

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





DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

MARCH 2021

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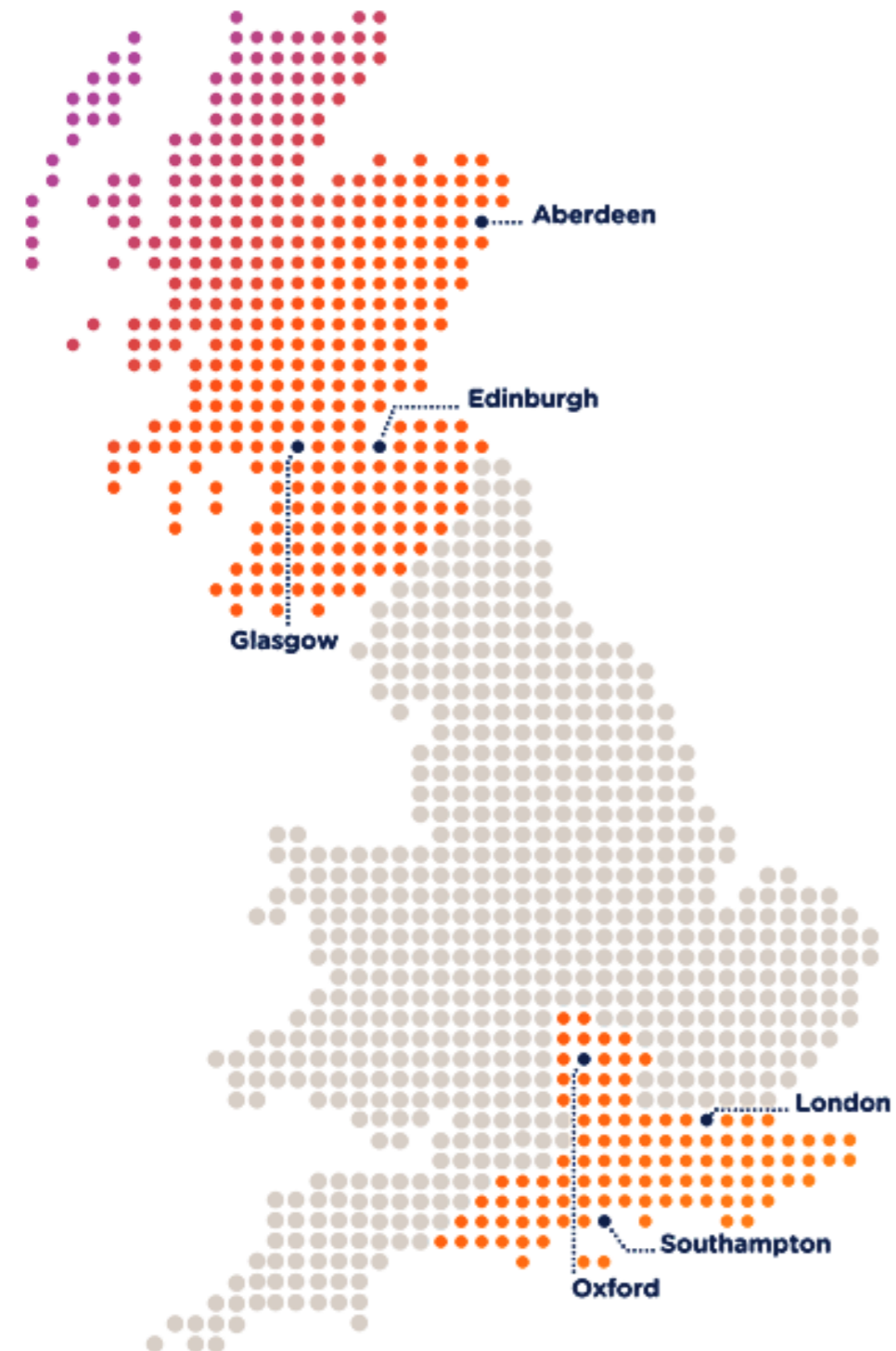
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Community Engagement



Client

SGN (formerly Southern Gas Networks and Scotland Gas Networks) is the gas distribution network for the south of England and Scotland, maintaining a network that supplies 5.9 million homes and businesses.



As a result of changes in distribution and storage technology, many of SGN's sites are now surplus to operational requirements, in particular gasholder sites. Many of these sites have been in SGN and its predecessor companies since the early 19th century and have a long history of industrial use. In 2018 SGN set up SGN Place to bring land no longer required for gas distribution back into use for the community by clearing and cleaning up the sites, dismantling redundant plant and infrastructure and remediating the ground where required. This enables the high cost of holder dismantling and land remediation to be met by development and disposal receipts, reducing the risk to the regulated utility business and the cost to consumers. This innovative approach has led to SGN Place being shortlisted for New Business of the Year in the 2020 UK Business Awards.

SGN Place currently has a portfolio of around 60 brownfield sites across southern England and Scotland and is now working on plans for their development.

SGN Place provides a unique opportunity to create value from surplus assets and divert risk away from SGN's regulated business to a newly formed entity while creatively regenerating brownfield sites for residential, commercial and retail property and open green spaces to benefit the communities we serve.



Introduction

This Design & Access Statement supports a full planning application for the former Sevenoaks Gasholder site, made on behalf of SGN Place. The site is located within Sevenoaks District less than half a mile from Bat and Ball Station, between Otford Road to the west and Crampton's Road to the east.

In 2018 SGN set up SGN Place to bring land no longer required for gas distribution back into use for the community by clearing and cleaning up the sites, dismantling redundant plant and infrastructure and remediating the ground where required.

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.

This design team has been working for 3 years to develop a specialised and bespoke approach to designing residential development on gasholder sites. The concept is a simple one based around working with these historic structures rather than removing all trace of them. Building on or close to the footprint of the gasholder references the planning precedent of the original structure in terms of scale and height but also retains something of its historic townscape presence. Creating a bespoke circular typology around the historic land uses results in a unique residential environment. This circular rather than linear approach to the structures can open up both views across and access into the site for the wider community's benefit.

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



Introduction

The planning proposals for the site are addressed in the context of the Development Plan for Sevenoaks District Council. The relevant documents to this application comprise:

- Core Strategy (February 2011)
- Allocations and Development Management Plan (February 2015)
- Interactive Policies Map
- The Sevenoaks District Strategy for Transport 2010-2026 (July 2010)

The area is contained within that put forward by Sevenoaks Town Council as a designated neighbourhood area.

The area is not one safeguarded for minerals, therefore although part of the Development Plan, the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan does not apply in this instance.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The following sections are considered relevant for development at the site:

- Section 2 – Achieving Sustainable Development
- Section 5 – Delivering a Sufficient Supply of Homes
- Section 8 – Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities
- Section 9 – Promoting Sustainable Transport
- Section 11 – Making Effective Use of Land
- Section 12 – Achieving Well-designed Places
- Section 14 – Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change
- Section 15 – Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment
- Section 4 – Decision Making
- Annex 1: Implementation

Planning Practice Guidance

The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) builds on principles within the NPPF and provides further detailed technical guidance, with reference to relevant legislation and other guidance.

The PPG sets out the importance of good design. It advocates the need for quality design and confirms that this is an integral part of achieving the fundamental objective of sustainable development. It affirms how good

design should follow the 10 characteristics set out in the National Design Guide.

SDC Core Strategy (2011)

The following policies are considered relevant for development at the site:

- Policy LO1: Distribution of Development
- Policy LO2: Development in Sevenoaks Urban Area
- Policy SP1: Design of New Development and Conservation
- Policy SP2: Sustainable Development
- Policy SP3: Provision of Affordable Housing
- Policy SP5: Housing Size and Type
- Policy SP7: Density of Housing Development
- Policy SP9: Infrastructure Provision
- Policy SP10: Green Infrastructure, Open Space, Sport and Recreation Provision
- Policy SP11: Biodiversity

SDC Allocations and Development Management Plan (2015)

The Site is allocated within the ADMP for approximately 39 residential units under Policy H1(c) at a density of 40dph.

Figure 4.1 – Adopted Site Allocation H1(c) Sevenoaks Gasholders



The ADMP also provides a series of development management policies that are relevant to the proposal for this Site, as follows:

- Policy SC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- Policy EN1: Design Principles
- Policy EN2: Amenity Protection
- Policy EN5: Landscape
- Policy EN6: Outdoor Lighting
- Policy EN7: Noise Pollution
- Policy G11: Green Infrastructure and New Development
- Policy T1: Mitigating Travel Impact
- Policy T2: Vehicle Parking
- Policy T3: Provision of Electrical Vehicle Charging Points

Emerging Local Plan

On 4 June 2020, SDC was granted permission to bring a judicial review against the Planning Inspector's decision to reject the emerging draft Local Plan. This was dismissed by the High Court on 13 November 2020.

SDC launched an appeal against the High Court ruling in January 2021.

As such, at the time of writing, the emerging Local Plan has limited weight in consideration.

Other Documents

The planning proposals for the Site have had regard to relevant Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD). This includes:

- Affordable Housing (October 2011)
- Sevenoaks Residential Character Area Assessment (April 2012)
- Kent Design Guide (July 2007)

The Sevenoaks District Strategy for Transport (July 2010) sets out the approach to transport across the District to 2026. The primary objective set out within the Strategy for the Sevenoaks Urban Area includes improving public transport interchange facilities and improving facilities for walking and cycling. The Strategy identifies the Bat and Ball signalised junction as a "congestion hotspot" and that strategies to provide improvements to the roads and reduce the need to travel by car should be encouraged.

Neighbourhood Plan

The Site is set out within the draft NP as providing houses along Crampton's Road, and potential for apartments fronting Otford Road at a density of around 75dph as below:

5 SEVENOAKS GASHOLDER STATION
CRAMPTONS ROAD 0.98Ha



| | |
|--|--|
| EXISTING USE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site of former gas works — gasholders were removed in 2018 |
| PLANNING STATUS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residential site allocation in the existing and emerging Local Plan |
| CONSTRAINTS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site remediation will be required Development opportunity is impacted by adjacent big box retail uses to the south Comprehensive approach required that anticipates potential change on adjacent sites |
| POTENTIAL USES AND QUANTUMS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residential use: houses fronting Cramptons Road but potential for apartments fronting Otford Road (73 dwellings @ 75dph) |
| OPPORTUNITY / URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residential development close to Bat and Ball station that supports the regeneration of Northern Sevenoaks Development layout should provide positive frontages to streets and retain and front onto the pedestrian path that connects Cramptons Road with Otford Road through the site Scale and massing should respond to the context (i.e. two storey buildings on Cramptons Road but with potential for four storeys on Otford Road) |

Extract from Sevenoaks Town NP Consultation Draft (January 2020)

Therefore, the masterplan has limited weight in planning consideration as the NP is not yet adopted.

There is the potential that the NP could be adopted following the Referendum in June, by which time this application may be in its latter stages of determination by SDC. If this were the case, it is considered the proposals are in accordance with draft Policy D1 of the NP as promoting development on a sustainable site that has been identified for residential development.

Other relevant policies contained within the NP include:

- Policy C3
- Policy C7
- Policy L2
- Policy M1
- Policy M3
- Policy D2
- Policy D3
- Policy D5

The progress with the NP was on hold while the District Council was awaiting a decision on the emerging Local Plan. As such, the current timescales for progression with the NP are as follows:

- Submission of draft NP to SDC in April 2021; and
- Referendum on the NP in June 2021

The application site is located in the northern part of Sevenoaks, just north of the middle of the Sevenoaks District in Kent. The site is approximately 10 miles from the nearest M25 junction. Otford is located about 1.5 miles north of the site and Sevenoaks almost 2 miles to the south. The closest neighbourhood to the site is Greatness.

Despite adjoining the outer edge of London, Sevenoaks' character could be described as predominantly rural with several urban areas. This is reflected in 93% of the District being designated as Green Belt, and 60% of the District being situated in either the Kent Downs or High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



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.

For nearly 100 years the Sevenoaks Gasholders dominated the skyline on a prominent bend on the Otford Road approaching Sevenoaks. At 28m/32m in height and 33m/31m in diameter, the structures formed a significant landmark. 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. Gasholder 4 was constructed in the 1930s while Gasholder 3 was constructed in the late 1940s. Unlike some disused gasholders, the detailing of the steel frame was of little architectural merit, but the scale and presence of the gasholders nevertheless provides an important planning precedent on the site which should be reflected in the urban design approach.

Having stood disused since being decommissioned in the late 1990s, the structures were finally demolished in 2019 due to safety concerns and ongoing maintenance costs.

The demolished gasholders are separated by a public footpath that bisects the site from north to south.

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.

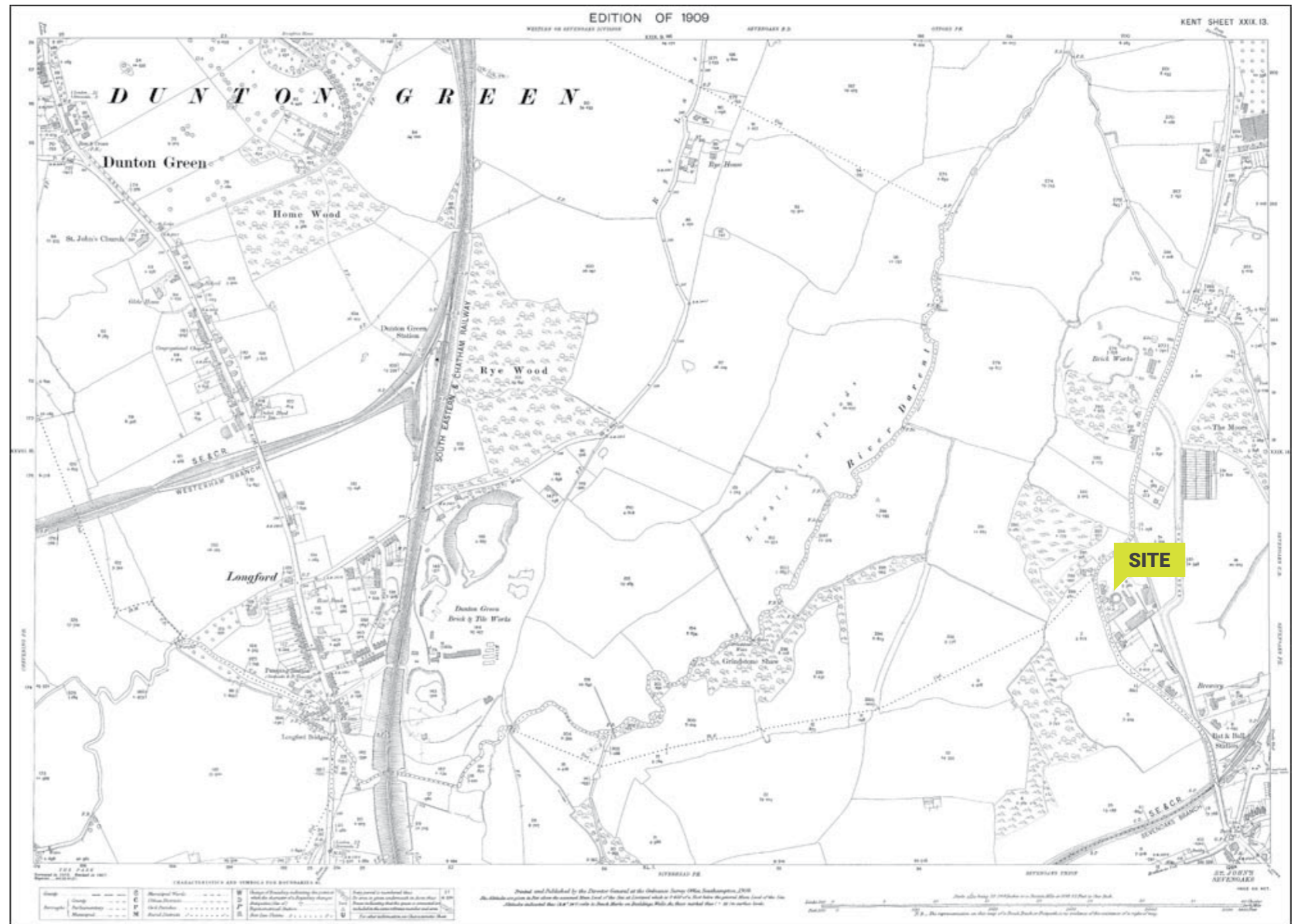


In order to understand the significance that the landscape impact of the gasholders had on the Darent Valley for over 100 years, it is worth recalling how they came to be built in this location.

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 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.





OTFORD MOUNT

PILGRIMS WAY

M25 BRIDGE

SITE

BAT AND BALL JUNCTION

VINE CRICKET GROUND

SEVENOAKS SCHOOL



Historic photograph of gasholders from Otford Road



Historic photograph of gasholders with tanks raised



Historic aerial photograph of gasholders with tanks raised circa 1939



Historic photograph of gasholders with tanks raised



Birds eye view pre-demolition with application boundary line



Historic photograph of gasholders before demolition



Historic photograph of gasholders being demolished