

SGN PLACE
SEVENOAKS GASHOLDER STATION
CRAMPTON'S ROAD, SEVENOAKS, KENT, TN14 5ES
PLANNING APPLICATION - MARCH 2021





TOWNSCAPE ASSESSMENT

MARCH 2021

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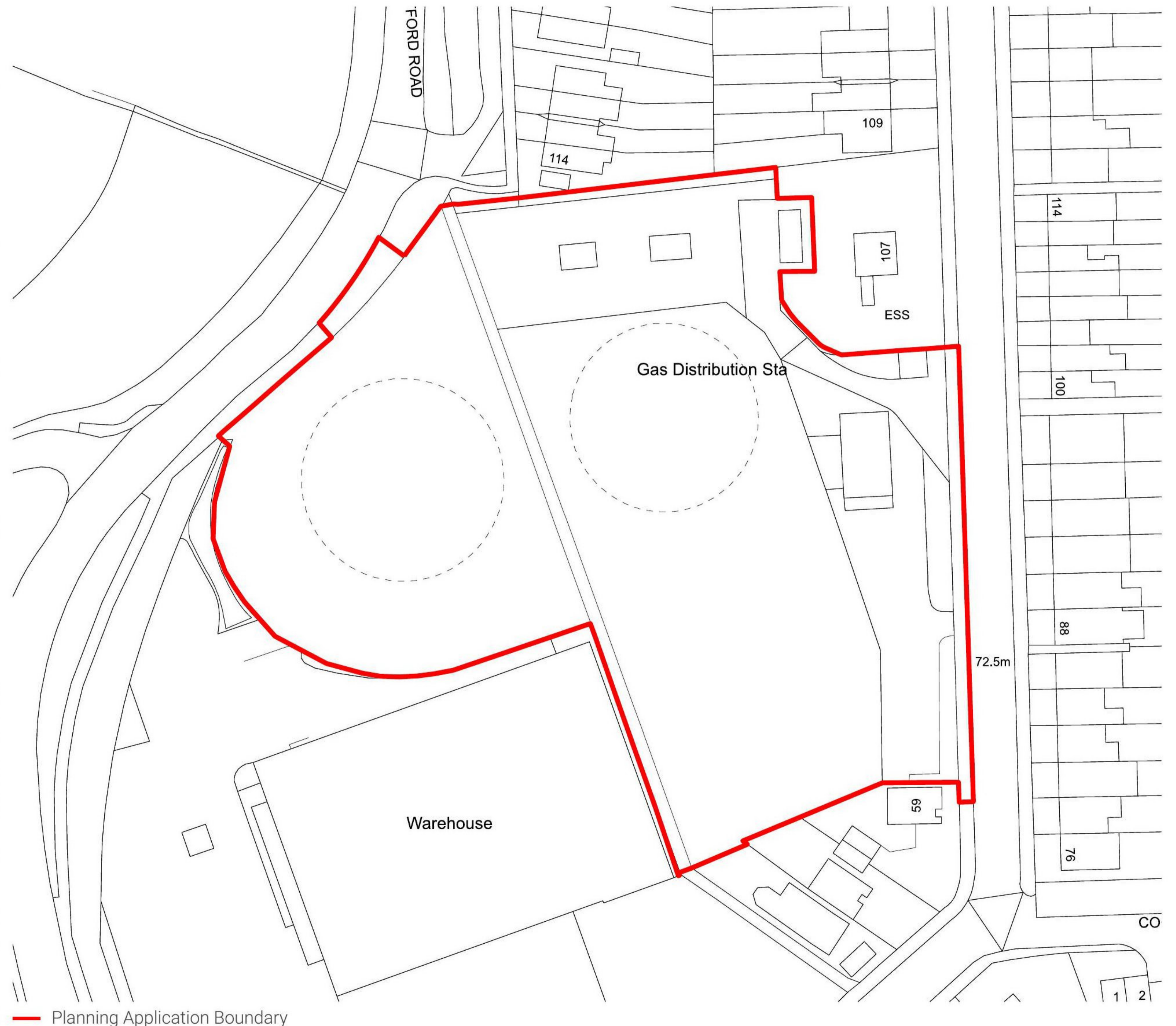


This Townscape Assessment has been completed by MAX Architects as part of a planning application submission by SGN Place for development of the Sevenoaks Gasholder brownfield site. The proposal consists of construction of a residential development consisting of 136no. dwellings, with new vehicular accesses from Otford Road and Crampton's Road, associated parking, landscaping, drainage, boundary treatments and earthworks.

The assessment is based on a set of twelve views agreed with Sevenoaks District Council. Since the scheme does not require an Environmental Impact Assessment, through agreement with officers, these views do not take the form of full verified views. However, a clear and robust methodology and assessment of the development's impacts has been undertaken.

Due to the significant predominance of the original gasholders as a landmark on the townscape for almost 100 years, it was agreed with SDC that the existing townscape views would include the outline of the gasholders as the baseline townscape view from which to assess the proposed development townscape against.

This assessment borrows from the Design and Access Statement for the introduction, proposal overview and the site and surrounding context.



In order to understand the significance that the landscape impact of the gasholders had on the Darent Valley for over 100 years, it is worth recalling how they came to be built in this location.

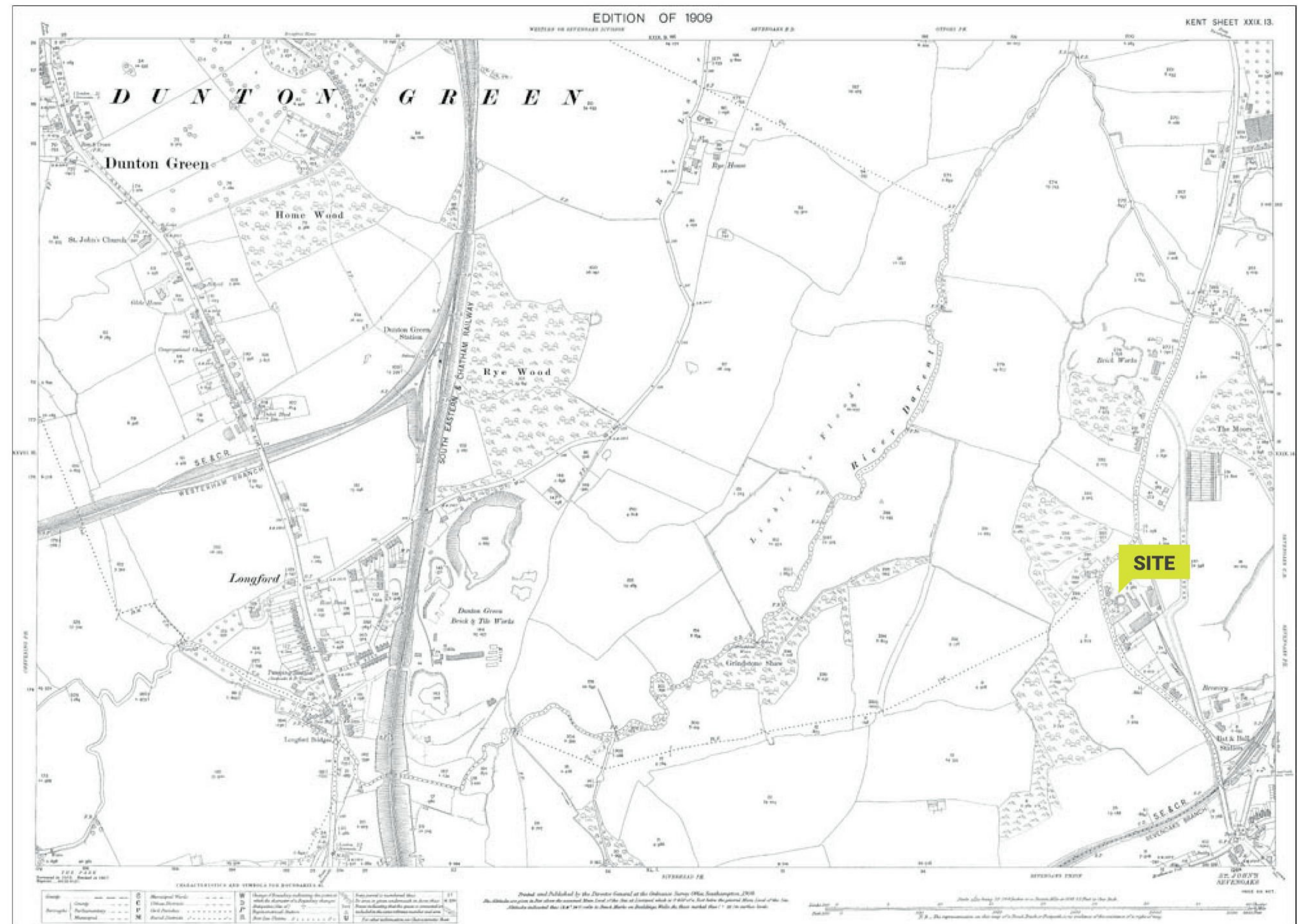
In 1859, the construction contract for the Station (then to be known simply as 'Sevenoaks Station') was awarded to Thomas Crampton as part of Parliament's Sevenoaks Railway Bill. Three years later, in 1862, the station was completed. At this time, the area to the north of Bat and Ball Station (renamed after the pub of the same name which pre-dated the station) was undeveloped farmland. The Station became the catalyst for the establishment of a number of industries (Brickmaking, Quarrying, Light Engineering, Printing and Publishing) of which the production of Gas was just one. The Gasworks was operational by the turn of the century and the 2 Gasholders which stood until the end of 2018 themselves were erected shortly afterwards, before the creation of Crampton's Road itself, and before the quarrying that led to the eventual formation of the Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve. Gasworks were inextricably linked to the railways due to the requirements to bring in coal for the creation of town gas. Therefore, like most other gasworks, what became known as the Crampton's Road Gasworks was situated in a valley bottom, alongside the railway which was to serve it. A short rail spur was created from Bat & Ball Station to serve the gasworks and this was clearly in place by 1909 as illustrated in the early OS map opposite.

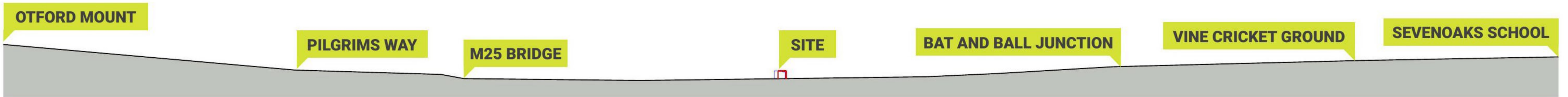
The topography shown in the other early map from 1895 (next page) clearly shows the geographic rationale for this industrial evolution. The hills to the North are the North Downs and those to the South are known as the Greensand Ridge, upon which Sevenoaks itself sits. There is a clear gap in the hills to the north, through which the railway was directed, before entering the relatively flat Darent Valley. The Station and therefore the Gasworks, were positioned at the base of this valley. As a result of this positioning, while the Gasholders themselves have always been prominent on this relatively flat valley floor due to their height, this prominence varies considerably depending on the view point. From close up, the Gasholders would have always presented a strong silhouette against the sky, but from further away in the valley, they were typically viewed against the backdrop of the surrounding hills. From further away still, in the raised vantage points to the North and South, the Gasholders lost their landscape prominence due to their position in the base of the valley.

This Townscape Assessment provides a number of viewpoints of varying length which seek to demonstrate this variance of prominence in presenting the current scheme against the century-old precedent set by the Gasholders themselves. Given that the Gasholders pre-date the surrounding built context and much of the landscape character (such as the wildlife reserve) and given that the structures themselves stood for almost 100 years until the very recent past (December 2018), the development team has requested that any townscape evaluation of the visual benefits

or harm resulting from the proposed development, be assessed against the historic presence of the Gasholders themselves.

This is a unique site with a unique history. The approval and construction of a building or buildings reflecting the historic townscape presence of the Gasholders would not set a precedent for new building heights in the area as no other site in the area shares the unique set of townscape characteristics presented by this site's long history.





SGN's Crampton's Road site, like so many former gasholders, carries a unique set of opportunities and constraints, requiring a bespoke approach to placemaking.

The gasholder structures themselves were iconic landmarks which dominated their surroundings for generations, surviving wartime damage and successive waves of post war development and regeneration. They have a place in the hearts of the communities around them. Any development plans need to understand this historic relationship to the surrounding townscape and work with it rather than against it.

Like many of its sites, the Crampton's Road Gasholder site represents an important opportunity for SGN to deliver much needed housing in an area where demand outstrips supply and where the Greenbelt prevents supply being brought forward.

This site is one of the few major development sites identified in the Sevenoaks area as appropriate for the delivery of housing. The gasholders themselves were an important industrial landmark that stood for nearly 100 years as a prominent local landmark.

This development seeks to celebrate the site's industrial past while making a sustainable and viable contribution to the area's housing targets without compromising vital open space in the greenbelt.

In bringing forward this prominent site for development we have set out to:

- Reflect the historic industrial townscape precedent of the Gasholders
- Respect neighbouring residential properties by stepping down and away from boundaries
- Maximise views from the site to the wildlife reserve to the west
- Enhance the public footpath through the site that connects Crampton's Road and Otford Road
- Create a high quality housing environment for all tenures
- Create 136 new homes
- Introduce a mix of studio, 1 bed, 2 bed, 3 bed apartments and townhouses
- Create three building types; rotunda, blocks and townhouses
- Clad all buildings in high-quality brick
- Ensure that all units have private amenity space and meet Nationally Described Space Standards
- Introduce a large shared public amenity space at the heart of the site
- 97 car parking spaces and 184 cycle parking spaces



Aerial perspective from northeast



Vehicular entrance from Crampton's Road



Main vehicular entrance from Otford Road (NB, development name TBD)

Crampton's Road is a pleasant residential street, however, the surrounding buildings have little architectural significance or merit. The closest buildings of historic or architectural interest are the newly refurbished Sevenoaks Community Centre and Bat and Ball station which are approximately 0.2 and 0.4 miles south of the site, respectively.

The areas directly north and east of the site are primarily comprised of 2-storey terraced housing. There are also several detached houses including the house within the SGN ownership boundary, adjacent to the application boundary and 3 directly to the south of the site.

The site is bound to the south and west by retail warehouses and associated parking. To the west of the site over the Otford Road is small parking lot with a of couple retail units and a cafe.

The areas to the west of the site primarily comprise green space, including agricultural fields and the Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve, which consists of a series of lakes and forested areas.



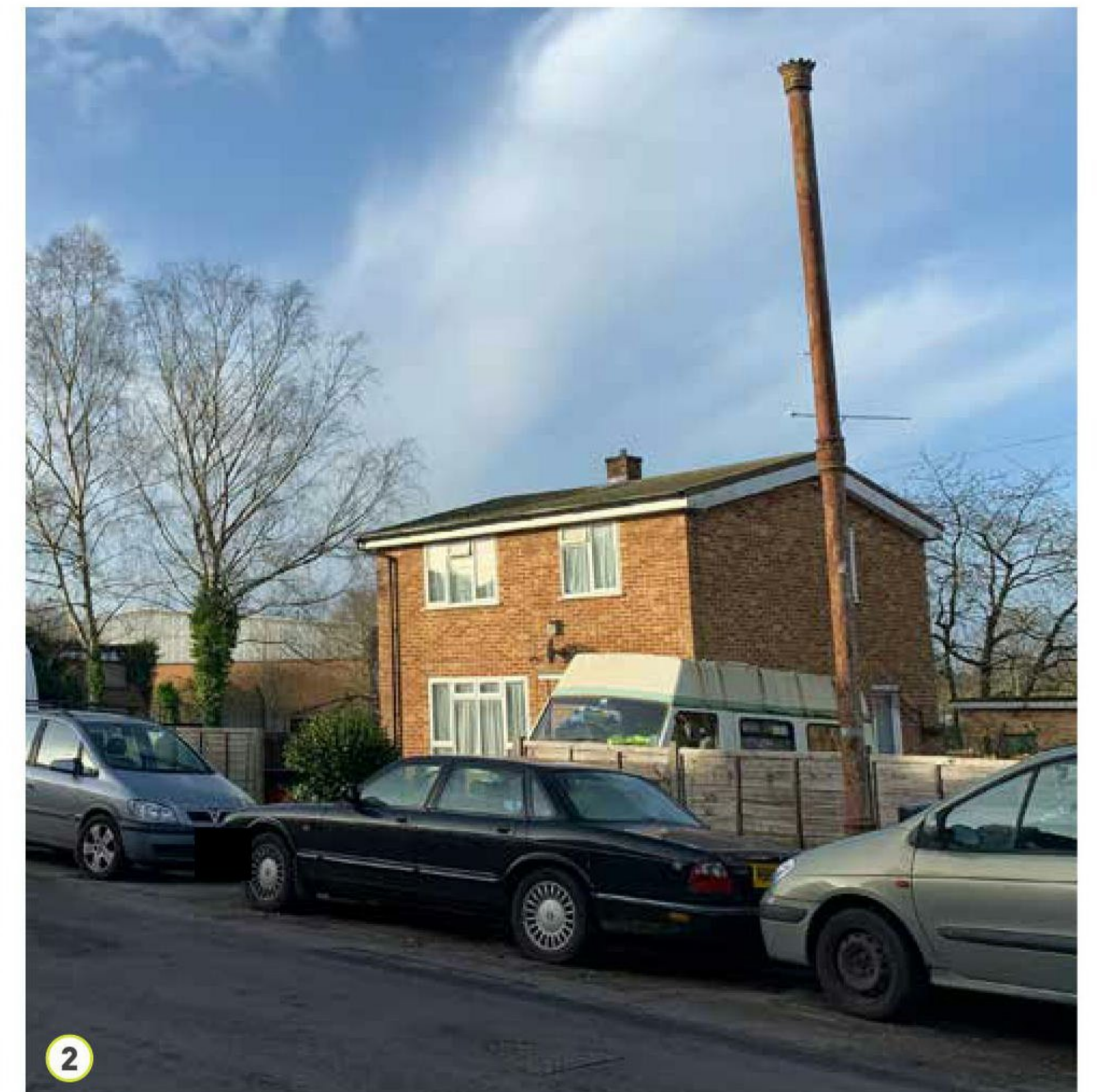
Sevenoaks Community Centre



Bat and Ball Station



1



2



3



4



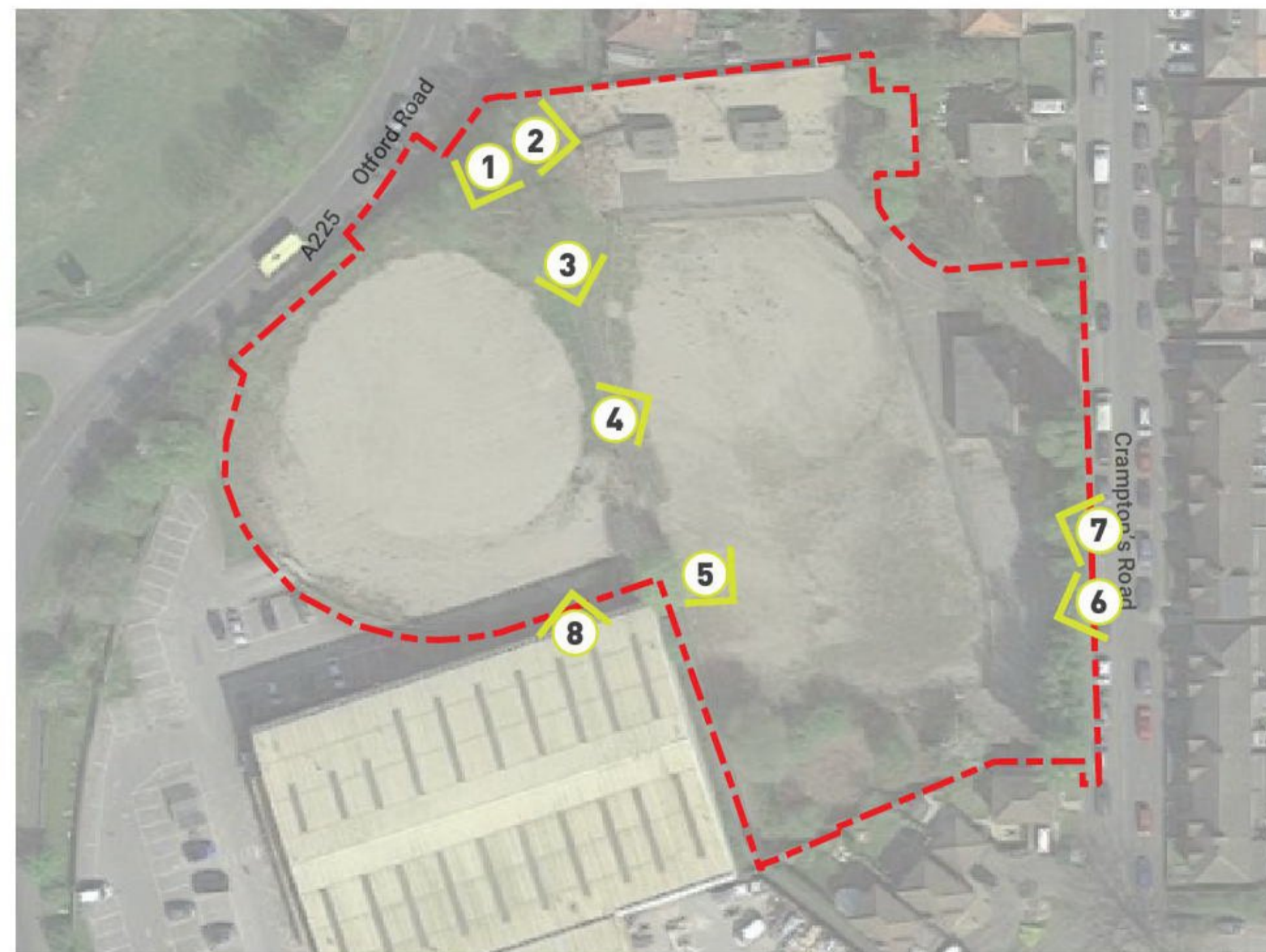
The application site has an area of approximately 0.9 ha. The application site includes two recently demolished gasholder structures, some remaining operational gas infrastructure, a series of small buildings and areas of hard standing, bare ground and vegetation.

The site topography primarily slopes upwards away from and along the public footpath. The site slopes upwards from north to south with an overall level change of approximately 3.6m. The portion of the site to the west of the public footpath slopes upwards from the point of intersection shown to the site boundary with a level change of approximately 0.5m to the north and 3m to the south. The portion of the site east of the public footpath slopes upwards from west to east and the level changes range between 1.2m and 2.0m.

The two demolished gasholder structures are located within the eastern and western parts of the site and were previously known as Gasholder 3 and Gasholder 4 respectively. The demolished gasholders are separated by a public footpath that bisects the site from north to south. Gasholder 4 was constructed in the 1930s while Gasholder 3 was constructed in the late 1940s. The gasholder structures stood disused since their decommission in the late 1990s until they were finally demolished in 2019, in response to safety concerns and ongoing maintenance costs.

A total of six buildings are present on-site. An Active Pressure Reducing System (PRS) is present in the north of the site. This comprises three small above surface structures and above ground pipework and is contained within a newly fenced modern compound area with gravel surfacing.

Two further buildings are present, to the south of the SGN operational land area, adjacent to the eastern site boundary. These buildings comprise an active electrical substation and an abandoned building, which had formerly been used during the operation of the gas works. Finally, a small building is present in the south eastern corner of the site, which is used for storage.





The selection of twelve views to be assessed in this document were determined by the design team in conjunction with the local authority.

Four short and mid-range views with wirelines were shown to Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) as part of the second pre-application meeting, from which Views 1, 2 and 3 were deemed appropriate. It was decided that the previous View 4, which was taken closer to the site from Otford road, would be better if replaced by a view slightly further away on Otford road at the entrance to Aldi. In addition, SDC requested five longer range views which were specified via email following this meeting. Photographs were taken, wirelines mocked up and the requested views were marked on a plan and sent to SDC for approval. These sent views were not discussed until the Third Pre-App meeting, where MAX proposed an additional view from Rye Lane and SDC requested a further short-range view from the southwest on Otford road. It was agreed that following the meeting MAX would send the new views with wirelines and plan locations for approval. MAX sent this document to SDC, including an additional view from Kennedy Gardens that was never previously discussed.

These twelve views were agreed by SDC via email on 22.12.2020. Agreement was also made with SDC that all twelve views would be shown as wirelines of the proposed massing in comparison with wirelines of the original gasholders as a benchmark. In addition to the wireline views, fully rendered views would be also be shown for six of the more significant views, as defined on the right.

VIEW 1
Junction of Otford and Crampton's Road
Wireline

VIEW 2
Crampton's Road from South
Rendered

VIEW 3
Crampton's Road from North
Rendered

VIEW 4
Otford Road North at Aldi
Wireline

VIEW 5
Bat and Ball Junction
Rendered

VIEW 6
Otford Road from Southwest
Rendered

VIEW 7
Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve
Rendered

VIEW 8
McDonald's Sevenoaks
Rendered

VIEW 9
M25 Bridge
Wireline

VIEW 10
Hillway/Otford Mount
Wireline

VIEW 11
Rye Lane
Wireline

VIEW 12
Kennedy Gardens
Wireline