing inks) manufacturing works
Chemical works: pesticides manufacturing works
Road vehicle fuelling, service and repair: garages and filling stations
Road vehicle fuelling, service and repair: transport and haulage centres
Waste recycling, treatment and disposal sites: landfills and other waste treatment or waste disposal sites

4.4 Health, safety and environmental risks

The Notes issued by the Chief Inspector of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution (HMIP) provide guidance for the processes prescribed for integrated pollution control in Regulations made under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 1994 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992 are available from HMSO. Information on relevant health and safety legislation and approved codes of practice published by HSE publications are available from Health and Safety Executive Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk, CO10 6FS (telephone 01787 881165), as well as HMSO and other retailers.

Information on the health, safety and environmental hazards associated with individual contaminants mentioned in this profile may be obtained from the following sources:

Howard P H. *Handbook of environmental fate and exposure data for organic chemicals*. Vols I and II. USA, Lewis Publishers, 1990.

Sax N and Lewis R. *Hazardous chemicals desk reference*. New York, Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1987.

Verschueren K. *Handbook of environmental data on organic chemicals*. 2nd Edition. New York, Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1983.

4.5 Waste disposal and remediation options

Useful information may be obtained from the Department of the Environment series of Waste Management Papers, which contain details of the nature of industrial waste arisings, their treatment and disposal. A current list of titles in this series is available from HMSO Publications Centre, PO Box 276, London, SW8 5DT.

Publications containing information on the treatment options available for the remediation of contaminated land sites, prepared with the support of the Department of the Environment's Research Programme, can be obtained from National Environmental Technology Centre Library, F6, Culham, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 3DB.

A full list of current titles of Government publications on all aspects of contaminated land can be obtained from CLL Division, Room A323, Department of the Environment, Romney House, 43 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 3PY.

Advice on the assessment and remediation of contaminated land is contained in guidance published by the Construction Industry Research and Information Association (CIRIA), 6 Storey's Gate, Westminster, London, SW1P 3AU.

Annex Potential contaminants

The chemical compounds and other materials listed below generally reflect those associated with the industry and which have the potential to contaminate the ground. The list is not exhaustive; neither does it imply that all these chemicals might be present nor that they have caused contamination.

Fuels

Aviation kerosene	paraffinic and aromatic hydrocarbons (C ₉ -C ₁₈)
Aviation gasoline	paraffinic, olefinic and aromatic hydrocarbons (C ₄ -C ₁₀)
Gas-oil/diesel	

Operations and maintenance materials

Anti-freeze and de-icing agents	monoethylene glycols diethylene glycols propylene glycols urea calcium acetates magnesium acetates
Organic solvents	ketones eg acetone methanol aliphatic hydrocarbons eg heptane aromatic hydrocarbons eg xylene esters chlorinated compounds eg 1,1,1-trichloroethane, methylene chloride
Fire-fighting agents	eg allophanates carbamates hydrolysed proteins glycols ether alcohols fluorinated surfactants
Washing agents	
Wheel cleaners	eg potassium hydroxide
Lubricants	
Hydraulic fluids	
Herbicides	see Industry Profile on pesticide manufacture (Section 4)

Paints and associated solvents and thinners

polyurethanes
eg butanol isopropanoln-butylacetate
methoxy 1 propanol-2-acetate
xylene
toluene
methyl ethyl ketone
methyl isobutyl ketone

Rust removers

phosphoric acid

Corrosion inhibitors/etching materials

aluminium paints
chromic acid
potassium ferricyanide
potassium fluorozirconate
sodium fluoroborate

General contaminants

Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs)

Asbestos

Contaminants from ancillary industries — see relevant Industry Profile

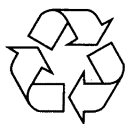
Table 1 Main groups of contaminants and their probable locations

Airports

Main groups of contaminants	Location					
	Fuel delivery/storage transport	Maintenance service areas	Runways and aprons	Drainage system and soakaways	Waste disposal	Electrical transformer areas
Inorganic compounds						
Acids/alkalis						
Asbestos		1				
Solvents						
Herbicides						
Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs)						
Fuels						
De-icing agents, fire-fighting chemicals						

1 Pipe insulation/building cladding

Shaded boxes indicate areas where contamination is most likely to occur



Recycled paper

DOE Industry Profiles

Airports
Animal and animal products processing works
Asbestos manufacturing works
Ceramics, cement and asphalt manufacturing works
Chemical works: coatings (paints and printing inks) manufacturing works
Chemical works: cosmetics and toiletries manufacturing works
Chemical works: disinfectants manufacturing works
Chemical works: explosives, propellants and pyrotechnics manufacturing works
Chemical works: fertiliser manufacturing works
Chemical works: fine chemicals manufacturing works
Chemical works: inorganic chemicals manufacturing works
Chemical works: linoleum, vinyl and bitumen-based floor covering manufacturing works
Chemical works: mastics, sealants, adhesives and roofing felt manufacturing works
Chemical works: organic chemicals manufacturing works
Chemical works: pesticides manufacturing works
Chemical works: pharmaceuticals manufacturing works
Chemical works: rubber processing works (including works manufacturing tyres or other rubber products)
Chemical works: soap and detergent manufacturing works
Dockyards and dockland
Engineering works: aircraft manufacturing works
Engineering works: electrical and electronic equipment manufacturing works (including works manufacturing equipment containing PCBs)
Engineering works: mechanical engineering and ordnance works
Engineering works: railway engineering works
Engineering works: shipbuilding, repair and shipbreaking (including naval shipyards)
Engineering works: vehicle manufacturing works
Gas works, coke works and other coal carbonisation plants
Metal manufacturing, refining and finishing works: electroplating and other metal finishing works
Metal manufacturing, refining and finishing works: iron and steelworks
Metal manufacturing, refining and finishing works: lead works
Metal manufacturing, refining and finishing works: non-ferrous metal works (excluding lead works)
Metal manufacturing, refining and finishing works: precious metal recovery works
Oil refineries and bulk storage of crude oil and petroleum products
Power stations (excluding nuclear power stations)
Pulp and paper manufacturing works
Railway land
Road vehicle fuelling, service and repair: garages and filling stations
Road vehicle fuelling, service and repair: transport and haulage centres
Sewage works and sewage farms
Textile works and dye works
Timber products manufacturing works
Timber treatment works
Waste recycling, treatment and disposal sites: drum and tank cleaning and recycling plants
Waste recycling, treatment and disposal sites: hazardous waste treatment plants
Waste recycling, treatment and disposal sites: landfills and other waste treatment or waste disposal sites
Waste recycling, treatment and disposal sites: metal recycling sites
Waste recycling, treatment and disposal sites: solvent recovery works
Profile of miscellaneous industries incorporating:
Charcoal works
Dry-cleaners
Fibreglass and fibreglass resins manufacturing works
Glass manufacturing works
Photographic processing industry
Printing and bookbinding works

Copies may be purchased from:

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Government Buildings,
Lime Grove,
Ruislip, HA4 8SF

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