

Gas Holder Site, Reading

Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment

April 2019

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Montagu Evans have been instructed by Danescroft (Kenavon Drive Project Management) LLP to provide heritage, townscape and visual advice in relation to the redevelopment of the former gas holder site at Alexander Turner Close, Reading (the “Site”).

The description of development is as follows:

“Demolition of existing buildings and Gas Holder and the erection of new buildings ranging between 2 and 9 storeys in height, providing 130 residential units (Class C3) with associated access, car parking, landscaping and open space.”

Background

The proposals for the redevelopment of the Site are subject to an application for Planning Permission which is now before Reading Borough Council, who are the local planning authority, for determination.

The Site does not lie in a conservation area or any areas identified as sensitive land. The Site does lie in the setting of nearby listed buildings, however, notably Newton Primary School (Grade II) to the south (**Figure 0.1**)

The Site represents the last remaining part of a larger gasworks in this area which was established in the 19th century and extended to the west of the Site.

As a result of the industrial use, the Site is a brownfield site with contaminated land.

The Site is currently used as a depot for SGN which requires 24-hour access for the continual coming and going of operational vehicles. That use contrasts and conflicts with the adjacent residential use due to the shared access route on Kenavon Drive, Robert Parker Road and Alexander Turner Close.



Figure 0.1 Aerial photograph of the Site from the south west showing the existing gasholder

The most prominent part of the Site is the remaining gas holder, Gas holder No. 4, which dates to 1916. The gas holder is a late example of its type and has limited architectural or engineering interest. Gas holder No. 4 was decommissioned in March 2008 and is now redundant. It has no current use or function and lies permanently in its resting state.

Owing to its age and local value, Gas holder No. 4 is identified as a non-designated heritage asset according to the definition set out in Annex 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework. In accordance with the Framework, the removal of the gas holder is material consideration in the determination of the application for planning permission.

In considering the acceptability of any redevelopment proposal, weight must be attached to its status as a non-designated heritage asset. Unlike listed buildings or conservation area (designated heritage assets) the gas holder does not receive statutory protection and it could be demolished under **Section 3(1)** of the Town and Country Planning General Permitted Development Order (2015) (GPDO) (see Part 11(B) of Schedule 2 'Class B – demolition of buildings').

The Site is allocated for residential development in the Reading Central Area Action Plan (2009) under Policy RC3f. This is a sub-area of the wider East Side Major Opportunity Area (MOA) as designated under Policy RC3. The first phases of the East Side MOA redevelopment have already been completed.

Reading Borough Council are also in the process of producing a new Local Plan which was submitted to the Secretary of State on 29th March 2018. The vision for the East Side MOA remains unaltered as set out in draft Policy CS13 and the site continues to be allocated for residential development under draft Policy CR13d. The Examination in Public into the new Local Plan commenced on 25th September 2018.

The principle of redevelopment has therefore been established through the development plan.

The acceptability of the Proposed Development depends, therefore, on the quality of the replacement scheme, and notably, how it interacts with the earlier phases of development within the site allocation, the townscape and visual context, and the setting of heritage assets.

Pre-Application Consultation

The proposals have been developed by Collado Collins, an experienced and award-winning architectural practice. The proposals have been prepared in response to the Design South East Design Review Panel, and comments provided over the course of lengthy pre-application consultation with the Council which included a Planning Performance Agreement.

Summary of the Proposals

In summary the proposals comprise:

- Redevelopment of an existing brownfield, contaminated site in a prominent location;
- High quality residential development providing 130 new flats with associated parking;
- Replacement of the existing, approximately 33m tall gas holder with a new building to mark the gateway into Reading;
- Creating a high quality scheme, with a strong sense of place and celebrating the Site's heritage; and
- High quality landscape, significantly improving the public realm and ecological credentials of the site, and maximising the relationship to the river.



Figure 0.2 Accurate Visual representation showing the proposals from the river path to the Rover Kennett (Source: GMJ)

Summary Assessment

Heritage

One of the main aims of the proposals has been to identify the significance of the relevant heritage assets, and where appropriate, deliver enhancements. We consider the following matters are the principal heritage considerations:

- The impact of the Proposed Development on the setting of nearby listed buildings, notably Newton School (Grade II), and railway bridge (Grade II);
- The impact of the Proposed Development on the setting and significance of nearby Conservation Areas; and
- The impact of the Proposed Development on Gas holder No. 4, which is identified as a non-designated heritage asset.

We accept that the development will lead to additional scale and mass in comparison to the existing gas holder on the Site. However, change in the local context of listed buildings does not necessarily equate to a harmful effect.

In this case the quality of the architecture, together with the orientation of the buildings, helps to minimise any potential effect and, in turn, will provide enhancements in certain areas by introducing a new development that has been sensitively designed and appears as a sympathetic addition in the local context.

On that basis, we consider that the proposals comply with paragraphs 193 and 200 of the Framework, Policy CS33 of the Council's Core Strategy. On that basis the decision maker is able to discharge his or her legal duty under s66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

In relation to Gas holder No. 4 we conclude that its heritage significance is limited to its local associations. In accordance with paragraph 197 of the Framework, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Options were tested to ascertain whether the Council's policy objectives and wider planning benefits could be achieved in a scenario where the gas holder was retained. The testing demonstrated that the retention of the gas holder was not feasible.

In this case, the proposed development will deliver 130 residential units in an area identified for housing in the development plan. It will improve the connectivity of the area and the overall character and appearance of the townscape (as described in this report). It is our judgement that these wider benefits outweigh the loss of the non-designated heritage receptor of limited value.

Townscape

The proposed development will deliver 130 residential units in an area identified for housing in the development plan. It will improve the connectivity of the area and the overall character and appearance of the townscape (as described below).

The redundant gas holder is the main feature of built form which identifies the Site in the local townscape and views from the surrounding area. The effect on townscape character areas has been assessed through the analysis of nine Character Area (A-I).

Overall, the articulation of the architecture and the resolution of scale, bulk and mass across the Site is considered to represent high quality urban design which will significantly improve the local townscape, in particular Character Areas A, B and E which are located in the closest proximity to the Site.

Visual

This assessment has been informed by the 22 Accurate Visual Representations (AVRs) prepared by GMJ, visualisation specialists, as part of the visual analysis. The AVRs demonstrate that the proposed development will sit well below the height of the redundant gas holder, and will not create a sense of overbearing or dominance for people travelling through the areas to the east of Reading town centre.

The visual analysis demonstrates how the proposed development will enrich the character of the views identified in this assessment, which include the important local views identified in the Council's policy documents and evidence base.

In conclusion, the proposed development will achieve the Council's aspirations for the Site through a high quality residential development which will improve the local townscape and views.

The proposals will realise the full potential of a highly sustainable site and provide the opportunity to remediate contaminated brownfield land to the considerable benefit of exiting local residents.

The proposals will meet the statutory duty of the decision-maker with the regards to listed buildings as set out in **Section 66(1)** of the 1990 Act regarding listed buildings, which seeks the preservation of a their significance, and will have no effect on any CA.

1.0

// GAS WORK SITE, READING



Introduction

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Montagu Evans have been instructed by Danescroft (Kenavon Drive Project Management) LLP (hereafter ‘the Applicant’) to provide consultancy services and produce this Heritage, Townscape and Visual Assessment (HTVIA) in support of proposals to redevelop the Gas Holder Site at Alexander Turner Close, Reading (the “Site”).
- 1.2 The proposals seek to deliver a high quality residential development which will realise the potential of a brownfield site in a prominent location.
- 1.3 The description of development is as follows:
“Demolition of existing buildings and Gas Holder and the erection of new buildings ranging between 2 and 9 storeys in height, providing 130 residential units (Class C3) with associated access, car parking, landscaping and open space.”
- 1.4 **Figure 1.1** outlines the boundary of the Site. An aerial view of the Site from south-east is provided at **Figure 1.2**.
- 1.5 This report should be read together with the suite of documents which comprise the planning submission, in particular the Planning Statement by Boyer Planning and the Design and Access Statement by Collado Collins.

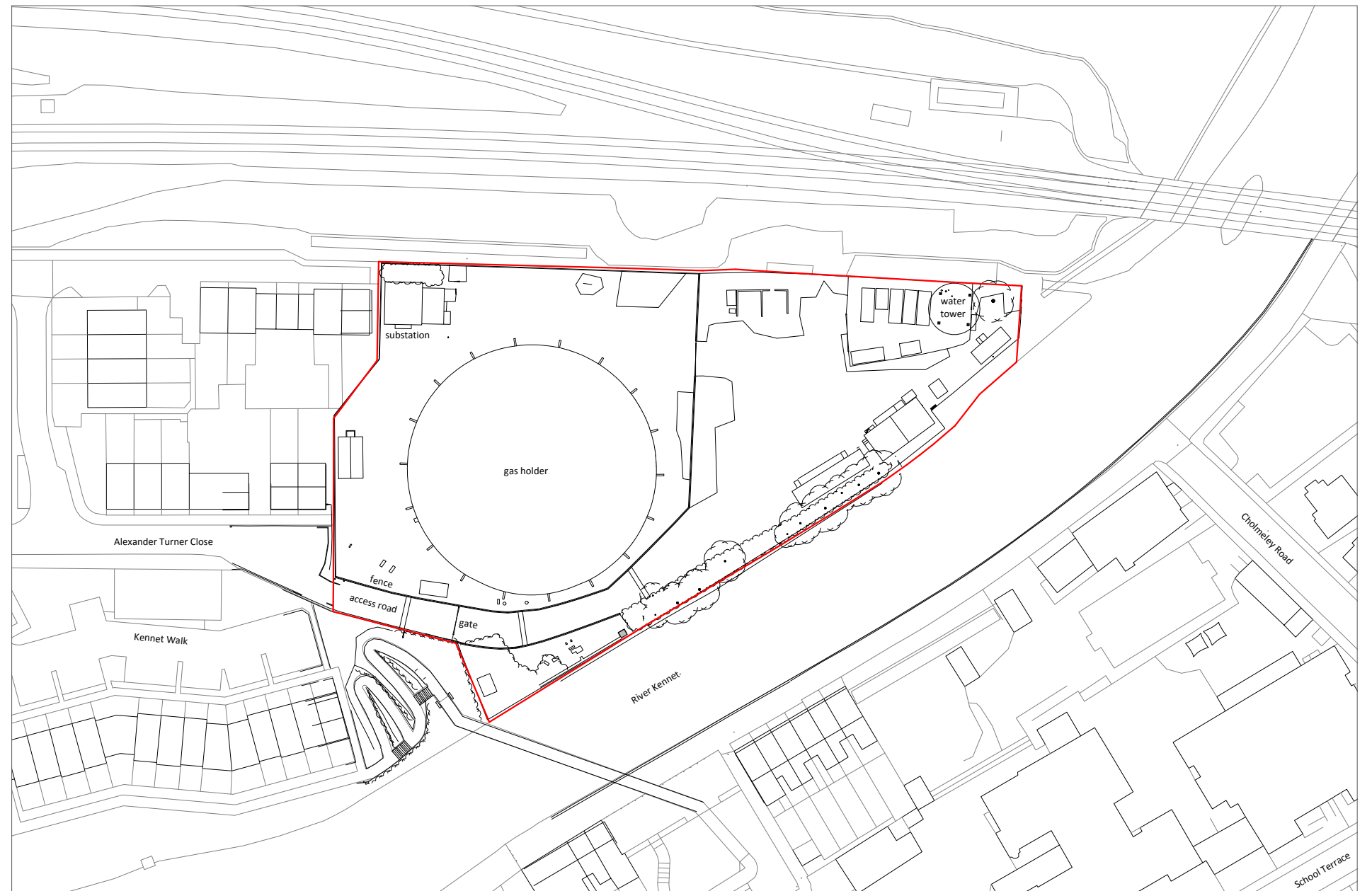


Figure 1.1 The boundary of the Site in red.



Figure 1.2 An aerial view of the Site (in red) from the south-east.

The Site

- 1.6 The Site is located within the administrative boundary of Reading Borough Council who are the local planning authority (hereafter 'the Council').
- 1.7 The Site is 0.71 hectares and roughly triangular in plan, with the main corner oriented to the east towards the convergence of the River Thames and River Kennet. It is currently operated as a SGN Depot and has a functional and utilitarian appearance derived from:
 - The remaining gas holder;
 - The water tower;
 - Hardstanding with a small area of rough vegetation; and
 - The SGN Pressure Reduction System (PRS) with associated telemetry.
- 1.8 The Site is accessed via Alexander Turner Close to the west. The road leads through the recent Bellway development (planning ref. 131280). It is also linked to the southern bank of the Kennet via a footbridge. The most prominent element within the Site is the remains of the early 20th century gas holder which has a height of 33 meters and is visible in views from the surrounding area.

The Proposals

Relevant Background

- 1.9 The Site is located in the East Side Major Opportunity Area which is identified in the local plan. The area is intended to deliver a new residential community at the eastern fringes of the city centre. The Site is the subject of sub-area RC3f Gas Holder which states that:

"This area will be used for residential development. Development should enhance the character of the mouth of the Kennet and should maximise the potential of the site to be a river gateway to Reading."
- 1.10 RC3f is adjacent to RC3e, 42 Kenavon Drive. RC3e has recently been built out with a scheme of 192 units by Bellway Homes (ref. 131280). There is also a scheme to redevelop the former Homebase/Toys R Us site with housing (ref. 170509) which is contained within RC3c Forbury Business Park.

- 1.11 The proposals for RC3f submitted in this application represent the next step to realise the Council's ambition for the area.
- 1.12 The opportunity area has been carried forward into the emerging local plan for residential use as before (see Policy CR13 and CR13d). The policy position is described in detail at **Section 3.0** of this report and in the Planning Statement prepared by Boyer Planning.
- 1.13 The Site formerly comprised one small part of the wider Reading Gasworks which extended to the west. The Site has ground contamination due to its historical use. There are, therefore, remediation costs which are necessary to deliver the land for redevelopment.
- 1.14 The design has been alive to the constraints of the Site and has sought to work with the existing conditions to offer a residential development of a high standard. The constraints include the proximity to the railway, which forms the northern boundary of the Site, the single access route from the west (Alexander Turner Close) and the size and shape of the plot. The river frontage is considered to present a design opportunity for connectivity with the existing river paths.

Pre-application consultation and public engagement

- 1.15 The proposals have been prepared in response to the Design South East Design Review Panel, and comments provided over the course of lengthy pre-application consultation with the Council which included a Planning Performance Agreement.

Summary of the proposals

- 1.16 The proposals comprise the redevelopment of a contaminated, brownfield site in a prominent location. A description of the proposals is provided in **Section 7.0** of this report and the Design and Access Statement. In summary, the proposals involve:
- The remediation of the Site including the removal of the redundant buildings and structures associated with the former gasworks: the water tower and c.33m tall gas holder.
 - The delivery of a high quality residential development providing 130 new units with associated parking.

- The development is contained within three distinct buildings: a smaller Block A fronting the river (five storeys), a taller Block B towards the north east corner of the Site, creating a 'marker' building (nine storeys) and Block C, a small-scale, three storey building designed as a continuation of and transition from the adjacent terrace.
- High quality landscaping which will significantly improve the public realm and ecological credentials of the site, and maximise the relationship to the river.

- 1.17 The proposed development represents a high quality scheme which achieves a strong sense of place and seeks to celebrate the Site's heritage.

Purpose of the Report

- 1.18 We have prepared this heritage, townscape and visual baseline to inform the emerging proposals and pre-application discussions. Details of the methodology we have used is presented in **Section 2.0**.
- 1.19 In terms of the heritage context, paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework requires applicants to prepare an assessment of the significance of heritage assets which will be affected by development proposals. The policy is clear that *"The level of detail should be proportionate to the asset's importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance"*.
- 1.20 The remaining gas holder within the Site is considered as a non-designated heritage asset and we have identified heritage assets in the wider area which may experience a change to their setting as a result of the development of the Site. The significance of these heritage assets is described at **Section 5.0**. The assessment at **Section 7.0** of this report describes the potential for impact on their significance as a result of the proposals.
- 1.21 The townscape assessment considers the existing urban context, including the buildings, the relationships between them, the different types of urban open spaces, including green spaces and the relationship between buildings and open spaces.

- 1.22 The visual assessment will consider the impact of the development on visual receptors. The assessment relates to how people will be affected by changes in views and visual amenity at different places, including publicly accessible locations. Visual receptors are always people (although usually visual receptors are defined according to use e.g. residential, business, road, footpath etc.) as opposed to landscape or other features.
- 1.23 The HTVIA is supported by 22 Accurate Visual Representations (AVRs) to illustrate how the proposals will relate to the heritage assets, local townscape and visual receptors identified. The AVRs have been prepared by GMJ whose methodology is included at **Appendix 1.0**.
- 1.24 The location of the viewpoints has been informed by architectural and historic accounts of the area, an appraisal of the existing Site and surroundings, and relevant policy designations. The viewpoint locations have been agreed with the Council during pre-application discussions.

Structure of this Report

- 1.25 The structure of the report is as follows:
- The methodology we have used to assess the effect of the proposals on heritage assets, local townscape and visual impacts is provided at **Section 2.0**.
 - **Section 3.0** sets out the relevant legislative and planning policy context for this assessment;
 - **Section 4.0** provides a description of the historical development of the Site and the surrounding area, which is used to inform the Statement of Significance for heritage assets at **Section 5.0**, and the analysis of townscape character areas at **Section 6.0**.
 - A summary of the proposals is provided at **Section 7.0**.
 - **Section 8.0** provides an assessment of the effect of the proposals on the significance of the heritage assets set out at **Section 5.0** in accordance with legislation and policy (**Section 3.0**).
 - **Section 9.0** describes the effect of the proposals on the townscape character areas identified at **Section 6.0**.
 - The analysis of visual impact is provided at **Section 10.0**, which provides existing and proposed images for the 22 viewpoint locations. A qualitative description accompanies each image.
 - The report is concluded at **Section 11.0**.

2.0

// GAS WORK SITE, READING



Methodology

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 This section provides an overview of the assessment framework. The method is the product of legislation, policy and best practice guidance.

Scope of Assessment

2.2 An initial study radius of 500m was used to identify heritage assets (*inter alia* listed buildings, conservation areas, Registered Parks and Gardens and locally listed buildings) and townscape character areas.

2.3 This study area was then refined to take into account Site observations, a manual desk-based review of OS maps and characterisation studies. The scope has also been informed by building locations and heights, topography and townscape features and an understanding of the scale of the proposals.

2.4 **Section 7.0** identifies the 22 viewpoints that have informed the ‘visual study area’. The study area may be defined as the anticipated extent of visibility (from a height of approximately 1.5m (eye level) above the ground).

2.5 It is acknowledged and accepted that judgments made by a surveyor are subjective, which provides limitations to the identification of a visual envelope. There will be areas within the study area where visibility is not possible e.g. due to interposing development. Conversely, the assessment considers further long distance views where identified and relevant.

2.6 A site survey of the baseline situation was undertaken by Montagu Evans in June 2018 to understand the immediate setting of the site and to identify the townscape character and appearance. A further site visit was undertaken in December 2018.

Assessment Process Framework

Heritage

2.7 The term ‘heritage asset’ is used within this assessment to describe both designated (e.g. listed buildings, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area) or non-designated (identified by the local authority e.g. building of townscape merit etc.) assets. For the purposes of this report, heritage assets do not include archaeological remains.

2.8 Paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the “Framework”) states:
“In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.”

2.9 ‘Significance’ (for heritage policy) is defined in Annex 2 of the Framework as:
“the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting.”

2.10 This is reaffirmed by Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (2015).

2.11 It is commonly agreed that Grade I and II* buildings are of ‘exceptional’ and ‘particularly important’ interest; therefore these are generally afforded a higher heritage value. This differentiation is best summarised by the drafting of paragraph 189 of the Framework, which states that the *“level of detail (to describe the significance of heritage assets) should be proportionate to the assets’ importance”*; thus, a grading is appropriate. We have given due and proportionate regard to all heritage assets assessed.

2.12 Where a proposal may have an effect on the surroundings in which the heritage asset is experienced, a qualitative assessment is made of whether, how and to what degree setting contributes to the significance of heritage assets. Setting is defined in the Fra as:

“the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.”

2.13 The assessment of setting is informed by the check-list of potential attributes outlined by the Historic England guidance document Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (2017) (hereafter ‘GPA3’).

2.14 GPA3 identifies five steps towards assessing the implications of development proposals which may affect the setting of heritage assets (it is consistent with other guidance):
a. Identify the assets affected;
b. Assessing the contribution setting makes to significance;
c. Assessing the effect of the proposed development;
d. Maximising enhancement and minimising harm; and
e. Making and documenting the decision and monitoring outcomes.

2.15 Part (e) is incumbent on the decision maker, through the provision of conditions.

Townscape and Visual

2.16 The framework for assessment of townscape and visual impact has been prepared using the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013) (‘GLVIA3’).

2.17 The two components of TVIA are:
■ Assessment of townscape effects: assessing effects on the townscape as a resource in its own right; and
■ Assessment of visual effects: assessing effects on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people.

Townscape

- 2.18 Townscape is defined in GLVIA3 as “the built-up area, including the buildings, the relationships between them, the different types of urban open spaces, including green spaces, and the relationship between buildings and open spaces”.
- 2.19 An initial assessment defined distinct and recognisable patterns of elements, or characteristics that make one area different from another, rather than better or worse. This process, defined as townscape character assessment, is the process of identifying and describing variation in the character of townscape.
- 2.20 Townscape character areas are identified and assessed according to their built form, materials, maintenance, and statutory and non-statutory designations.
- 2.21 The assessment was informed by both field survey and desk based research of secondary sources, with reference to existing character assessments where applicable.
- 2.22 The assessment allowed the description of character areas/types, their key characteristics and for them to be mapped with boundaries. The mapped boundaries suggest a sharp change from one townscape area. In reality, this often represents a zone of transition.
- 2.23 The objective of identifying the existing context is to provide an understanding of the townscape in the area that may be affected – its constituent elements, its character and the way this varies spatially, its geographic extent, its history, its condition, the way the townscape is experienced and the value attached to it.
- Visual**
- 2.24 Visual impact assessment relates to how people will be affected by changes in views and visual amenity at different places, including publicly accessible locations. Visual receptors are always people (although usually visual receptors are defined according to use e.g. residential, business, road, footpath etc.) rather than landscape features.
- 2.25 The aim of the visual baseline is to establish the area in which the development may be visible, the different groups of people who may experience views of the development, the places where they will be affected and the nature of the views and visual amenity at those points.
- 2.26 The baseline study identifies individuals and/or defined groups of people within the area who will be affected by changes in the views, ‘visual receptors’.
- 2.27 The following visual receptors are identified by GLVIA3 as being likely to be the most susceptible to change:
- Residents at home;
 - People, whether residents or visitors, who are engaged in outdoor recreation, including use of public rights of way, whose attention or interest is likely to be focused on the landscape and on particular views;
 - Visitors to heritage assets, or to other attractions, where views of the surroundings are an important contributor to the experience; and/or
 - Communities where views contribute to the landscape setting enjoyed by residents in the area.
- 2.28 It should be noted that the assessment does not comprise a ‘residential amenity assessment’, which considers private viewpoints from residential properties. This is separate from townscape and visual assessment (refer to GLVIA3, paragraph 6.17).
- 2.29 Assessment viewpoints were identified based on a comprehensive review of the surrounding area, including the following criteria:
- Heritage receptors;
 - Townscape character;
 - Where the development may be prominent;
 - Be visible from concentrations of residential areas;
 - Open spaces (parkland, publicly accessible space);
 - Potentially sensitive receptors (e.g. schools);
 - Accessibility to the public;
 - The viewing direction, distance and elevation; and/or
 - Townscape and transport nodes.
- 2.30 The Site falls within views which are identified in the Kenavon Drive Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) and the emerging local plan. The relevant policy designations are described at **Section 3.0** and these views have been represented in the locations for the proposed visual assessment.
- 2.31 Furthermore, we have had due regard to the Reading Tall Buildings Strategy (March 2018 Update) (“TBS”) and identified the relevant views which are identified in this document where the proposals may appear.
- 2.32 The visual assessment is supported by 22 Accurate Visual Representations (“AVRs”) which provide the basis for the assessment of the development and its effect on the identified views.
- 2.33 The objective of a photomontage is to simulate the likely visual changes that would result from a proposed development, and to produce printed images of a size and resolution sufficient to match the perspective in the same view in the field.
- 2.34 AVR is two-dimensional and cannot capture the complexity of the visual experience. It is an approximation of the three-dimensional visual experience the observer would receive on site. Neither do they capture transient significant effects arising from noise or traffic on perception, or that wider range of expectations and associations that anyone in an urban scene may have.
- 2.35 A visit to the location from which the photographs were taken was completed in December 2018 to appreciate and understand the visual impact in the round, and at a time of year when there is the least amount of leaf cover on trees.
- 2.36 The text that will accompany each view seeks to contextualise it. Inevitably one must accept that judgement is involved in this specialist area on the basis of the above and the importance of design quality in the operation of policy. In preparing any written assessment, allowances are made for these factors as well as the assessor’s knowledge of the scheme.

3.0

// GAS WORK SITE, READING



Legislation and Planning Policy

3.0 LEGISLATION AND PLANNING POLICY

3.1 This section sets out the planning policy context for the redevelopment of the Site, including national and local guidance.

Legislation

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act) 1990

3.2 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 ('the 1990 Act') sets out the legislative duties of the decision maker in this case. The relevant provisions for this application are as follows:

■ **Section 66(1)** In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

3.3 Section 66(1) is relevant because the development proposals have the potential to affect the setting of listed buildings.

3.4 The Site does contain any listed building and nor does it fall within a conservation area ("CA"). Sections 16(2) and 72(1) of the 1990 Act are not, therefore, relevant to the proposals. We are mindful, however, that the impact on the setting of a CA, as a designated heritage asset, is enshrined in policy (see paragraphs 189 and 192 of the Framework). This is taken into account and we consider the effect of the proposals on the significance of CAs in the local area.

Development Plan

3.5 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 stipulates that where in making any determination under the Planning Acts, regard is to be had to the development plan, and the determination must be made in accordance with that plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

3.6 **Table 3.1** below sets out the development plan which is relevant to this application and identifies the policies in relation to heritage, townscape and visual impact:

Development Plan Policy	Key Provisions
Core Strategy (2008, updated 2015)	Policy CS33 Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
Reading Central Area Action Plan to 2026 including Proposals Map and Appendices (2009) (RCAAP)	Policy RC3 Development in the East Side Major Opportunity Area Policy RC5 Design in the Centre
Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012, updated 2015)	"National planning policy provides an appropriate framework for considering proposals for development that affects historic assets in Reading and it is not considered necessary to have specific detailed policies within this document. Additionally, the historic environment is addressed strategically by policy CS33 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment) in the Core Strategy." (page 59, paragraph 9.1.9)
Kenavon Drive Urban Design Concept Statement (July 2004)	Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) – see discussion below

Table 3.1 Summary of the statutory development plan policies relevant to heritage, townscape and visual impact.

National Policy

3.7 The government's approach to planning matter is set out in the Framework which was published in February 2019. It supersedes the previous version of the FRAMEWORK (2012 and 2018) and various Planning Policy Guidance and Planning Policy Statements.

3.8 The Framework is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications, and we identify the relevant paragraphs in **Table 3.2**.

National Policy	Key Provisions
National Planning Policy Framework (the "Framework") (February 2019)	Paragraph 11 – sustainable development Paragraph 127 – good design Paragraph 130 – design and local distinctiveness Paragraph 189 – the significance of heritage assets Paragraph 193 and 194 – the impact of development on designated heritage assets Paragraph 197 – non-designated heritage assets Paragraph 200 – enhancements to the setting and significance of heritage assets

Table 3.1 National Planning Policy

Material Considerations

3.9 In addition to legislation and national policy, the assessment will take into consideration other relevant planning guidance and material considerations, including:

- Planning Practice Guidance (online);
- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition (GLVIA) (2013);
- Photography and photomontage in landscape and visual impact assessment: Landscape Institute Advice Note 01/11;
- Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision;
- Taking in the Historic Environment (Historic England, 2015);
- Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (Historic England, Second Edition 2017);
- Kenavon Drive Urban Design Concept Statement (Reading Borough Council, July 2004);
- Reading Tall Buildings Strategy (January 2008); and
- Reading Tall Buildings Strategy Update Note 2018 (March 2018).

Emerging Policy

Reading Borough Council New Local Plan

- 3.10 The Council are currently preparing a new Local Plan which will replace the current development plan (the Core Strategy, Reading Central Area Action Plan and Sites and Detailed Policies Document). It will set the Council's vision for the Borough to 2036.
- 3.11 The Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State on the 29th March 2018 for Examination under Regulation 22 of the Town and Country Planning Regulations (Local Planning) (England) (2012). The hearings commenced in September 2018 and the emerging Local Plan is therefore at an advanced stage and carries weight as a material planning consideration.
- 3.12 The relevant emerging policies to this assessment are as follows, and we present a short discussion of them.
- Policy CC7 Design and the Public Realm;
 - Policy EN1 Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment;
 - Policy EN4 Locally Important Heritage Assets;
 - Policy EN5 Protection of Significant Views with Heritage Interest;
 - Policy EN6 New Development in a Historic Context;
 - Policy CR2 Design in Central Reading;
 - Policy CR13 East Side Major Opportunity Area
- 3.13 The policies regarding heritage assets are broadly similar to the existing policy and consistent with the provisions of the Framework. Emerging Policy EN4 states the following:

“Development proposals that affect locally important heritage assets will demonstrate that development conserves architectural, archaeological or historical significance which may include the appearance, character and setting of the asset. Planning permission may be granted in cases where a proposal could result in harm to or loss of a locally important heritage asset only where it can be demonstrated that the benefits of the development significantly outweigh the asset's significance. Where it is accepted by the Local Planning Authority that retention is not important, recording of the heritage asset should be undertaken and submitted alongside development proposals.

Replacement buildings should draw upon heritage elements of the previous design, incorporating historical qualities that made the previous building significant. This may include appearance, scale and architectural quality.”

- 3.14 The Site falls within the view cone for View 5 which is identified in emerging Policy EN5. This view comprises the view over Alexandra Road Conservation Area towards the Chilterns escarpment (**Figure 3.1**).
- 3.15 In emerging Policy EN6 it is stated that proposals for new development should be informed and shaped by the existing historic environment.
- 3.16 The Site is identified as site CR13d in emerging Policy CR13. It is largely

unchanged from the existing policy designation, but the policy wording for CR13d is as follows:

“This area will be used for residential development. Development should enhance the character of the mouth of the Kennet and should maximise the potential of the site to be a river gateway to Reading. Public access along the river will be sought. Development should be set back at least ten metres from the top of the bank of the river and allow for a wildlife corridor along the river. Development should take account of potential contamination on the site.”

- 3.17 The overall vision for the Kenavon Drive area is presented in the plan reproduced from the emerging Local Plan at **Figure 3.2**.

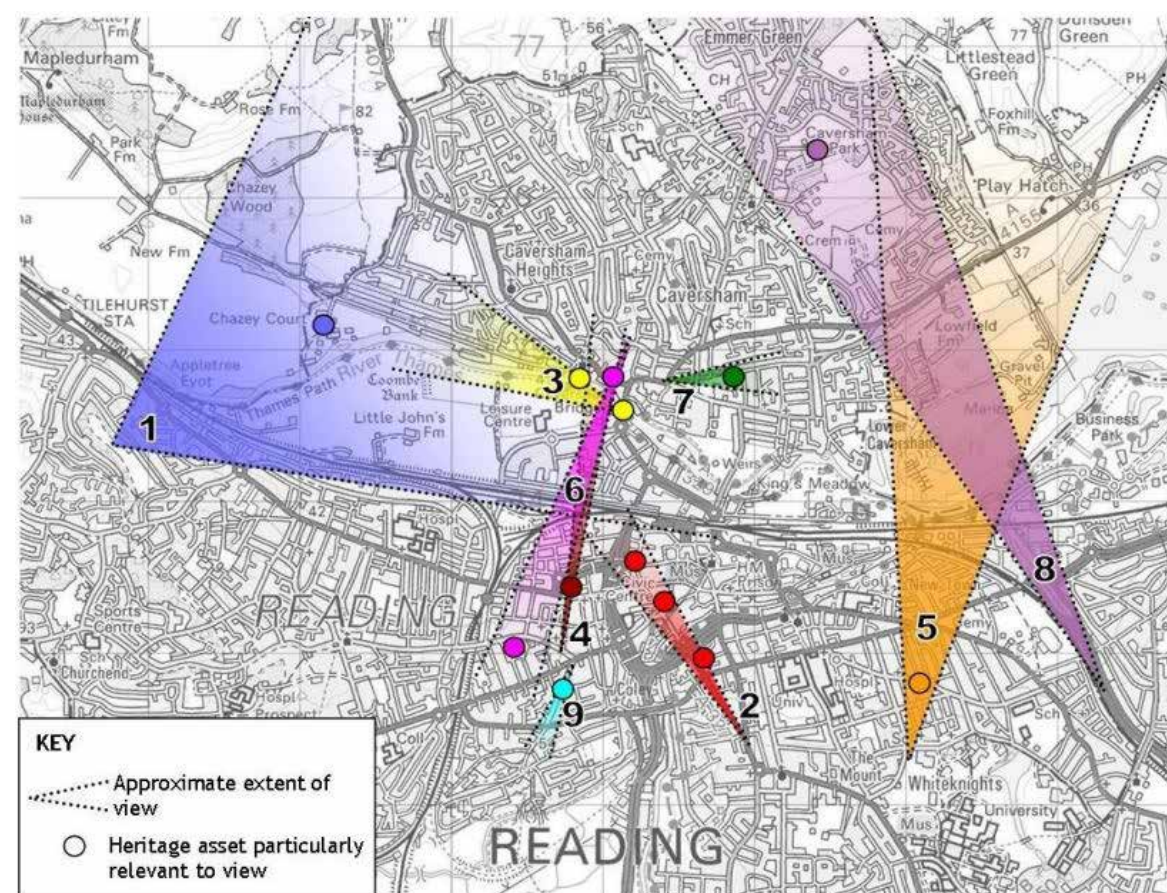


Figure 3.1 Map showing views identified in EN5. The Site falls within the view cone of View 5.

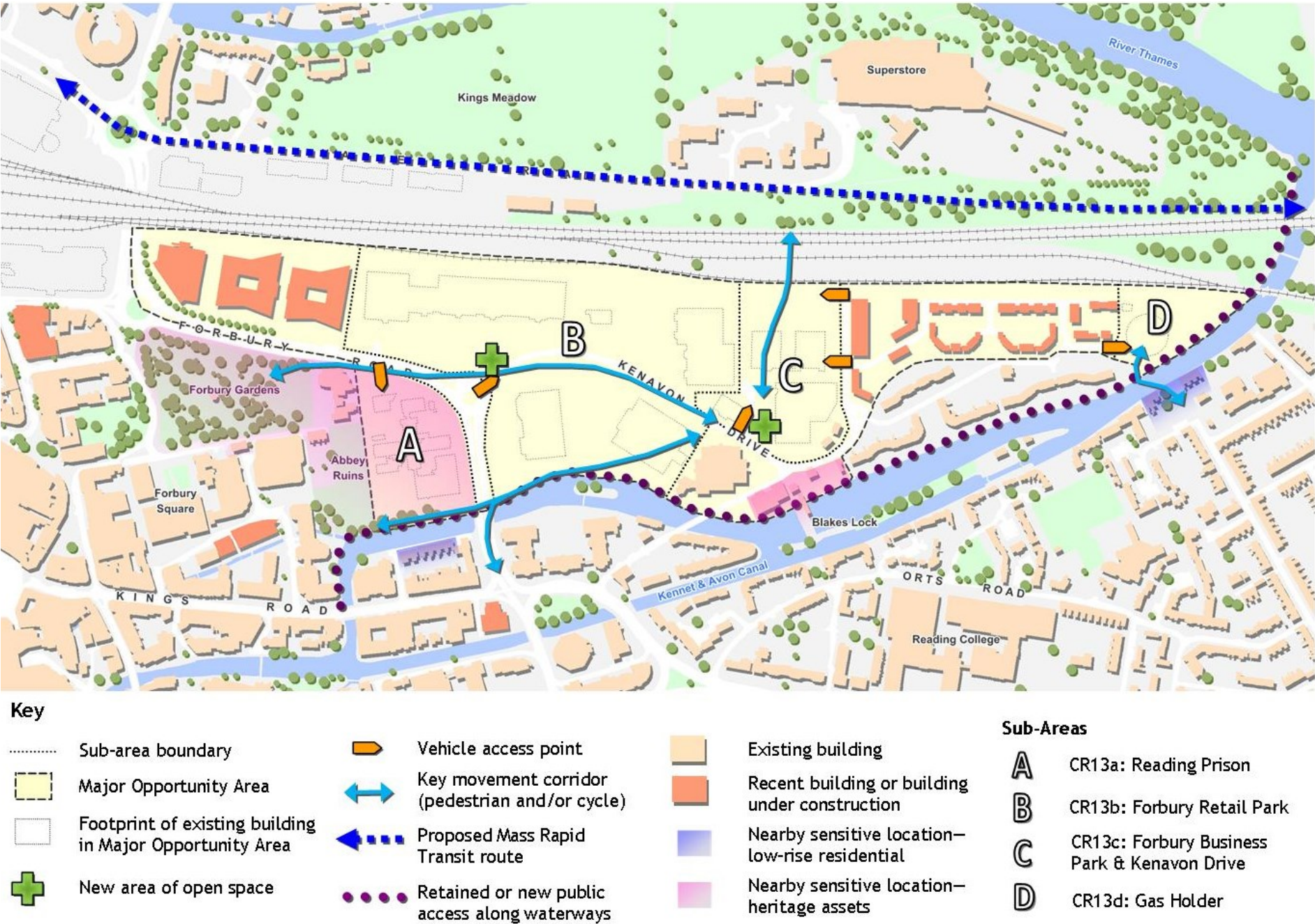


Figure 3.2 Vision for the Kennet Drive area as presented at page 144 of the emerging local plan.

Policy Discussion

- 3.18 The Site is subject to the following land-use designations and constraints which are relevant to this assessment of heritage, townscape and visual impacts:
- East Side Major Opportunity Area; and
 - Reading Central Area.
- 3.19 The Site is also located within an Area of Archaeological Potential. For the avoidance of doubt, archaeological matters are dealt with separately from this built (above ground) heritage assessment. The archaeological work is being undertaken by Wessex Archaeology.
- 3.20 The East Side Major Opportunity Area is defined in the Reading Proposal's Map and the Reading Central Area Proposal's Map. Policy RC3 of the RCAAP outlines the most appropriate land use for specific sites within this Opportunity Area. The Site is identified as Site RC3f, and the subsequent policy states that this area will be used for residential development. The principles of redevelopment for the Site are as follows:
- The Site's redevelopment should enhance the character of the mouth of the Kennet and maximise the potential of the site to be a river gateway to Reading.
 - The Site is part of a much wider area along the river which has been identified for residential redevelopment.
 - At present, this area is characterised by low-density buildings which are not considered to relate well to the streets and spaces. Therefore, redevelopment of this area should be of a more urban form, such as perimeter blocks.
- 3.21 This policy is broadly similar to the emerging policies presented for site CR13d in Policy CR13 of the new local plan.
- 3.22 The RCAAP also makes reference to the historically significant sites on the eastern fringes of the Reading Central area. Redevelopment proposals should take account of impacts on the setting of historic sites, and also seek opportunities to create new public routes and enhance the waterside environment for ecology purposes.

- 3.23 The historic environment is regarded at Policy CS33 of the Core Strategy. This wording of the policy is fairly broad, stating that historic features, areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings, should be protected and where appropriate enhanced. We have had regard to this policy, and in particular the impact on the Grade II listed school opposite the Site (New Town Primary School).
- 3.24 In the Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012; 2015) the Council refer to the Framework for assessment. We have regard to paragraphs 189, 193 and 194 which require the applicant to describe the significance of a designated heritage asset and any effects on that significance arising from development proposals.
- 3.25 The remaining gas holder on the Site is being treated as a non-designated heritage asset. It is for this reason that paragraph 197 of the Framework is also applicable, which states that:
"The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset."
- 3.26 We have had regard to emerging Policy EN1, EN4, EN5 and EN6 in our consideration of the gas holder and proposals.
- 3.27 In terms of the design of the new development, we have had regard to paragraph 130 of the Framework in this assessment, which states:
"Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, taking into account any local design standards or style guides in plans or supplementary planning documents. Conversely, where the design of a development accords with clear expectations in plan policies, design should not be used by the decision-maker as a valid reason to object to development."
- Vision for Kenavon Drive**
- 3.28 The policies of the East Side Major Opportunity Area are supplemented by the Kenavon Drive Urban Design Concept Statement (Reading Borough Council, July 2004). It is Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG).
- 3.29 When the SPG was drafted the gas holder on the Site was in operational use and the Site had not come forward as a development opportunity. It is for this reason the development of gasworks site does not appear to be anticipated or directly addressed in the document, with the exception of some references to a future situation where this would come forward.
- 3.30 Overall, the vision for Kenavon Drive is to create a new neighbourhood which offers a residential-led opportunity for a mixed use townscape which takes advantage of the river frontage and links to existing recreational and retail areas.
- 3.31 The SPG recognises that:
"The River Kennet/Avon Canal forms the southern boundary of the study area and offers a rare town centre opportunity for the enhancement of the Kennet water front." (page 7)
- 3.32 It goes on to state:
"The perception of the eastern part of the study area is that of a 'dead-end', accessed only by a single vehicular route." (ibid)
- 3.33 The Site presents an opportunity to address this character of the eastern part of the study area and the SPG suggests ways this might be achieved:
- It is identified that there is a poor sense of integration between the Kennet Walk residential development and the New Town area to the south.
 - Furthermore, within the Kennet Walk residential area there is a clear distinction between the social housing and the private housing. Social housing has been positioned at the end of the development adjacent to the Gas holder within poor quality open space.
 - New development must strike a balance between the achievement of design quality and sensitive integration within the context of the neighbouring townscape.
- 3.34 In terms of the Site itself, the plan at **Figure 3.3** shows that the gas holder is identified as a landmark structure in the SPG. This plan also identifies key views from the south bank of the Kennet and Avon Canal and from the north across the railway lines.
- 3.35 On the study area concept at **Figure 3.4**, which is reproduced from the SPG, the Site is identified as a 'Focal Point' at the south west corner.
- 3.36 The SPG goes into greater detail on visual issues at page 6. We have had regard to the locations of "visual exposure" which are relevant to the Site. These include:
- Long range views of the gas holder from Caversham to the north and the university area to the south;
 - Views from the river walk on the southern side of the Kennet;
 - Views from the raised pedestrian bridge over the River and into the Kenavon Drive area from the east; and
 - Views from the railway line to the north, particularly from stationary trains overlooking Kenavon Drive and giving glimpses of the River Kennet.
- 3.37 Notwithstanding this landmark status which, as we have already stated, was identified at a time the gas holder was in use, the SPG is alive to the potential for redevelopment of the Site, stating that:
"If the gas holder is redeveloped, there may be scope for a landmark building on this corner site overlooking the river. The gas holder, as an industrial structure of varying height should not be considered to set a precedent for the height of future structures in this area." (page 20)
- 3.38 The appropriate height for the new development is addressed in the Design and Access Statement prepared by Collado Collins.

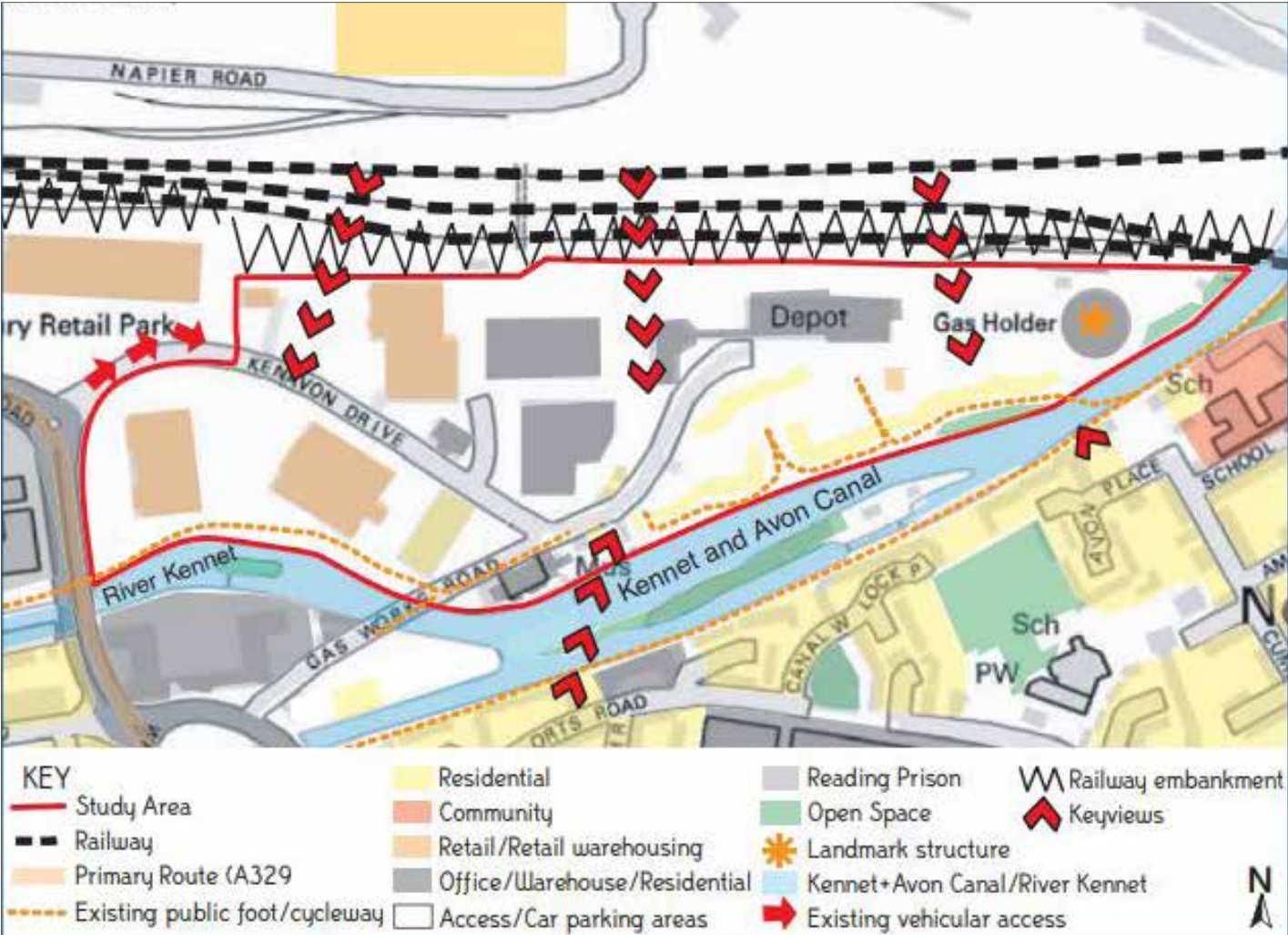


Figure 3.3 Plan of the Kenavon Drive context produced in the UDCS SPG (page 5). The indicative location of the Site is in blue.

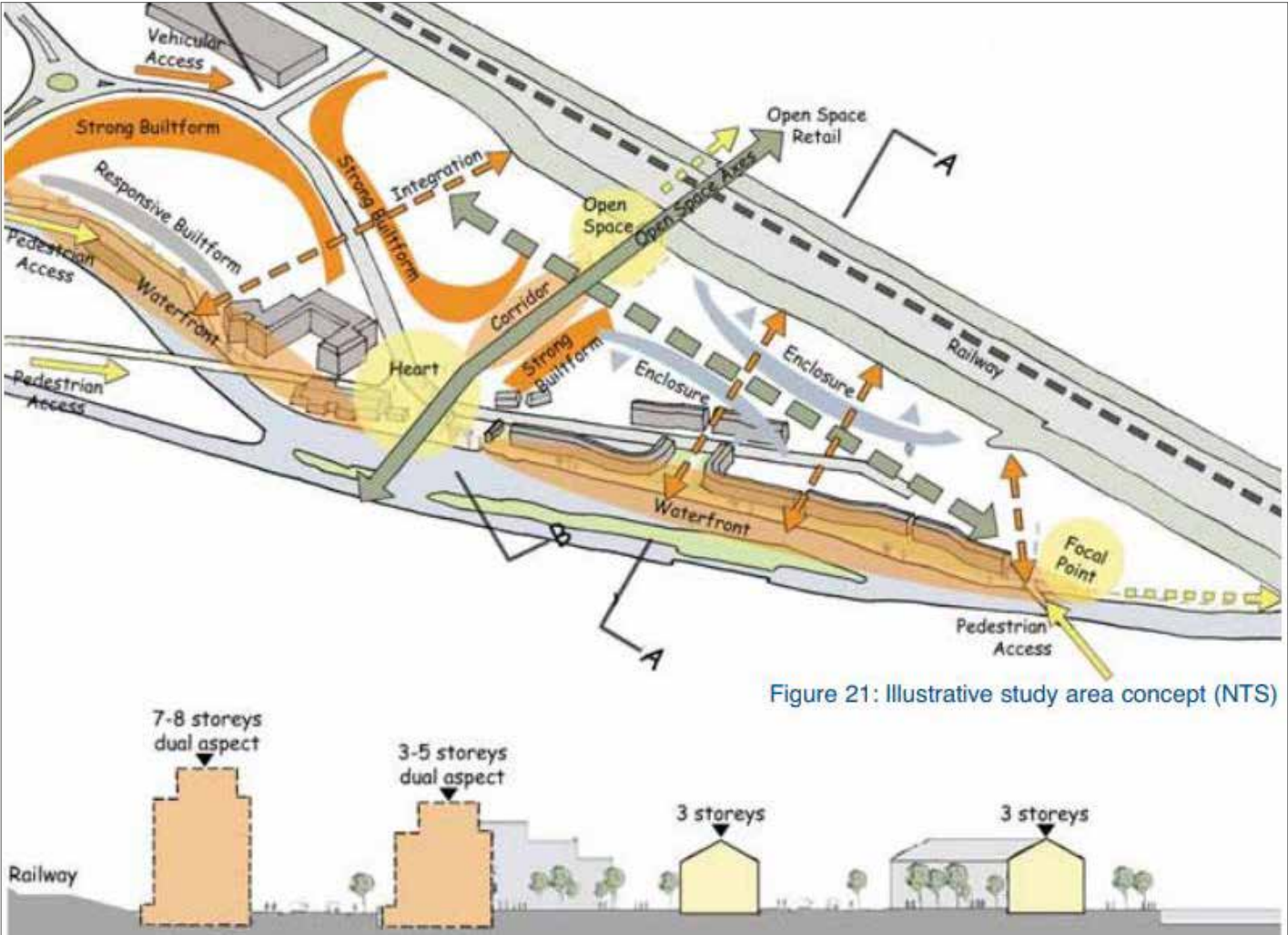


Figure 3.4 Illustrative study area concept for Kenavon Drive, page 21 of the SPG. The indicative location of the Site is in blue.

4.0

// GAS WORK SITE, READING



Historical Development

4.0 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 This section provides a description of the historical development of the Site and that of the surrounding area.
- 4.2 This section and **Section 5.0** have been informed by sources including historic maps, published secondary sources, CA appraisals, list entry descriptions and information from the National Gas Archive, Warrington.

Kenavon Drive and its environs

- 4.3 This description begins in the 18th century when the modern character of the area was established. By this time, Reading was flourishing as a prosperous market town which occupied a prominent riverside location along one of the main routes into London from the west.
- 4.4 The first major industrial activity began in the 18th century, comprising iron works and brewing. The economy in Reading was supported by the good connections provided by the turnpike roads and rivers. The river traffic gradually increased on both the Thames and the Kennet, and in 1723 the Kennet Navigation opened the River Kennet to boats as far as Newbury.
- 4.5 The Site has a river frontage to the south and the development of the waterways is important to the evolution of the Site and surrounding area.

Kennet and Avon Canal

- 4.6 In the late 18th century a new canal between Newbury and Bath was designed to meet increasing demand. The construction of the Kennet and Avon Canal began in 1794 when it received Royal Assent. The canal eventually opened in 1810.
- 4.7 From Newbury to the west, the canal enters into the earlier Navigation at the confluence with the River Thames to the north west of the Site.
- 4.8 The section through Reading consists of 11 miles of artificial lock cuts and a series of locks, the final one being Blake's Lock to the south west of the Site. Blake's Lock comprises a group of Grade II listed buildings (see **Section 5.0**).

- 4.9 A map of Reading in 1830 is reproduced at **Figure 4.1**. At this time the Site was open land at the mouth of the River Kennet labelled 'King's Mead'. The island at Blake's Lock is legible, and the land to the south (now New Town) is agricultural land associated with 'Broken Brow' and 'New Farm'.



Figure 4.1 Map of Reading in 1830. The indicative location of the Site is shown in red.

Great Western Railway and Victorian growth

- 4.10 The Great Western Railway (GWR) arrived in Reading in 1841. The railway line traversed the agricultural land to the north of Reading's historic town centre and creating a physical barrier between Reading, Caversham and the River Thames to the north. The railway forms the northern boundary of the Site.
- 4.11 The GWR was followed by the South Eastern Railway in 1849 and London and South Western Railway in 1856.
- 4.12 The arrival of the railways and expansion of industry meant that the population of Reading more than trebled between 1850 and 1900 (from 21,450 to 72,200).
- 4.13 The town was known for the production of 'Three Bs' – beer, bulbs and biscuits. The expression was primarily derived from Simonds' Brewery (1785-2010), Suttons Seeds (1837-1974) and the Huntley and Palmers biscuit factory (1822-1976).
- 4.14 The rapid population growth lead to the development of new housing at an equally rapid pace. The 1883 Ordnance Survey (OS) Map at **Figure 4.2** shows the expansion of the market town into a major urban centre. At this time, the railway line remains the northern boundary of the town.
- 4.15 In 1883 the Site remained within an area of open land at King's Mead which is identified as 'liable to floods'.
- 4.16 To the south, the residential development of New Town is well-established, comprising rows of terraces as well as some larger, higher-status properties along King's Road. It also includes a school near the water's edge. This is the Grade II listed Newton School which is described at **Section 5.0**.

- 4.17 The Sewage Pumping Station has been established at Blake's Lock and the Hunter and Palmers Biscuit Factory is also shown. The first gasworks appears next to the Biscuit Factory, comprising a single holder.
- 4.18 This part of Reading was gradually industrialised into the 19th century. King's Mead was absorbed by development which is shown on the 1900 OS Map at **Figure 4.3**. The Biscuit Factory was expanded and a new gasworks had been developed to the east of the original site.
- 4.19 The gas company had purchased 13 acres of land on the north side of the river from Huntley and Palmers in 1880. Railway sidings run through the land to support the various industries, including the gasworks.
- 4.20 The railway eventually replaced the canal as the main source of coal delivery, as well as other goods and products into Reading.



Figure 4.2 1883 OS Map. The indicative location of the Site is identified in red.



Figure 4.3 1900 OS Map. The indicative location of the Site is identified in red.

20th century to present

- 4.21 Reading continued to expand into the 20th century, annexing Caversham to the north in 1911 and absorbing other radial settlements.
- 4.22 The 1934 OS Map shows how the River Kennet remained the boundary between residential New Town to the south and the industrial land between the river and the railway line (**Figure 4.4**). The gasworks had expanded to comprise three gas holders and there was an extension to the east.
- 4.23 The overall character of the area surrounding the Site was relatively static until the mid-late 20th century, when the Biscuit Factory was closed and the land was redeveloped with a retail park.
- 4.24 Along the river there was some residential development in the 1980s/90s, and since 2004 the land between the River Kennet and the railway line has been identified for regeneration. Its designation as an Opportunity Area has led to new residential developments, including the Bellway scheme at 42 Kenavon Drive.

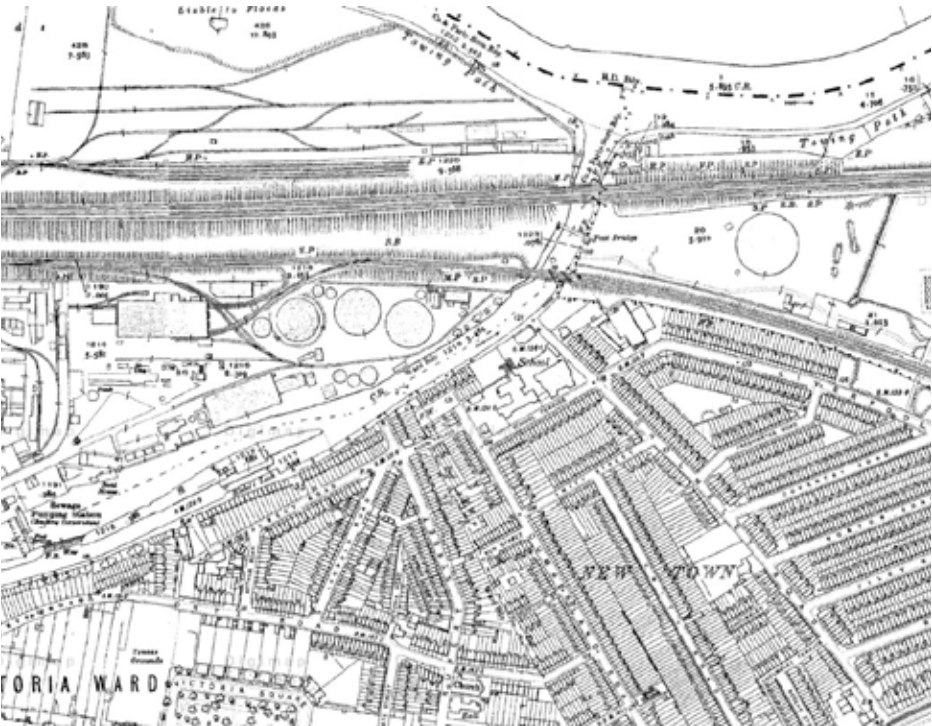


Figure 4.4 1934 OS Map. The indicative location of the Site is identified in red.

Historical Development of the Site

- 4.25 The gasworks was established on the Site in 1880. It was located on a section of land enclosed by the railway in 1841 which separated it from the flood plains to the north. It was bound to the south by the River Kennet. The location close to transport connections and the centre of Reading made the land an ideal location for industry.
- 4.26 In the 1870s the gasworks was on a restricted site to the west of Kenavon Drive near to the Biscuit Factory and the Sewage Pumping Station. At this time, the Site remained open land.
- 4.27 By the 1890s there had been a large expansion of the gasworks into the King's Mead area to the north, immediately adjacent to the railway line. The new site contained one large gas holder, some smaller tanks and a number of larger retort houses. The site continued to expand and, by 1910, there were two large gas holders, tanks and sidings connecting directly to the railway to the north.
- 4.28 A further gas holder was constructed in 1916. It is this final gas holder which survives on the Site. It is known as Gas holder No. 4.
- 4.29 The group of three gas holders on the Site is shown on the aerial photograph at **Figure 4.5** which dates to 1920. The 1916 gas holder is the furthest right of the trio, identified in red.
- 4.30 The 1930s OS Map shows that another gas holder had been constructed by this time, separated from the main site by the canal and the railway (see **Figure 4.4** above). This additional gas holder is shown on the aerial photograph at **Figure 4.6** in 1932.
- 4.31 In the mid-20th century the production of gas shifted towards intake from the North Sea and gas holders became increasingly obsolete. The investment and upgrading of infrastructure means that gas is now stored more efficiently in underground pipework. The majority of the holders at the Reading gasworks were dismantled and Gas holder No. 4 was decommissioned in March 2008.



Figure 4.5 Aerial photograph of Reading gasworks from the east, 1920. The remaining gas holder on the Site is identified in red.



Figure 4.6 Aerial photograph of the Reading gasworks from the west, 1932. The remaining gas holder on the Site is identified in red.

History of gas holders in Britain

- 4.32 Gas lighting had originally been introduced on a commercial basis in the early part of the 19th century and gas holders were built in great numbers from the 1820s onwards. Demand was mostly concentrated on winter evenings, when gas was needed to provide light and for use in the home. During the day, gas, which was manufactured from coal, was built up and stored for use over the peak dispersal period overnight. This process manifest in the rise and fall of gas holder tanks, as the gas was used by customers.
- 4.33 Gas holders were originally invented by Antoine Lavoisier (1743-1794) who built the first structure of its kind in 1782. It comprised of an inverted metal vessel (the bell) which rose and fell in a tank of water. It could hold a volume of c.3 cubic meters.
- 4.34 By the early 19th century the first commercial gas holders had been developed, comprising water-sealed tanks and a movable bell in which the gas was stored. At this stage, cylinder bells were attached to guide frames which moved up and down.
- 4.35 The guide frames were originally cast iron and wrought iron used from 1876. The design of the guide frame was dependent on the degree of the lateral forces, which was affected by the dimensions of the gas holder and the number of lifts. Diagonal bracing provided additional strength. The design of gas holders therefore varied across the country, and often had decorative features such as emblems at joins in the braces.
- 4.36 Towards the end of the 19th century, the principles for the design of gas holders had become increasingly standardised. Whilst there were some innovations in the technology, for the most part only incremental changes were made to suit specific site requirements.

Gas holder No. 4 in Context

- 4.37 The gas holder on the Site was constructed towards the end of the period where great strides in technical innovation were being made in many industries, particularly those where Britain was the global leader. This was no different in the development of gas holders which were built in great numbers from the 1820s onwards.
- 4.38 The development of gas storage in England has been extensively researched by Historic England as part of the Monument Protection Plan's (MPP) survey and comprehensive review of the gas industry

completed between 1997 and 2002. The reports which were produced as part of the MPP survey (known as Steps 1-3) set out the characteristics and development of the gas industry and identified several sites and buildings which merited assessment for statutory designation as significant examples of the industry's principal periods of development.

- 4.39 The design of Gas holder No. 4 comprises a narrow lattice box-section standard. It is identified as a 'Type 37' in the categories identified as part of the MPP study.
- 4.40 The description of Type 37 on page 55 of part A of the London Gas holder Survey (English Heritage, December 2000) is reproduced below:
"At Poplar No 2 in 1881-2, Harry Jones adopted rolled I-sections for the front and back chords of the standards, which were joined by lattice webs on both side faces to make a narrow box-section (J Gas L, 1882, vol 40, pp 1079-80). Later designers used rolled channel sections for the chords giving a neater appearance. The early ones were strongly tapered, to a point at the top (Type 36), but later the taper was reduced (Type 37). In the twentieth century, this type was very widely used, as in Poplar No 3 of 1928 and the giant 12.5-million-cubic foot holder of 1913-17 at Sydney. Also in the 20th century, single rolled-steel angles, more able to work as struts, replaced the traditional crosses of flat bars in the webs."
- 4.41 The survey identified approximately 150 sites of historic or architectural interest related to the gas industry.
- 4.42 Gas holder No. 4 at Reading was not identified as being of national significance as part of that national review.

5.0

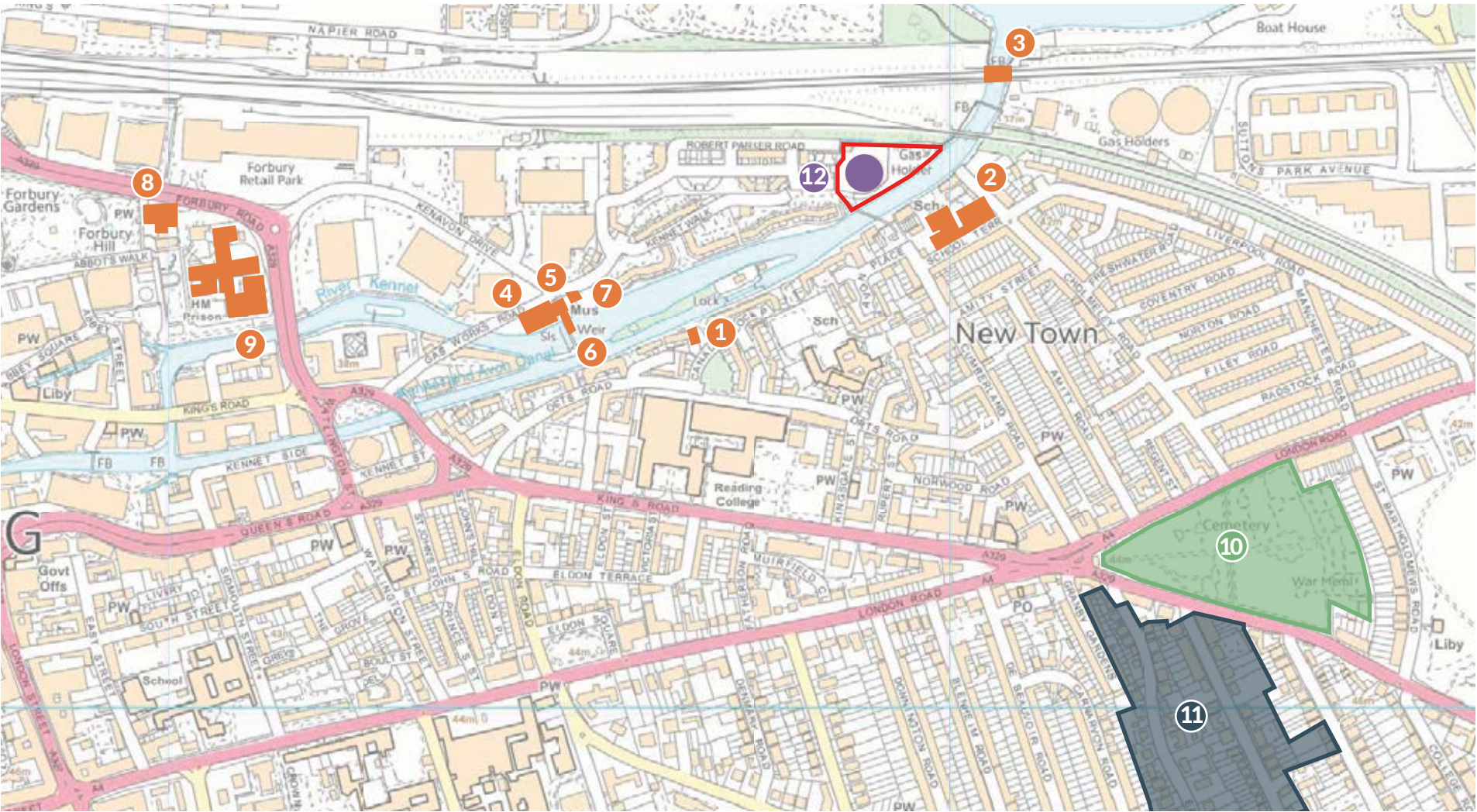
// GAS WORK SITE, READING



Assessment of Heritage Assets' Significance

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE ASSETS' SIGNIFICANCE

- 5.1 In accordance with paragraph 189 of the Framework, this section provides a description of the significance of heritage assets which could be affected by the proposals.
- 5.2 The identification of the heritage assets involved professional judgement to determine those heritage assets that were likely to be affected by the proposals, both within the Site and the surrounding area, where the Site could be reasonably judged to form part of the asset's setting.
- 5.3 The location of the heritage assets is shown on the plan at **Figure 5.1**.
- 5.4 The list entry descriptions for the listed buildings are reproduced at **Appendix 2.0**.



HERITAGE ASSETS			
Application Site	Grade II Listed Buildings	7 48-49 Kenavon Drive	Conservation Area
	1 Fisherman's Cottage Inn	8 Church of St James	11 South Park Conservation Area
	2 Newton School	9 Reading Gaol	Non-Designated Heritage Asset
	3 Railway Bridge and attached Accommodation Bridge	Registered Park and Gardens	12 Former gasholder at Kenavon Drive
	4 The Pump and Turbine House	10 Reading Cemetery (Grade II)	
	5 The Screens House		
	6 The Engine House		



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Location:
Kenavon Drive, Reading

Date:
April 2019

Scale:
1:7500 @ A3

Figure 5.1 Map showing the location of heritage assets identified for assessment.

▲ North

The Gas holder on the Site

- 5.5 The redundant gas holder on the Site is considered as a non-designated heritage asset as a result of its age. A photograph of the gas holder is provided at **Figure 5.1**.
- 5.6 The gas holder is not a listed building and neither is it included on Reading Borough Council's List of Locally Important Buildings and Structures.
- 5.7 No part of the Site, including the gas holder, falls within a CA.
- 5.8 The significance of the gas holder as a non-designated heritage asset is described below.
- 5.9 The gas holder has local heritage interest as the remaining identifiable feature of the gasworks which once occupied the land on the northern side of the river. It has some historical interest from its age and representing the period of industrial development in this part Reading. The industrial context has been entirely lost, however, through the demolition of the wider gasworks site. Gas holder No. 4 is now isolated in the new residential setting which makes no contribution to its significance, and it is poorly maintained as part of the SGN Depot which now operates on the Site.
- 5.10 The gas holder on the Site is a late example of its type. By the time it was constructed, the principles for the design of gas holders were increasingly standardised. While leaps in technical innovation did occur, small incremental changes were far more regular.
- 5.11 Gas holder No. 4 was constructed in 1916 by C. & W. Walker Limited. It replaced an earlier gas holder which was constructed on the site the late 19th century. It is the last of the four gas holders which were built on the wider gasworks site, which extended to the west as far as Kenavon Drive (now Decathlon).
- 5.12 It is a frame guided gas holder with 18 lattice columns and four lifts. It had a nominal capacity of 2 million cubic feet. It was decommissioned and put out of service in March 2008 and is now redundant.

- 5.13 The example at Reading is a Type 37 which became very popular in the 20th century. The earliest examples of this type was in Manchester at Miles Platting in 1892. Miles Platting is still standing but there is a permission for its demolition. It is older and considerably larger than Reading.
- 5.14 Some Type 37s had rolled sections to the front to give the gas holder a neater appearance, but this was not included at Reading which is principally utilitarian and functional.
- 5.15 Gas holder No. 4 therefore has limited engineering or architectural interest. It is not technologically innovative and does not exhibit the kind of decorative detail that is otherwise associated with the majority of listed examples, such as Classical detailing seen at those at Bromley by Bow and King's Cross, both in London.
- 5.16 We have already described how the development of the gas supply industry in England has been extensively researched by Historic England as part of the MPP (see **Section 4.0**).
- 5.17 The survey identified approximately 150 sites of historical or architectural interest related to the gas industry. Gas holder No. 4 at Reading was not identified as being of national significance as part of that review.



Figure 5.2 GH4 at the east end of Alexander Turner Close, 2018.

Heritage assets in the surrounding area

Newton School (Grade II)

- 5.18 The Newton School is a Grade II listed building which is located approximately 120m south east of the Site on the opposite bank of the River Kennet. The listed building was designated in December 1978.
- 5.19 The school is known as New Town School although it is listed as 'Newton' School. We will use the list entry name for the purposes of this assessment.
- 5.20 The school occupies an urban block created by the river to the north-west, Cholmeley Road to the north-east, and School Terrace and the area of residential development to the south. The school buildings are separated from the riverfront by playgrounds and ancillary spaces.
- 5.21 The Newton School comprises a group of late-19th century school buildings which were designed by architect J. Morris (1872-1908). The building first appears on the 1879 OS Map and is believed to date from c.1874. The school is contemporary with the row of terraced properties on the south side of School Terrace, also designed by Morris (not listed).
- 5.22 The school was developed as part of the wave of educational reform that was initiated by the Elementary Education Act in 1870. Board schools were developed by local authorities to provide basic education for children in growing populations that were drawn to urban centres by industry and opportunity. Typically, the buildings were located in a residential area that was being laid out and developed concurrently. In this case, the building remains in its original use.

- 5.23 The school comprises two buildings which are connected by a covered walkway (**Figures 5.1 and 5.2**). The southern building was the first to be built in a T-plan and the northern building constructed later. The second building first appears on the 1899 OS Map.
- 5.24 The principal elevations face School Terrace to the south east and the buildings extend back into the plot with a series of parallel ranges. The architecture has a restrained Gothic style. It is primarily red brick with lighter brick bands and yellow brick patterning in arched tympana over the windows, which are varied in style. The southern building has red brick stacks and a number of straight headed lancets. The other has a large three bay gable over a pointed entrance of several moulded orders. The outer bays in both blocks break forward slightly. The interiors have not been inspected as part of this assessment.
- 5.25 Within the school's grounds are two ancillary buildings which appear on historic maps by 1912. They are not described in the list entry description but are considered curtilage listed by virtue of their proximity, age and associated use with the listed building.
- 5.26 The significance of the Newton School is derived from its historical and architectural interest as one of the better examples of a Victorian Board school building in Reading. The building is representative of the urban growth of the city and social measures that were put in place to cope with demand. The attractive quality of the Gothic style and decorative details are of architectural interest. The listed building remains in its original use which also makes a positive contribution to its significance.



Figure 5.3 The south elevation of the first school building at Newton School (Grade II).



Figure 5.4 The south elevation of the first school building at Newton School (Grade II)

Contribution of setting to significance

- 5.27 The listed building is experienced in the context of the residential area to the south and the mixed character of development along the river to the north. There has been some later redevelopment of the original townscape, primarily to the west of the school. The contemporary development to the south and east makes a positive contribution to the appreciation of the building as a Victorian Board school.
- 5.28 The properties which comprise School Terrace make a positive contribution to the significance of the school. They share the same architect and architectural language. The character of School Terrace complements the listed building in the main views of the principal elevations from the south.
- 5.29 The listed buildings are set back from the river, and OS Maps suggest that land was kept clear between the school and the river to provide land for a terrace of properties, the first of which had been completed by 1899. Development did not continue, however, and the land was absorbed as part of the school's grounds by the early 20th century.
- 5.30 The historic development plots suggest that a link between the school and river was not intentional. The character of this area is changing from industrial to residential, and it now provides a pleasant setting for the school. There is an established belt of trees and vegetation to the north which prevents visibility into the areas of later development to the north, and creates a sense of suburban tranquillity linked to the character of the lakes to the north east.
- 5.31 The Site forms part of the former industrial setting on the north side of the river. The only part of the Site that is visible in association with the listed building is the upper part of the gas holder frame, which appears in views of the school from the south (see **Figures 5.3-5.5**). The present gas holder was erected after the school (in 1916) and these views are incidental.

- 5.32 We are mindful that the gasworks may have been the place of employment for those individuals living in the residential area surrounding the School. In turn, some of the children of those workers may have attended the school thus creating a historical connection. In drawing the relative value of such an association one must be mindful that this is a purely speculative assertion that is not supported by an evidence that we have obtained over the course of our research. Consequently, an association should be afforded very limited weight.
- 5.33 Overall, we consider that the gas holder does not contribute to the appreciation of the significance of the listed building, and in fact represents the type of industrial activity that the school was originally separated from.



Figure 5.5 The northern boundary of the Grade II listed school plot including river and river pathways. The school is located to the left in this view.



Figure 5.6 The view of Newton School (Grade II) from the south east. The gas holder is glimpsed in this location and is clearly identifiable as an industrial feature that contrasts with and is later than the school.

Railway Bridge & Attached Accommodation Bridge over River Kennet at SU 7306 7381 (Grade II)

- 5.34 The railway bridge and attached accommodation bridge to the north-east of the Site was designated as Grade II listed building in December 1988 (**Figure 5.5**). It is located near to the point where the River Kennet meets the River Thames. There is another, smaller railway bridge to the south which is not designated.
- 5.35 The railway bridge was constructed in 1839-40 by Isambard Kingdom Brunel (1806-1859) as part of the Twyford to Reading branch of the GWR. The branch line opened in April 1840. The bridge was widened in 1890 and the accommodation bridge was added in 1891 to allow horse-drawn boats to pass along the River Thames. There is a plaque on the bridge which provides information about the structure.
- 5.36 The original bridge was built in red brick, with a central elliptical arch flanked by pilasters. There are two round flood arches to each side and broad battered buttresses beyond. The widening works are identifiable from the use of engineering bricks with ashlar dressings. The accommodation bridge is comprised of steel and timber. The railway bridge remains in operation with trains passing across it frequently, the carriages visible above the brick parapet.
- 5.37 The significance of the railway bridge is primarily derived from its historical association with Brunel and the GWR. It has some engineering interest for its design and survival of the original architecture and materials. It has group value with the other historic bridges which survive along the railway. The accommodation is an interesting structure in its own right, representing the industrial history of this part of Reading.

Contribution of setting to significance

- 5.38 The setting of the railway bridge is defined by the railway lines which travel east-west between Reading and London and the waterways. The original industrial activity along the waterways has been lost over time and they are now characterised as areas of public amenity and leisure. This setting makes a positive contribution to the significance of the railway bridge because it remains in its original use and the public river paths provide an opportunity to appreciate the appearance and engineering of the structure. The vegetation along the river corridor provides a pleasant and attractive environment.



Figure 5.7 View of the Grade II listed railway bridge to the east of the Site.

- 5.39 The wider setting of the railway bridge includes Caversham Lakes to the north and residential Reading to the south and west. The wider setting makes little to no contribution to the significance of the railway bridge, which is primarily the intrinsic interest of its structure and ongoing use.
- 5.40 The Site falls within the wider setting of the listed bridge in an area of former industrial land which has been gradually redeveloped for housing. There is limited intervisibility between the bridge and the Site because of the route of the river and the interposing landscape character which is densely wooded.
- 5.41 In the view of the listed bridge from the south, the frame of the gas holder is seen to the left of the bridge and it is separated by an open, heavily vegetated area. The gas holder does not contribute to an appreciation of the significance of the bridge.
- 5.42 The distance between the gas holder and the bridge means that it does not appear above the parapet of the listed structure in views from the north. The bridge only begins to appear once you pass beneath the bridge travelling west. The gas holder was built after the bridge and this was not an intentional or designed view.

Blake's Lock

- 5.43 Blake's Lock is located approximately 450m south west of the Site along the River Kennet. There are four listed buildings at Blake's Lock which comprise the 19th century infrastructure associated with the former Sewerage Pumping Station on the north side of the lock. The historic buildings have been converted into a museum and restaurant and now represent a destination along the river in which the public can enjoy the riverside area.
- 5.44 The following listed buildings form part of the group at Blake's Lock.
- The Pump and Turbine House, Grade II (map ref. 4) (**Figure 5.6**);
 - The Screens House, Grade II (map ref. 5) (**Figure 5.7**);
 - The Engine House, Grade II (map ref. 6) (**Figure 5.8**); and
 - 48-49 Kenavon Drive, Grade II (map ref. 7) (**Figure 5.9**).
- 5.45 There has been a lock at this point along the River Kennet since at least the 13th century. The early flash lock was replaced in 1802 with a timber-constructed pound lock to improve navigation along the waterway. By this time, Rennie's Kennet and Avon Canal was also in operation.
- 5.46 The 19th century lock has been modernised and repaired and none of its fabric is listed.
- 5.47 In c.1870 a Sewerage Pumping Station was developed on the north side of the lock. The engine house, pump and turbine house and screens house are Grade II listed. The buildings have a free Gothic architectural style and they are legible as a historic group. They are single storey buildings (the Pump House slightly taller) in red brick with grey brick decoration and dressings. The windows have cast iron frames and the roofs comprise red tiles.
- 5.48 There is a narrow access yard from the south west which has the original paving. It creates a small courtyard around which the buildings are arranged and appreciated together.

- 5.49 Nos. 48 and 49 Kenavon Drive are a pair of houses which are also Grade II listed. They date to 1873 and the detailing is similar to the Victorian buildings which comprise the Sewage Pumping Station. The similarities in date and style suggests that they may have been built as accommodation for workers at the sewerage plant. The list entry description states that they are “*listed for their stylistic and functional association with the sewage Pumping Station buildings*”.
- 5.50 The significance of the listed buildings at Blake’s Lock is derived from their historical and architectural interest as a Victorian sewage works. The group of buildings is evidence of the way waste was handled, and their survival as a group is also important to their special interest because it helps to understand the processes involved in the works. The architectural detailing of the buildings is also of interest.

Contribution of setting to significance

- 5.51 The setting of the listed buildings at Blake’s Lock comprises the River Kennet which makes an important contribution to the special interest of the listed buildings. The river was part of the industrial process at the sewage works.
- 5.52 The wider setting includes later development which has changed the historic character of the area, first from open land (King’s Mead) to industrial uses (Huntley and Palmers factory), and now there is a mix of large retail units and modern residential blocks of flats. To the east along the River Kennet, the listed buildings are experienced in the context of the later residential development along the riverbank which visible in views out and across from the group of listed buildings. The later elements of the setting do not contribute to the special interest of the listed buildings.
- 5.53 The Site forms part of the wider setting that has been subject of later development. There is only intervisibility between the Site and the group of listed buildings in the views down the river from the windows on the east side of The Pump and Turbine House (Figure 5.10). The Site cannot be perceived from within the courtyard that the building area arranged around.



Figure 5.8 The north end of the Pump House and Turbine House (Grade II).



Figure 5.10 The south and east elevation of the Engine House (Grade II).



Figure 5.9 The south elevation of the Screens House (Grade II).



Figure 5.11 Nos. 48-49 Kenavon Drive from the north (Grade II).

- 5.54 The verdant southern boundary forms part of the vegetation on the north (left) side of the river in views from the windows. The view includes later development. The upper parts of the gas holder on the Site is visible in this view. The gas holder was built after The Pump and Turbine House and there is no historical relationship between it and the listed buildings.
- 5.55 The gas holder is periphery to the viewer's experience in views to the west, which focuses on the foreground. The gas holder appears as an industrial building that has no functional relationship with this group of listed buildings.



Figure 5.12 The view east along the river from the Pump House and Engine House.

Church of St James's

- 5.56 The Church of St James's comprises three Grade II listed buildings: Church of St James's, St James's Presbytery and St James's Roman Catholic School. The Church is the primary building in the complex, which is located approximately 935m west of the Site (Figure 5.11).
- 5.57 The orientation of Forbury Road to the north of the Church and the low scale of interposing development means that it is possible to see the gas holder on the Site together with the Church in views from the west (Figure 5.12). It is for this reason that the listed buildings are assessed.
- 5.58 The Church and Presbytery were built in 1837-40 to the design of A. W. N. Pugin (1812-1852). It was Pugin's first church design. In the Church, the south aisle and asp ambulatory were added by W. C. Mangan in 1925, and the north aisle was added by Bingham Towner in 1962.
- 5.59 The buildings have a Norman style that was untypical of Pugin's usual work. He was probably influenced by the proximity of the ruins of Reading Abbey. The neighbouring school was built in 1876 in a plain Gothic style and is listed for its group value.
- 5.60 The significance of the listed buildings lies in their group value as a collection of ecclesiastical buildings with associated educational use. The association with Pugin is important to the buildings' historical interest. The architectural interest of the buildings lies in the unusual character and quality of the Norman revival.

Contribution of setting to significance

- 5.61 The setting of St James's includes the ruins of Reading Abbey which are contained within Forbury Gardens. This setting makes a positive contribution to the significance of the listed buildings because it provides a historic context in which the buildings are appreciated. Furthermore, the architectural style of the Church was inspired by the Abbey.

- 5.62 The Church addresses the Abbey gardens to the west. Reading Gaol (Grade II) is located to the south east of the listed buildings. It is a contemporary building but does not contribute to the significance of the Church complex.



Figure 5.13 The Church of St James (Grade II).



Figure 5.14 The view looking towards the Site from Forbury Road with the Church of St James to the right.

5.63 The setting also includes features which detract from the special interest of the listed buildings, for example Forbury Road to the north, a major four-lane carriageway, and the later office and retail development in the area. The road exposes the Church and its courtyard to the later development and environmental influences (noise, pollution etc.). That said, Forbury Road and the roundabout do provide an opportunity to appreciate the Norman character of the building, particularly the north elevation and curved east end of the building. This is incidental, however.

5.64 The Site is part of the wider, altered setting of the listed building. The interposing development includes a retail park and housing. The upper part of the gas holder is an incidental feature in the periphery of long views of the listed building from the north west. The gas holder and the church do not share a functional relationship.

5.65 The Site does not materially contribute to the special interest of the listed building.

Reading Gaol (Main Building) Former Her Majesty's Prison (Grade II)

5.66 Reading Gaol is a Grade II listed building located approximately 850m west of the Site. It is located on the west side of Forbury Road roundabout which, together with the low interposing development, allows longer views towards the Site.

5.67 The significance of the Gaol lies in its historical and architectural interest as a Victorian county gaol designed by George Gilbert Scott (1811-1878) and William Boynton Moffatt (1812-1887) in 1844. It has an impressive, fortress-like quality. It is also significant for its plan form, which represents a pioneering English example of a radial-plan prison built for the newly-introduced 'separate system' of constant surveillance and solitary confinement.

5.68 The Gaol also derives significance from its most well-known inmate, Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), who wrote 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol' based on his time there. The gaol was closed in 2013 and the building is redundant at the time of writing.

Contribution of setting to significance

5.69 Due to its function, the setting of the listed building is restricted to its immediate boundary which is enclosed by tall boundary walls. The walls make it difficult to appreciate its architectural character from the surrounding area (Figure 5.13). The building has an inward-looking and private character and there is little external expression. Setting therefore makes no contribution to the special interest of the listed building.



Figure 5.15 Reading Gaol (Grade II) from the north east.

5.70 The Site is part of the wider, altered setting of the listed building. The interposing development includes a retail park and housing. The upper part of the gas holder is an incidental feature in the periphery of long views of the listed building. The gas holder and former gaol do not share any functional relationship.

Fisherman's Cottage Inn (Grade II)

5.71 The Fisherman's Cottage Inn is a Grade II listed building located approximately 315m south west of the Site on the south bank of the River Kennet. It was statutorily listed at Grade II in December 1978.

5.72 The Fisherman's Cottage Inn was built in the early 19th century. It is a detached, two storey property in an asymmetrical Gothic style (Figure 5.14). The building is now in use as a public house although its name suggests it was formerly a dwelling house. It was labelled as a public house by the time the 1879 OS Map was published, however. There has been a large conservatory added to the west elevation.

5.73 The significance of the listed building is derived from its historical and architectural character as a late Georgian house in a Gothic style. It is the last surviving remnant of earlier development in the area, which has been otherwise redeveloped with mid-late 20th century housing. The primary interest of the building lies in the character of its front (north) elevation which is relatively unaltered. The rear façade and later additions make no contribution to its special interest.

Contribution of setting to significance

5.74 The setting of the listed building consists of the area of mid-late 20th century development to the south at Canal Way and the river frontage to the north. The original context has changed and the later development makes no contribution to the special interest of the listed building.

5.75 The relationship to the river makes a positive contribution to the significance of the listed building because the primary elevation addresses the river, and the open setting and river path provides an opportunity to appreciate the historic character of the building.

5.76 At this part of the river there is an island which forms part of the setting of the listed building, and is a key component in views out from the listed building. The island and curve of the river path prevents any intervisibility between the Site and the listed pub. The gasworks on the Site was created after the house was built and there is no historical association between the two. The Site therefore makes no contribution to the significance of the listed building.



Figure 5.16 North elevation of Fisherman's Cottage Inn (Grade II).

Reading Cemetery (Grade II RPG)

5.77 Reading Cemetery was designated as a Grade II RPG in August 2002. It is located approximately 650m south east of the Site. It is included in this assessment to consider whether there will be any effect on its special interest arising from change to its setting as a result of development on the Site, mindful that it is an area of public open space.

5.78 The significance of the RPG lies in its historical and architectural interest as an early garden cemetery which was designed in 1842-3 for a private cemetery company in a growing, provincial town. Some of the planting which survives is thought to have been undertaken by Suttons, a local nurseryman of national renown. It is largely complete except for the loss of its two chapels and some signs of neglect, and there are number of monuments which are of heritage interest.

Contribution of setting to significance

5.79 The RPG comprises of the wedge of land between Wokingham Road and London Road, with the west tip at a major vehicle and pedestrian interchange (Cemetery Junction). Its setting consists of an area of suburban development which makes a positive contribution to its historical interest as a cemetery for the growing population at this time, where much of the surrounding development is contemporary (mid-late 19th century).

5.80 The Site is located some distance from the Cemetery and the interposing development means that there is no intervisibility with the Site. There is no associational relationship between the Cemetery and the Site. The Site does not contribute to its significance.

South Park CA

5.81 The South Park CA was first designated by the Council in 1988 as a result of an earlier planning policy document, 'South Park: A Planning Policy to Protect the Physical Character of a Victorian Suburb' (1976). The CA is located nearly a kilometre to the south of the Site at Eastern Avenue and Hamilton Road, south of Wokingham Road.

5.82 The CA is considered in this assessment to understand if there will be any effect on its significance arising from a new feature long views out from within the CA, particularly along the north-south routes which align to the Site. That said, the street orientation and interposing development means that there is unlikely to be any intervisibility between the CA and the proposals.

5.83 The significance of the CA lies in the historical interest and architectural quality and homogeneity of the mid-late Victorian and Edwardian residential development, which represents the suburban expansion of Reading in this period and survives relatively intact in terms of plan form and architectural styles. These suburban areas were designed to be "more spacious and leafy area than the artisans' terraces which lie closer to their employers to the north and west of this Conservation Area" (South Park Conservation Area Appraisal, 2008, p.9).

5.84 In terms of these views, the CA Appraisal (2008) states that: "Views out of the area to the north are directly on to the busy main Wokingham Road and the wall and railings of Reading Cemetery beyond. Views into the area from the north are marred by buildings immediately outside the Conservation Area. The best views are therefore to be seen within the Conservation Area along broad sweeps of fine Victorian and Edwardian houses. There are a number of individual buildings which stand out within the Conservation Area, with corner buildings tending to be particularly prominent in the street scene, although often not visible from any distance." (page 9)

Contribution of setting to significance

5.85 The setting of the CA comprises suburban development of varying age and quality. This setting makes a positive contribution to its historical interest as part of the evolution of Reading, but the architectural interest is more intrinsic. The setting also includes open green spaces such as Palmer Park to the east, Reading Cemetery to the north and the university campus to the south. The Site is separated from the CA by a less-refined area of 19th century development which includes later infill, as well as the Wokingham Road which is acts as the northern boundary of the CA.

5.86 We assess the likelihood of the proposals appearing in the longer, distant views as part of the heritage and visual assessment.

// GAS WORK SITE, READING



Townscape and Visual Context

6.0 TOWNSCAPE AND VISUAL CONTEXT

Townscape

6.1 The townscape surrounding the Site may be categorised into 10 distinct areas. For the purposes of this assessment the character areas are referred to as:

- Character Area A – Late 20th and early 21st century development (Kenavon Drive);
- Character Area B – 19th century residential development (New Town);
- Character Area C – 20th century residential development (New Town);
- Character Area D – Educational campus (Reading College);
- Character Area E – Waterways (River Kennet and canal);
- Character Area F – Railway lines;
- Character Area G – Caversham Lakes;
- Character Area H – Retail and business parks (Kenavon Drive and Sutton Park Avenue);
- Character Area I – King’s Meadow and superstore; and
- Character Area J – Open space at St Bartholomew’s Road.

6.2 The broad boundaries of the character areas are identified in **Appendix 3.0**. The character and appearance of the character areas is discussed below.

Character Area A – Late 20th and early 21st century development (Kennet Walk)

6.3 Character Area A comprises an area of late 20th and early 21st century residential development surrounding Kennet Walk and the east end of Kenavon Drive. The character area is defined by its regeneration and prevailing use. The character area is subject to the East Side Major Opportunity Area designation which seeks the delivery of a new residential area in the former industrial wedge of land between the River Kennet and the railway line. The Site falls within this Character Area and policy vision, where it is the aspiration for the Site to come forward for housing and integrate with the modern residential townscape.

6.4 There is a combination of residential and industrial uses in the character area. The south part consists of the three to four storey late 20th century development properties which comprises Kennet Walk and fronts the river. The housing is mixed between three to four storeys in blocks of flats as well as townhouse-style development to the east. This part of the character area includes large areas of hardstanding used for parking and a specialist nursery school.

6.5 The north part of the character area consists of the more recent Bellway housing development to the north which involves modern blocks of flats ranging between four and eight storeys. There is a noticeable contrast between the two development types, in particular the character and scale of development and roof profiles – the 20th century buildings have pitched, tiled roofs, whereas the Bellway development has flat roofs. There are also areas for parking within the newer development between the blocks, but these are not combined to create one large area like they are to the south. At the east end of the newest development there are three storey, townhouse-style properties.

6.6 We have described how there is a difference between the type of residential properties to the east and west of the character area which both the older and newer developments share. That is, blocks of flats to the west and single townhouses to the east.

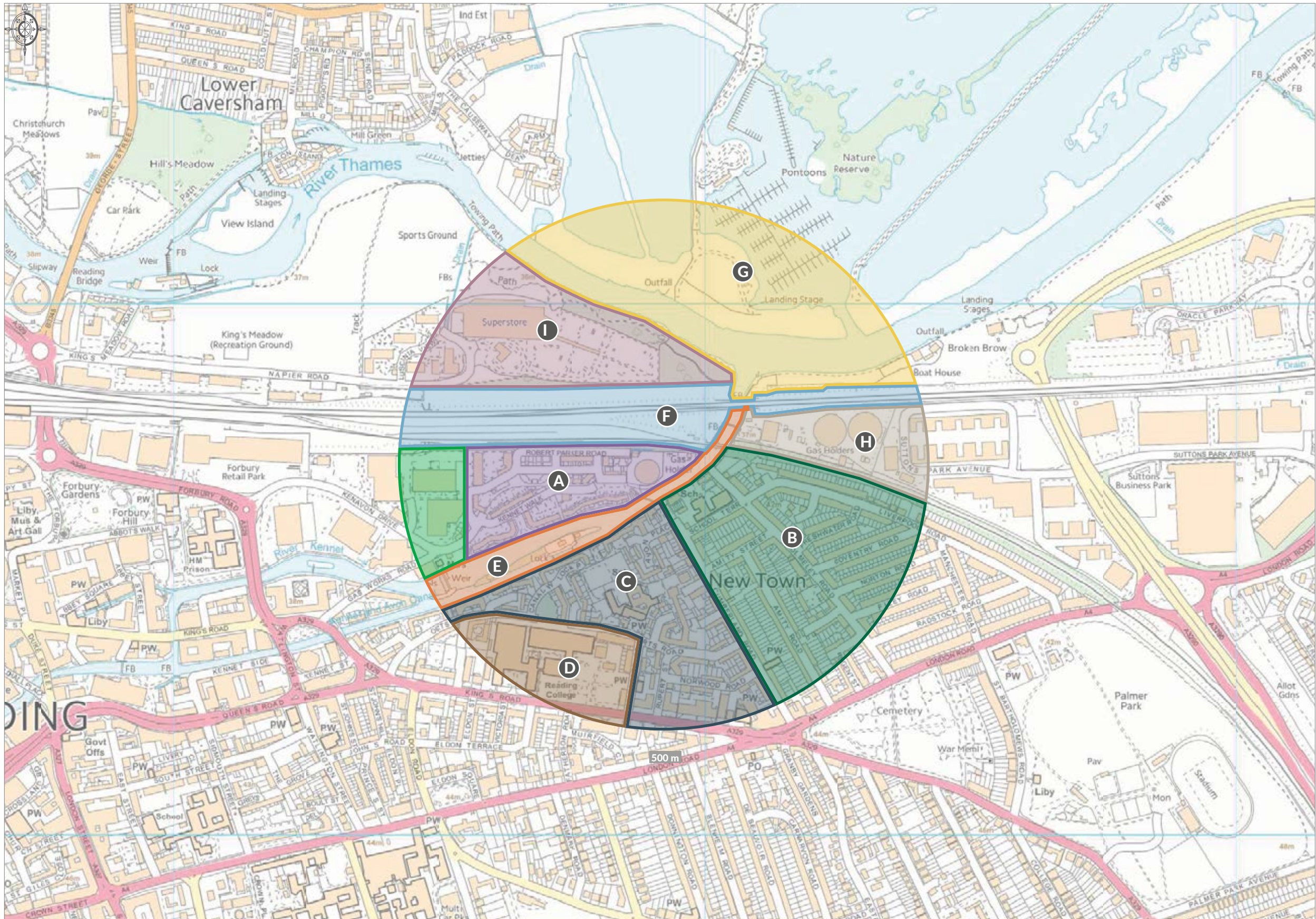
6.7 The people who will experience this character are primarily residents. Pedestrians who are using the public routes along the river may also experience the area. In the Kenavon Drive SPG document it is described as having a sense of being a ‘dead-end’. There are no through routes and the residential character is strong. There are no public green spaces internally, however, with parking taking up the land between the buildings. The only public realm for amenity use is the landscaped river path which is pleasant.



Figure 6.1 The entry to Character Area A from the west.



Figure 6.2 Late 20th century development in Character Area A.



CHARACTER AREAS

- Application Site
- A. Late 20th and early 21st century development (Kenavon Drive)
- B. 19th century residential development (New Town)
- C. 20th century residential development (New Town)
- D. Educational campus (Reading College)
- E. Waterways (River Kennet and canal)
- F. Railway lines
- G. Lakes
- H. Retail Park (Kenavon Drive)
- I. Kings Meadow and Superstore



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Gas Work Site, Reading

Date:

April 2019

Scale:

1:7500 @ A3

Figure 6.3

Character Area Plan

▲ North



Figure 6.4 Recent development in Character Area A (Bellway scheme).



Figure 6.6 The gas holder as seen from within Character Area A.



Figure 6.7 Late 19th century character of residential development in Character Area B.



Figure 6.5 View of residential development from raised pathway towards the Site.

Character Area B – 19th Century Residential Development (New Town)

- 6.8 Character Area B comprises the area of 19th century residential development bounded by Cumberland Road to the west, the river to the north, London Road to the south and the railway line to the east. It is located opposite the Site on the south side of the River Kennet.
- 6.9 The area is characterised by two storey, mid-late 19th century rows of terraced properties and includes a Victorian school to the north which is Grade II listed. There is a regular street pattern with parallel rows of terraces connecting the three main north-south routes. The buildings are typical of an area of Victorian suburban expansion and, whilst pleasant, do not represent anything of particular special quality. The area is not covered by a CA designation.
- 6.10 There is a consistency in the character and appearance of the terrace, with homogenous detailing and brickwork. There are some differences between the terrace rows, possibly indicating different developers. There has been some later infill in a later style at the north end of Liverpool Road, but the height and buildings materials are consistent. Each property has a garden to the rear creating private green spaces within the urban blocks.
- 6.11 The character area has a suburban residential character and the primary people to experience it will be residents.



Figure 6.8 Example of late 19th century residential development in Character Area B. View looking north through the area towards the river.

Character Area C – 20th Century Residential Development (New Town)

- 6.12 Character Area C represents the area of residential development adjacent to Character Area B. Unlike Character Area B, the earlier Victorian building stock and street pattern has been redeveloped with mid-late 20th century residential buildings.
- 6.13 The townscape character in this character area is mixed, although the prevailing use is residential and there is a consistency in the overall scale of development. The architecture has no particular quality and the public realm is generally poor. The street layouts mean that it is not easy to navigate, nor does it present a legible, well-resolved townscape. There are some institutional and educational uses in purpose-built later buildings in the area that have associated landscaping, including hardstanding for parking. There is some public green space at the junction between Canal Way and Orts Road.
- 6.14 The character area includes short frontages to King's Road to the south where the scale and uses of the development changes to larger commercial to take advantage of the frontage to a major route. The people to experience this area will be primarily residents, with road users at the southern boundary.



Figure 6.9 The development at the boundary between character areas B and C.



Figure 6.11 Typical mid-late 20th century development in Character Area C.



Figure 6.10 Typical mid-late 20th century development in Character Area C.



Figure 6.12 Later development at Blake's Lock.

Character Area D – Educational campus (Reading College)

- 6.15 Character Area D is embedded within Character Area C. It represents the campus of Reading College, which is distinct from the prevailing residential use to the north. It is a relatively small character area defined by a single use.
- 6.16 The College comprises large buildings to accommodate teaching spaces and pedestrian routes between them. There is parking provided in hardstanding to the east of the character area and some areas of green space, particularly associated with the main building which has an open courtyard forecourt. The townscape character is unexceptional and comprises no listed buildings or features of heritage interest.
- 6.17 The primary users of this character area are staff, pupils and visitors to the College. The character area can also be appreciated by passing users of King's Road to the south.

Character Area E – Waterways (River Kennet and Canal)

- 6.18 Character Area E comprises the River Kennet and Kennet and Avon Canal which pass east-west to the south of the Site. The Character Area for this assessment covers the stretch of water between the confluence of the River Kennet and Thames in the east and Blake's Lock to the west.
- 6.19 The character area is defined by the waterway and includes the variety of development along its banks. It has a tranquil, picturesque character which can be appreciated from a river path on both sides. The path also provides buffer to residential development that has taken place in the surrounding area. The development and character of the waterway is appreciated in the context of being in a suburban tributary in to the town, which was once a key industrial route moving goods along the river to Oxford and London. The scale of development gradually increases to the west and the site of the former Huntley and Palmer factory.
- 6.20 Within the character area there is a long, narrow island which links to the weir at Blake's Lock and includes a residential dwelling. It is well vegetated and is an interesting feature creating a legible separation between the river and man-made canal (north and south respectively). There is a lock adjacent to the property on the island.
- 6.21 The character area would primarily be experienced by people using the river for amenity – either along the river path or by boat. It is an area that is influenced by later development.



Figure 6.13 Late 20th century development and river path on the north side of the River Kennet.



Figure 6.15 Development on the south side of the river.



Figure 6.14 Modern development on the river bank in Character Area E.



Figure 6.16 Development and river path on the south side of the river opposite the Site.

Character Area F – Railway Lines

- 6.22 The railway lines form a linear character area which runs east-west through the study area. It is Character Area F on the plan at **Figure 6.1**. At the convergence between the River Thames and River Kennet the local and London railway lines meet and travel together to Reading station in the west part of the character area. The townscape is wholly defined by the function and utilitarian character of the railway and it would be experienced by people travelling by train. The character area therefore includes the experience of long views out from the train carriages into the surrounding suburban and urban areas, which include the Site. It has no intrinsic townscape quality.

Character Area G – Caversham Lakes

- 6.23 Character Area G covers the area of Caversham Lakes to the north east of the Site and includes the River Thames and its south bank. The river and lakes are primarily used for recreation and leisure, and includes a marina and the Redgrave Pinsent Rowing Lake. The character area also includes routes through the lakes to the Thames and Kennet Marina and also along the river (the Thames River Path). We have had regard to views of the Site from within this character area in the visual study (see AVR View 12). The character area is an open landscaped area and does not include any built form. The lakes are separated by established tree planting at their edges which creates a sense of a natural, tranquil area.

Character Area H – Retail and business parks (Kenavon Drive and Sutton Park Avenue)

- 6.24 Character Area H comprises two areas of retail and business park development at Kenavon Drive and Sutton Park Avenue located west and east of the Site respectively. The prevailing townscape character is large scale, low storey warehouse development with extensive areas of hardstanding to accommodate vehicle parking and customer access. The architecture is of no quality, being mid-late 20th century utilitarian buildings. The character area is inward-looking, with the street layout designed to navigate the building form rather than provide any meaningful connection to the surrounding area. This reflects the former industrial use and character of the land.



Figure 6.17 Looking across the River Thames to Caversham Lakes from the river path in Character Area G.

Character Area I – Superstore

- 6.25 Character Area I covers the land on the north side of the railway line to the north west of the Site. The character area comprises a superstore and a small area of early 20th century flatted residential development at Luscinia View. It is included as a single townscape character area by virtue of the single approach road which connects each element (Napier Road) and their relationship to the Site, which it is separated from by the railway. The primary feature of the character area is the large, low-rise superstore with petrol station and large car park. The residential development adjacent to the superstore is of a typical, early 21st century character of no particular quality. There are six blocks of varying scale in an irregular arrangement which are yellow brick with 'sweeping' rooflines. The character area is enclosed by trees which screen the development from the railway, river and King's Meadow to the west.

Character Area J – Open Green Space

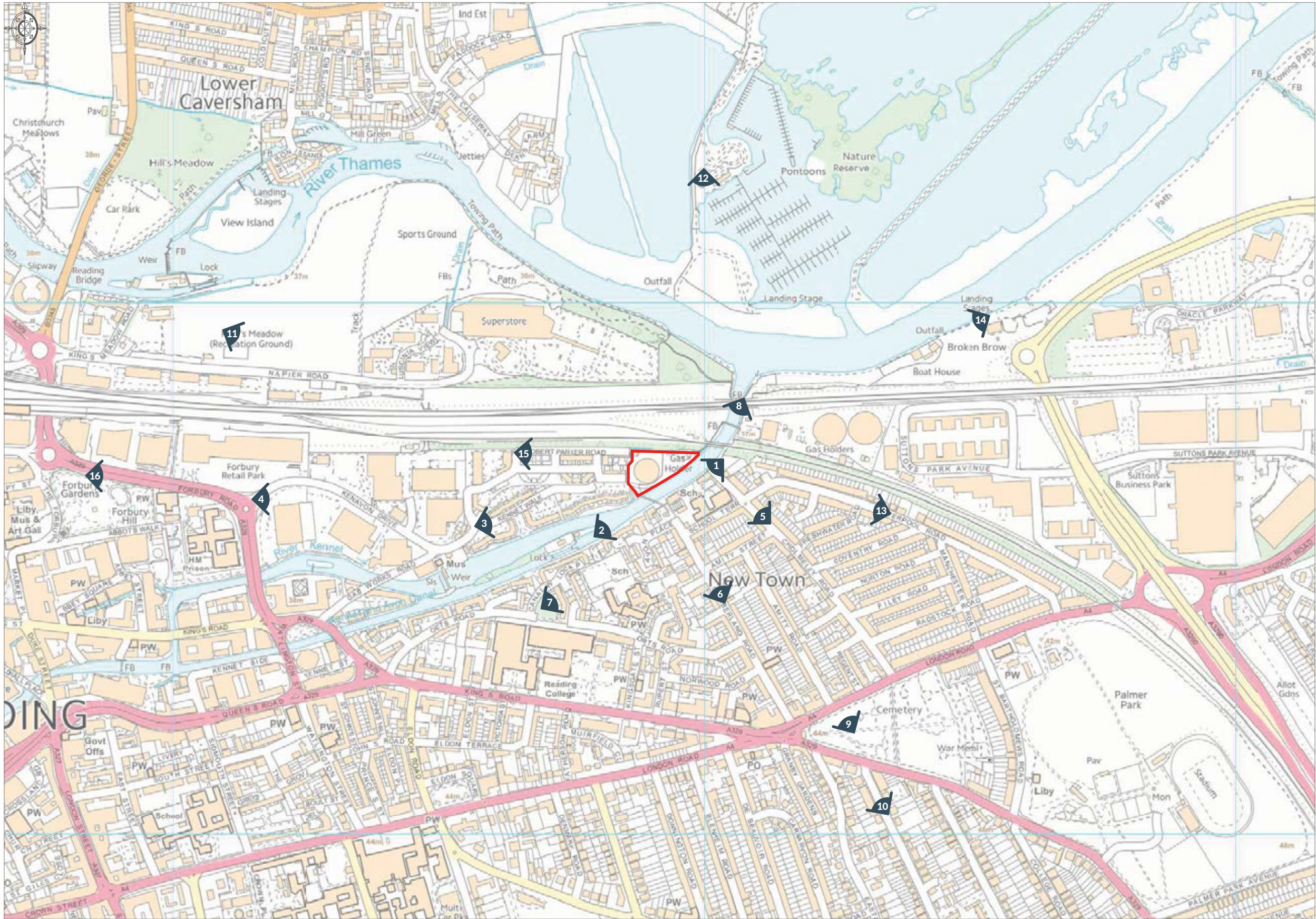
- 6.26 Character Area J comprises two areas of open green space: King's Meadow to the north west of the Site and Reading Cemetery and Palmer Park to the south of the Site. The character areas includes open areas of grassed space which is used primarily for recreation and leisure. The experience and use of the character areas is inward-looking, defined by the boundaries which are well-established by trees and vegetation. The Cemetery has a slightly different character, including built form of monuments and tombs and providing a space for quiet contemplation. Each part of the character area is embedded within suburban areas and it is influenced by this type of activity beyond the boundaries.

Visual

- 6.27 The HTVIA will be supported by 22 AVRs. The viewpoint locations are shown on the map at **Figure 6.18** and the existing views are described in **Section 10.0**.
- 6.28 **Table 6.1** provides an overview of the heritage and townscape considerations for each view, including any additional considerations such as the proximity to key transport nodes.

Note on visual assessment

- 6.29 A further view was originally identified from a location in the grounds of Caversham Park, which is View 24 in the TBS. Caversham Park is subject to heritage designations as a Grade II RPG and the house is a Grade II listed building. It was not possible to prepare an AVR from Caversham Park, because it is a private property and access was not possible.
- 6.30 The appearance of the proposed development in panoramic views provided by the higher ground in Caversham, such as that from Caversham Park, is demonstrated in AVR View 19 (Baltimore Park).



VIEWS - LOCAL

1. Riverside path at Cholmeley Road
2. Riverside path south-west of the Site
3. Kennet Walk
4. Forbury Road roundabout
5. Cholmeley Road at junction with School Terrace
6. Cumberland Road
7. Open green space at Canal Way/Orts Road
8. View from Grade II listed railway bridge
9. Reading Cemetery
10. Hamilton Road
11. King's Meadow
12. Thames & Kennet Marina
13. Liverpool Road at junction with Freshwater Road
14. View north east along the river path (TBS View 18)
15. Robert Parker Road
16. Forbury Road near Forbury Place



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Gas Work Site, Reading

Date:

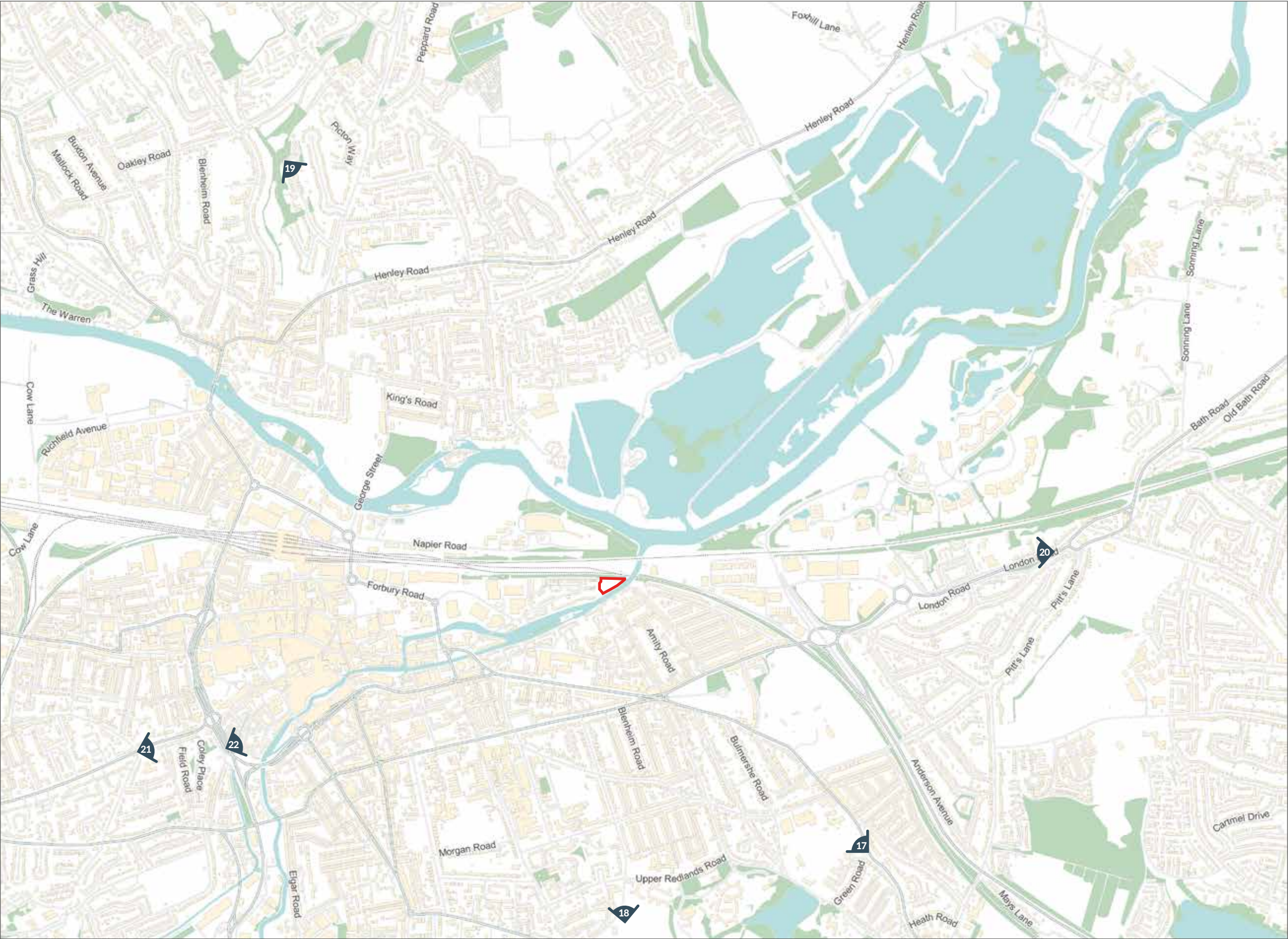
April 2019

Scale:

1:7500 @ A3

Figure 6.18 Map of AVR viewpoint locations.

▲ North



VIEWS - WIDER AREA

- 17. Near junction between Green Road and Wokingham Road (TBS View 2)
- 18. View north from the university sports fields at Queens Drive (TBS View 3)
- 19. Baltimore Park (TBS View 14)
- 20. West from the pedestrian crossing on the A4 (London Road) (TBS View 17)
- 21. 1 East from the junction between Bath Road and Coley Avenue (TBS View 23)
- 22. Pedestrian bridge over Caversham Road near Coley Place (TBS View 27)

Location:
Gas Work Site, Reading

Date:
April 2019

Scale:
1:17,500 @ A3

Figure 6.19 Map of AVR viewpoint locations. (wider area)

▲ North



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View	Location	Townscape Character	Heritage Assets	Visual Receptors	AVR Type	Additional Considerations
1	Riverside path at Cholmeley Road	Open Space Waterway	None	Pedestrians Users of Amenity Space	Render (AVR3)	Grade II listed Newton School to the left (south) – out of photograph
2	Riverside path south-west of the Site	Open Space Waterway	None	Pedestrians Users of Amenity Space	Render (AVR3)	
3	Kennet Walk	Residential	None	Pedestrians Residents	Wireline (AVR1)	
4	Forbury Road roundabout	Infrastructure Commercial	None	Road Users Pedestrians	Wireline (AVR1)	
5	Cholmeley Road at junction with School Terrace	Residential Educational	Newton School, Grade II	Pedestrians Residents	Render (AVR3)	
6	Cumberland Road	Residential	None	Pedestrians Residents	Render (AVR3)	
7	Open green space at Canal Way/Orts Road	Open Space Residential	None	Pedestrians Residents Users of Amenity Space	Wireline (AVR1)	
8	View from Grade II listed railway bridge	Open Space	Railway Bridge and attached Accommodation Bridge over River Kennet at SU 7306 7381 (Grade II)	Pedestrians Users of Amenity Space	Render (AVR3)	
9	Reading Cemetery	Open Space	Reading Cemetery RPG, Grade II	Visitors	Wireline (AVR1)	
10	Hamilton Road	Residential	South Park CA	Pedestrians Residents	Wireline (AVR1)	
11	King's Meadow	Open Space	None	Users of Amenity Space	Wireline (AVR1)	
12	Thames & Kennet Marina	Open Space Leisure	None	Users of Amenity Space	Wireline (AVR1)	
13	Liverpool Road at junction with Freshwater Road	Residential	None	Pedestrians Residents	Render (AVR3)	
14	View north east along the river path	Open Space Waterway	None	Pedestrians Users of Amenity Space	Wireline (AVR1)	Identified in the Reading Tall Building Strategy (January 2008, March 2018 Update) (TBS) View 18
15	Robert Parker Road	Residential	None	Residents Pedestrians	Wireline (AVR1)	
16	Forbury Road near Forbury Place	Infrastructure Commercial	None	Office Workers Pedestrians Road Users	Wireline (AVR1)	
17	Near junction between Green Road and Wokingham Road	Infrastructure Open Space Residential	None	Pedestrians Road Users Residents	Wireline (AVR1)	TBS View 2

View	Location	Townscape Character	Heritage Assets	Visual Receptors	AVR Type	Additional Considerations
18	View north from the university sports fields at Queens Drive	Open Space	None	Pedestrians Users of Amenity Space	Wireline (AVR1)	TBS View 3. The view is also identified in the Kenavon Drive SPD.
19	Balmore Park	Open Space	None	Users of Amenity Space Pedestrians	Wireline (AVR1)	TBS View 14
20	West from the pedestrian crossing on the A4 (London Road)	Infrastructure Residential	None	Pedestrians Road Users Residents	Wireline (AVR1)	TBS View 17
21	East from the junction between Bath Road/ Castle Hill and Coley Avenue	Infrastructure Residential Commercial	Listed buildings appear in the view on the north side of Castle Hill (framing the road to the left in the foreground): 168, 172 and 174 Castle Street (Grade II); 162a Castle Street (Grade II); and Nos. 154 to 160 (even) and railings to street (Grade II*).	Pedestrians Road Users Residents	Wireline (AVR1)	TBS View 23
22	Pedestrian bridge over Caversham Road near Coley Place	Infrastructure Town Centre Residential	None	Pedestrians Residents	Wireline (AVR1)	TBS View 27

Table 6.1 Summary of viewpoint locations.

7.0

// GAS WORK SITE, READING



Summary of the Proposals

7.0 SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSALS

- 7.1 In this section we provide a summary of the proposals as they relate to heritage, townscape and visual impact considerations. A detailed rationale is provided in the Design and Access Statement prepared by Collado Collins.
- 7.2 The design team has worked with the Council through an extensive pre-application consultation process to ensure the scheme is of high quality and responds to policy, context and best practice design guidance.
- 7.3 In summary the proposals comprise:
- Redevelopment of an existing brownfield, contaminated site in a prominent location;
 - High quality residential development providing 130 new flats with associated parking;
 - Replacement of the existing, approximately 33m tall gas holder with a new building to mark the gateway into Reading;
 - Creating a high quality scheme, with a strong sense of place and celebrating the Site's heritage; and
 - High quality landscape, significantly improving the public realm and ecological credentials of the site, and maximising the relationship to the river.
- 7.4 The development is contained within three distinct buildings: a smaller Block A fronting the river (five storeys), a taller Block B towards the north east corner of the Site, creating a 'marker' building (nine storeys) and Block C, a small-scale, three storey building designed as a continuation of and transition from the adjacent terrace.
- 7.5 The quality of the residential units and central circulation has driven the overall site layout of the scheme. All entrances are located along the central 'street', providing a clear and attractive way home for future residents. The street leads to the generous, river fronting public space with high quality landscaping.

- 7.6 The architectural forms and language are strongly inspired by the industrial heritage of the Site, yet presenting a contemporary response to create a place with its own identity and full of character. The material palette is intentionally restrained and elevation treatment of all buildings is based on the same principles, by subtle variations in details and their application each building acquires its own aesthetics and character.

- 7.7 Landscaping has been an integral part of the proposal and is designed to return parts of the site to its former, much wilder character, creating a contrast with the more formal language of the scheme. Providing views and access to the river and new public space is designed to create a strong identity, sense of space and bring the surrounding communities and the new residents together.



Figure 7.1 Overall Masterplan with landscape proposals

// GAS WORK SITE, READING



Assessment: Heritage

8.0 ASSESSMENT: HERITAGE

- 8.1 This section of the report assesses the impact of the proposals on the significance of the heritage assets identified in **Section 5.0** in light of national and local planning policy and the relevant statutory provisions.
- 8.2 The Design and Access Statement prepared by Collado Collins sets out the design rationale and should be read alongside this assessment.
- 8.3 The proposals represent the culmination of an iterative design process including extensive engagement with the Council. The scheme is intended to address provide a comprehensive redevelopment of the Site in the manner that responds positively to the emerging site allocation and the considerable constraints that must be overcome to deliver a viable development.
- 8.4 In preparing the proposals, the desirability of conserving designated heritage assets has been afforded great weight, (consistent paragraph 193 of the Framework and with the approach commended by the Court of Appeal in *Barnwell*).
- 8.5 An overarching aim of these proposals has been to identify the significance of the relevant heritage assets, and where appropriate, deliver enhancements. We consider the following matters are the principal heritage considerations:
- The impact of the Proposed Development on the setting of nearby listed buildings, notably Newton School (Grade II), and railway bridge (Grade II);
 - The impact of the Proposed Development on the setting and significance of nearby CAs; and
 - The impact of the Proposed Development on Gas holder No. 4, which is identified as a non-designated heritage asset.
- 8.6 At this point it is important to highlight that, whilst acknowledging the scale of change required to deliver the scheme is necessarily greater than the emerging site allocation quantum, we consider the Proposed Development satisfies the relevant legislative and policy planning criteria.
- 8.7 The design team have given due importance and weight to the special interest of heritage assets, which is demonstrated and elucidated within this HTVIA.
- 8.8 In conjunction, the scheme will have considerable beneficial effects to heritage assets, which must weigh in favour of the development as part of a wider balanced planning judgement. These benefits are discussed within this HTVIA, and summarised in the Executive Summary.
- Pre-Application Consultation**
- 8.9 Pre-application consultation with the Council has established that the principle heritage and townscape considerations relate to the scale of the proposed development and its relationship with adjacent heritage assets. The Council has identified the potential for harm to the setting of the Grade II listed Newton School, which lies on the southern side of the River Kennet.
- Principle of Development**
- 8.10 The aim of the proposals is to optimise the use of what is currently unattractive land with a redundant gas holder through the dismantling of the gas infrastructure and redevelopment with active residential uses.
- 8.11 The Applicant's aspirations for the project are to resolve the issues relating to the Site as it currently stands, specifically its character as an unattractive and contaminated site with no long-term viable use.
- 8.12 Through the development of the proposals, the project team has been mindful that conservation is a process of managing change and not simply preserving the status quo for its own sake. The emphasis is on understanding what is special about a heritage asset and its setting, and ascertaining where certain elements are capable of accepting change without harming the special values of a place.
- 8.13 **Sections 4.0** and **5.0** have set out a detailed analysis of the historical development of the Site and the way that it has changed over time, and now comes to contribute (or detract more specifically) for the significance of nearby assets.
- 8.14 In considering the impact of the works, the starting point for an assessment of impact must be to recognise that:
- The former gas holder site comprised one small part of the wider Reading Gasworks which was established in the 19th century and extended to the west of the Site. As a result of the industrial use, the Site has ground contamination due to that previous use.
 - The Site is currently used as a depot for SGN which requires 24-hour access for the continual coming and going of operational vehicles. That use contrasts and conflicts with the adjacent residential use due to the shared access route on Kenavon Drive, Robert Parker Road and Alexander Turner Close.
 - The most prominent part of the Site is the remaining gas holder, Gas holder No. 4, which was erected in 1916. The gas holder is a late example of its type and has limited architectural or engineering interest.
 - Gas holder No. 4 was decommissioned in March 2008 and is now redundant. It has no current use or function and lies permanently in its resting state.
 - Owing to its age and local value, Gas holder No. 4 is identified as a non-designated heritage asset according to the definition set out in Annex 2 of the Framework. The removal of the gas holder is, therefore, a material consideration in the determination of this application.
 - In considering the acceptability of any redevelopment proposal, weight must be attached to its status as a non-designated heritage asset. It does not receive statutory protection and so it could be demolished under Section 3(1) of the General Permitted Development Order (2015) (see Part 11(B) of Schedule 2 'Class B – demolition of buildings').

- The Site is allocated for residential development in the development plan under Policy RC3f. This is a sub-area of the wider East Side Major Opportunity Area (MOA), as designated under Policy RC3. The first phases of the East Side MOA redevelopment have already been completed.
 - Reading Borough Council are also in the process of producing a new Local Plan which was submitted to the Secretary of State on 29 March 2018. The vision for the East Side MOA remains unaltered as set out in draft Policy CS13 and the Site continues to be allocated for residential development under draft Policy CR13d.
 - The Examination in Public into the new Local Plan commenced on 25th September 2018. The principle of redevelopment has therefore been established through the local plan process.
- 8.15 Accepting these conclusions, and the need (set out in policy and guidance) to identify special interest and consider change in a balanced and proportionate manner, we see no compelling basis to preserve the *status quo*. What matters are the particular effects when the development is considered as a whole.
- 8.16 This approach is supported by the PPG which promotes sensitive design that delivers public benefits in a sustainable and appropriate way, and paragraph 200 of the Framework which states that local planning authorities should treat favourably those developments that better reveal the significance of a heritage asset.
- 8.17 Below we assess the impact of the proposals on the heritage assets that are likely to experience change to their setting and experience, and as identified in **Section 5.0**.

Assessment

- 8.18 The Council will be aware of the balanced and proportionate approach to conservation that is reflected in the statutory provisions set out in Section 66(1) of the 1990 Act and the Framework.
- 8.19 Paragraph 196 of the Framework also establishes, and reasserts the provisions of the 1990 Act, that any harm to a designated heritage asset should be afforded great weight, as would any benefit. This thrust of policy is reflected in the Council's Policy CS33 and the reasoned justification set out the Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012) (section 9.1).
- 8.20 There is a common misconception about the operation of paragraph 196, which states that if a proposal causes some, but less than substantial harm, then the decision maker should set that harm (and the particular weight accorded it by statutory provision) against other planning benefits. That is the approach set out in *Palmer vs Herefordshire Council & ANR* [2016]).
- ### Newton School (Grade II)
- 8.21 In forming our judgement as to whether the Proposed Development would cause harm, one must first consider the significance of the asset, and the contribution setting makes to that significance.
- 8.22 The Newton School comprises a group of late-19th century school buildings which were designed by architect J. Morris. The school is believed to date from c.1874. It is contemporary with the row of terraced properties on the south side of School Terrace, also designed by Morris (not listed).
- 8.23 The significance of the Newton School is derived from its historical and architectural interest as one of the better examples of a Victorian Board school building in Reading. The building is representative of the urban growth of the city and social measures that were put in place to cope with demand. The attractive quality of the Gothic style and decorative details are of architectural interest. The listed building remains in its original use which also makes a positive contribution to its significance.

- 8.24 The Site forms part of the former industrial setting on the north side of the river. The majority of the Site is occluded in views from the School by the line of mature trees and vegetation that border the northern bank of the River Kennet. The vegetation creates a clear boundary that while green, is not well-maintained.
- 8.25 The gas holder is the only part of the Site which is visible in local views which include the listed School. The gas holder was built in 1916, after the school, and so any visual relationship between the two is incidental because there was no intentional or designed relationship.
- 8.26 On that basis, any contribution that the gas holder makes to the setting of the School must be very limited. This proportionate judgement is an important part of the decision-making process.
- 8.27 The Proposed Development comprises three buildings ranging from three to five to nine storeys. Block B, which is the tallest element at nine storeys, marks the corner of the Site at what is a key location defined by the confluence of the River Thames and River Kennet.
- 8.28 Block C will be visible in views from the southern side of the river, but it has been designed in such a way that it appears suitable for this riverside location. This is because the architectural language draws on the factory/warehouse typology that is commonly found in Reading and is defined by the brick materials, strong rhythm of fenestration, and quality of detailing. That language is applied to not only Block B, but also Blocks A and C, which give a clear identity and architectural character.
- 8.29 AVR View 5 is taken from Cholmeley Road at the junction with School Terrace and is perhaps the most relevant to the effect on the listed building, showing the existing and proposed conditions (See **Section 10.0**).

- 8.30 In the existing condition, Gas holder No. 4 rises above the roofline of the school while the unattractive water tower is visible and a detracting feature to the east. In the proposed condition, the development will be noticeable but experienced as a high quality addition that is orientated to that it appears to recess away from the School.
- 8.31 The scale of Block B will also be noticeable, though not out of character given the scale of the existing gas holder. Indeed, the quality and architectural language will be such that the development will complement the prevailing materials found in the local area, including the school, and so helping to bed the building into the local townscape.
- 8.32 In the closer AVR Views 1 and 6, the development will be viewed in tandem with the School, albeit with the river separating the buildings. Blocks A and C will appear as complementary and high quality additions to the local area.
- 8.33 We accept that the development will lead to additional scale and mass in comparison to the existing gas holder. However, change in the local context of listed buildings does not necessarily equate to a harmful effect. What matters is the quality of the new addition and whether it materially harms the special interest of the listed building.
- 8.34 In this case the quality of the architecture, together with the orientation of the buildings, helps to minimise any potential effect.
- 8.35 Moreover, the layout comprising the open green space facing Newton School, in addition to the high quality five storey block, will considerably enhance the outlook from the south of the river towards the Site. After all, the Site is currently a disused industrial site with a defensive outlook defined by metal palisade fences as illustrated by AVR Views 1, 2 and 5. That green space will include elements that reflect the gas heritage of the site, such as seating and so forth, which will enhance the ability to appreciate the Site's history.
- 8.36 The improvement to the general townscape and quality of green space will enhance the setting and significance of the School.
- 8.37 Overall, we consider that the development would not dilute the ability to appreciate the special interest of the listed building. In particular Block C would appear as a new high quality addition seen in the background of local views including the School, but which would not materially harm the significance of the building. On that basis, we consider that the proposals comply with paragraphs 193 and 200 of the Framework, Policy CS33 of the Council's Core Strategy. On that basis the decision maker is able to discharge his or her legal duty under s66(1) of the 1990 Act.
- 8.38 We appreciate this conclusion involves subjective judgment, having regard to the intrinsic quality of the new development, the Site and the wider area. Should the Council consider that the development leads to some harm to the setting and significance of the School - a point that we do not agree - that harm would be very limited and certainly less than substantial.
- 8.39 It is accepted practice that an Applicant should seek to reduce the scale of any potential harmful impact in any way they can through mitigation and design insofar as possible. Indeed, the quality of design is a material consideration in the planning balance.
- 8.40 The design of the proposals has progressed significantly during pre-application consultation leading to the current proposals. The scheme now deliver demonstrable public benefits which include that enhancements to the land facing onto the river which will become an area of green space, thus enhancing the river front which forms part of the setting of the School.
- 8.41 In addition, and in forming a balanced judgement required by Paragraph 197 of the Framework, the Council must also have regard to the land use benefits that are set out in the Planning Statement prepared by Boyer Planning, and include the delivery of 130 residential units, a proportion of which will be affordable, and optimising the use of the land in a manner that is supported by the existing and emerging site allocation.
- 8.42 On that basis we consider that the heritage benefits alone would outweigh any harm to the listed building, notwithstanding that any harm would be of considerable importance and weight in the planning balance. The proposals would therefore comply with paragraph 197 of the Framework and local planning policy.
- Railway Bridge (Grade II)**
- 8.43 The listed railway bridge lies to the north-east of the Site. Its significance is primarily derived from its historical association with Brunel and the GWR. It has some engineering interest for its design and survival of the original architecture and materials.
- 8.44 The Site does not appear above the parapet of the listed structure in views from the north. The Site only begins to appear once you pass beneath the bridge travelling west (see AVR View 8). The gas holder was built after the bridge and there was no intentional or designed relationship.
- 8.45 The proposals will introduce new built form to the Site and, notably, Block C will be visible from the footpath that runs under the bridge. The depth of the building will be appreciated in the view, as the building extends to the west. As a result it is the two gable ends that will be more easily recognisable with the block broken in plan approximately half way.
- 8.46 The proposed condition of AVR View 8 illustrates that effect and shows that the building, while noticeable, will provide a high quality addition to the view that will appear sympathetic to the area through the use of brick materials and familiar warehouse architectural language.
- 8.47 On that basis we consider that the development will not materially affect the ability to appreciate the significance of the bridge, and thus will preserve its setting and special interest, thus meeting the policy requirements of the Framework and the development plan.
- Other Designated Heritage Assets**
- 8.48 In relation to the other designated heritage assets (which are described in **Section 5.0**), Block C may be visible in views from those assets. However, given the distances involved, these buildings are already experienced in an urban setting that has modern development that forms part of the context. The new addition will not materially affect the significance of those assets.
- 8.49 In all cases, the Proposed Development will preserve the significance of those assets.

Gas holder No. 4

- 8.50 Gas holder No. 4 on the Site is considered as a non-designated heritage asset ("NDHA"). Unlike designated heritage assets, NDHAs receive no statutory protection. Identification as a NDHA, or even inclusion on a Local List, is not in itself a reason to withhold planning permission.
- 8.51 Notably, the GPDO (2015) defines the types of work that can be performed without needing to apply for planning permission, i.e. permitted development. They derive from a general planning permission granted not by the local authority but Parliament.
- 8.52 Part 11 of the GPDO concerns heritage and demolition. Class B relates to the demolition of buildings. This excludes the demolition of buildings in conservation areas under permitted development.
- 8.53 Permitted development rights are important in this particular case because it would be possible to demolish Gas holder No. 4 without planning permission, subject to an approved application for Prior Approval. The Council should, therefore, attach weight to the GPDO in the determination of this planning application.
- 8.54 The Framework indicates that in weighing planning applications affecting NDHAs, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset (paragraph 197).
- 8.55 As Gas holder No. 4 would be lost as a result of the Proposed Development, it is necessary to assess the significance of the building to reach a balanced judgement. That assessment is set out in **Section 5.0** where we have concluded that the gas holder has some, but limited heritage significance.
- 8.56 It is material that the gas holder is not listed and does not possess the level of design or technical interest that is evident in other examples such as Bromley by Bow or King's Cross in London (examples are Grade II).

Alternative Options

- 8.57 The Council's Policy CS33 seeks to protect features of historic importance. If the policy were applied strictly, and without finer grain analysis or judgement, it would have the practical effect of treating all buildings as if they are listed buildings and so ignoring the important distinction – as set out in the Framework – between designated and non-designated heritage assets
- 8.58 Notwithstanding the planning policy context, including paragraph 197 of the Framework and the permitted development rights afforded by the GPDO, the project team has considered alternative options for the re-use of the gas holder.
- 8.59 Those options are not viable for several reasons and are detailed within the Design and Access Statement. We summarise them here:
- The gas holder does not demonstrate the high level of design and technical interest that is evident at Kings Cross, for example, where the Grade II listed gas holders are of a much finer quality and architectural detailing.
 - Notwithstanding the sustainable location of the Site, the proposals will seek to meet the Council's parking standards as far as possible within the existing site constraints. If the existing gas holder were to be retained and converted, the majority of the rest of the site would need to be handed over as car parking, leaving minimal opportunities for open space and structural landscaping, particularly along the banks of the River Kennet, which is a key policy objective.
- 8.60 It is often parking and not buildings that create the design challenge (and cost) and so this is something the design is trying to balance very carefully to ensure a deliverable scheme.
- 8.61 Given the extent of Site contamination and existing underground structures which will need to be capped, remediated, removed and/or bridged as part of the redevelopment of the Site, it is essential to ensure that, whatever the final design solution, it is realistic and deliverable, whilst respecting and enhancing the Site's location at a rail and river gateway to Reading. This naturally places a ceiling on build costs which the proposed design will need to work within, to ensure that the application can ultimately deliver the adopted and emerging policy aspirations for the Site.

- 8.62 If the existing gas holder were to be retained and a new building erected within or adjacent to it, there would be significant challenges with the scale of the new building in terms of the relationship to its immediate neighbours but also within the wider townscape, be it privacy, overshadowing or overly dominant appearance.

- 8.63 For these reasons, it was considered, and accepted by the Council during pre-application consultation, that retention of the gas holder was not feasible.

Replacement Development and Balance

- 8.64 In forming a balanced judgement required by paragraph 197 of the Framework, the decision maker must also have regard to the design quality of the Proposed Development. We have already described the design and also return to that subject in **Section 9.0**.
- 8.65 The decision maker will of course reach their own view on the scheme's acceptability in design terms. We appreciate this involves some element of subjective judgment, having regard to the intrinsic quality of the new development, the Site and the wider area. Should the decision maker take a different view to the assessment we have reached, we note only that the weight afforded to the interests of the NDHA would be circumscribed by the legislative and planning policy framework, notably that the low level of harm caused by the loss of the NDHA is a material consideration in the planning decision, but of no greater weight than any other consideration (unlike if it were statutorily listed).
- 8.66 Having carefully considered the requirements of paragraphs 189 and 197 of the Framework and the statutory development plan, we have set out the reasons why the assessment of the asset is proportionate to its significance.
- 8.67 In such cases where a development includes the demolition of a NDHA, paragraph 197 requires a balanced judgement. We consider that the loss of the gas holder would be outweighed by the combination of benefits weighing in its favour.

// GAS WORK SITE, READING



Assessment: Heritage

9.0 ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSALS ON TOWNSCAPE

9.1 The following section assesses the effect of the proposed development on the local townscape character, which is described at **Section 6.0**.

9.2 As before, the Design and Access Statement prepared by Collado Collins provides a detailed discussion on the design rationale and architectural approach to the existing context.

Assessment of the proposals on the Character Areas

Character Area A – Late 20th and early 21st century residential development (Kenavon Drive)

9.3 The Site falls within Character Area A. This character area covers part of the land identified as the East Side MOA which has been identified in the development plan for regeneration to provide residential use.

9.4 The redevelopment of the Site, which is currently brownfield land, with a high quality residential development will make an important and beneficial contribution the regeneration of the wider area in accordance with the Council's policy objectives.

9.5 The proposed development will transform the Site from what is an industrial depot in Character Area A to an integrated and attractive link between Kenavon Drive and New Town to the south (Character Area B) and Caversham Lakes to the east (Character Area G). There will be improvements to the physical relationship between these areas, i.e. the experience of the pedestrian bridge to New Town which is proximate to the proposed development, as well as the overall spatial and visual appearance of the Site it this wider context.

9.6 The proposed development will have benefits to the local community arising from the removal of the unsociable use of the Site as an SGN Depot. The loss of the Depot will mean that industrial traffic will no longer pass through the residential area, and the character of the Site will change from hostile and poorly maintained to an open, welcoming and managed landscape.

9.7 It is acknowledged that the redundant gas holder in the SGN Depot is a recognisable feature of Character Area A due to its longevity in the townscape. However, It is alien and incongruous with the modern residential character and use in Character Area A. The gas holder is now poorly maintained and associated with the hostile environment of the Depot.

9.8 We have already described the options which were tested for the retention of the gas holder during design development (see **Section 8.0**), and how it is the conclusion of these studies that the retention would not be feasible. The Kenavon Drive SPD states that there is scope for a “landmark building” on the Site through the redevelopment of the gas holder.

9.9 The high quality and strong design of the proposed development is considered to achieve a building of landmark quality for the reasons set out below:

- The Site has a prominent location at the eastern tip of Character Area A at the confluence of the River Kennet and River Thames. The Site addresses the railway line (Character Area F) and marks an entry point into the town centre in views from the east. It is for these reasons that the height proposed is considered acceptable, and an appropriate response to the particular virtues of the Site's location.
- The layout of the new buildings and the associated landscaping has sought to maximise the relationship with the river to the south and address the presence of the railway line to the north.
- The resultant proposal is one which enhances and activates the experience of the river by directing the focus of the development to the south. This is an important benefit to existing and future residents and the overall amenity of Character Area A.
- The scale and density of the proposals is sympathetic to the residential development to the west and south, and the varying block heights create an interesting and dynamic transition from the lower-rise development in Character Areas A and B to the nine storey Block B proposed for the Site's northern edge.
- The rhythm of the blocks creates a strong legibility from the entry point to the west and there is permeability to the surrounding areas as described before. The private to public spaces are well-defined creating the feeling of a safe and secure environment.
- In terms of the architectural expression of the proposals, the industrial history of the area is reflected in the warehouse typology.
- The strong and elegant gables, exposed red brick and ‘herringbone’ brickwork detailing to the fenestration comes together to create a high quality and visually attractive design which will lift and enrich the experience of Character Area A.

- The materiality and colour palette is complementary to the surrounding area, as demonstrated in the context studies presented in the Design and Access Statement.
- The solid-to-void ratio helps to break down the bulk of the massing, and the balconies and recesses in the brickwork around the openings creates an interesting and lively form.
- The buildings are well-proportioned and sit comfortably in views from the surrounding area – see AVR Views 1, 2, 6 and 13 at **Section 10.0** in particular. AVR View 2 is reproduced at **Figure 9.1**.

9.10 In summary, the effect of the proposed development on Character Area A is considered to be beneficial in terms of achieving the Council's aspirations for the area, and transforming the Site with an attractive and well-designed residential development.



Figure 9.1 The view of the proposed development when seen from the south west along the river path (AVR View 2, see Section 10.0).

Character Area B – 19th century residential development (New Town)

- 9.11 The Site is separated from Character Area B by the River Kennet. The primary effects of the proposed development on the experience of the townscape in Character Area B will be visual, i.e. the appearance of the new residential development in views from within the area. Accordingly, this assessment refers to the visual information provided by AVR View Nos. 1, 5, 6 and 13.
- 9.12 As with Character Area A, it is acknowledged that redevelopment of the gas holder will remove a feature of the townscape which has acquired some local interest over time. The loss of the gas holder is not considered to diminish the experience or appreciation of the Victorian residential townscape in Character Area B, however.
- 9.13 Character Area B comprises 19th century terraced residential development on a regular street pattern which includes long, linear streets arranged on a north-south axis. The proposed development will introduce a new building into the long views north out of the character area – see AVR View Nos. 6 and 13. In the axial views, the proposed development will be seen together with the lower-rise, earlier development.
- 9.14 The residential use of the proposed development is consistent with the uses in New Town and this use is legible in its architectural form.
- 9.15 The modern interpretation of the warehouse typology means that the proposed development is discernible as part of an area which is distinct from New Town. This preserves the ability to read the Site and Character Area B as areas which have evolved differently, and maintains the integrity of Character Area B as an area of Victorian residential development.
- 9.16 For the avoidance of doubt, the Victorian development in Character Area B is not identified as a CA or subject to any other conservation-related policies. Notwithstanding that fact, the area retains its original character to the benefit of the overall townscape.

9.17 The architectural detailing and scale of the proposal is complementary to Character Area B and introduces new high quality architecture into the experience of the townscape.

9.18 The overall effect of the proposals on Character Area B is considered to be beneficial by replacing a redundant and poor condition industrial feature with new residential development of high quality design.

Character Area C – 20th century residential development (New Town)

9.19 In contrast to Character Area B, the 20th century development in the western half of New Town, identified as Character Area C, is of lesser architectural or aesthetic quality. The townscape has emerged as a result of piecemeal redevelopment and comprises a variety of buildings with some open spaces and institutional development. The street pattern is irregular and there is limited intervisibility with the Site.

9.20 The proposals will therefore have a very limited positive effect on the townscape in Character Area C, which is separated from the Site by the River Kennet and more intact Victorian part of New Town to the east (Character Area B).

Character Area D – Educational campus (Reading College)

9.21 Character Area D comprises the campus of Reading College which is located approximately 420m south-west of the Site. The distance and interposing development prevents any intervisibility or other physical relationship between the proposed development and the townscape character area.

9.22 The interposing development includes the later 20th century townscape in Character Area C which provides a buffer to the Site. There will be no effect on the experience of Reading College arising from the proposals.

Character Area E – Waterways (River Kennet and canal)

9.23 Character Area E is formed of the waterway which runs to the south of the Site. The river is embedded in the suburban townscape which surrounds it and this development forms part of the experience of the riverbank. The proposed development will introduce a new development of high quality architecture into the experience of the river, as demonstrated by AVR View Nos. 1, 2 and 8.

9.24 The proposed development will be consistent with the prevailing uses and materiality of the existing townscape, and enhance the overall experience of people travelling through the character area. This will also be achieved by the high quality landscape proposals which will activate the section of the river bank which forms the southern boundary of the Site.

Character Area F – Railway lines

9.25 The primary effect of the proposed development on Character Area F is the views out of the character area looking south. These views are only available to people travelling in and out of Reading by train. The scale and high quality design of the proposed development will introduce a building of landmark quality in the townscape, which will signify the arrival into Reading for train passengers coming from the east. Such buildings are typical features that are commonly found adjacent to infrastructure and add to the dynamic urban experience of approaching a major city centre.

9.26 Overall, the development will lead to a beneficial effect on Character Area F.

Character Area G - Lakes

- 9.27 Character Area G covers the River Thames to the north of the Site and the recreational areas at Caversham Lakes. AVR View Nos. 12 and 14 are useful to inform the assessment of the proposals on this area. They help to demonstrate that the effect on Character Area G arising from the proposed development would be negligible, comprising only glimpsed views of Block B. It will not change the experience, enjoyment or appreciation of the riparian, natural landscape.

Character Area H – Retail Park (Kenavon Drive)

- 9.28 Character Area H represents the 20th century commercial development to the east of Forbury Road roundabout at Kenavon Drive. A number of large plots are now redundant and form part of the area identified for residential redevelopment as part of the East Side MOA. The character area is in a state of transition.
- 9.29 The character area is located approximately 410m west of the Site and it is separated from it by the interposing, modern residential development at Kennet Walk and Robert Parker Road (Character Area A).
- 9.30 The proposed development will have no effect on the townscape in Character Area H which is already experienced in the context of modern residential development to the east.

Character Area I – King’s Meadow and Superstore

- 9.31 Character Area I is separated from the Site by the railway lines (Character Area F) which form a major physical barrier between the superstore and open green space at King’s Meadow. As a result, there is a very limited visual relationship between the proposed development and the townscape in Character Area I.
- 9.32 In our judgement there will be no effect on Character Area I arising from the proposed development. The character area is primarily formed of the car park to the superstore which has the closest physical relationship to the Site. Any views of the taller parts of the scheme above the railway lines will introduce a high quality feature in views out to the surrounding area.

Summary of townscape effects

- 9.33 A summary of the townscape effects is as follows.

Urban design and high quality architecture

- 9.34 The Site occupies a prominent corner plot which represents an entry point into Reading from the east. This arrangement lends itself to a taller building in order to provide identity, a point of orientation and to create visual interest. These are all elements which reflect good urban design. The proposed development responds to the opportunity to create a landmark building in this location through its scale, articulation and high quality architecture.

Scale, bulk and mass

- 9.35 The development has been designed to ensure that the scale, bulk and massing of the proposals responds sensitively to the surrounding areas. The design has been achieved as a result of an iterative design process in close consultation with the Council and other stakeholders.
- 9.36 The scale, bulk and mass is considered to be a sensitive response to the surrounding areas for the following reasons:
- 9.37 The appearance of the proposed development has been managed by the step down in mass and scale from Block B towards the New Town and River Kennet to the south (Character Areas B and E), as well as the residential area to the west (Character Area A) through the lower heights of Blocks A and C.
- 9.38 AVR View Nos. 5, 6, 13 illustrate that while the building appears as a new form in the existing condition, the overall effect is limited to glimpses in dynamic views (such as Cumberland Road) and is generally peripheral to the viewer’s experience.

- The proposed development has an elegant appearance that is slender in views from the west, which is created by the configuration of the massing in the tallest element of the scheme (Block B) to incorporate a double pitched roof and strong gables. Similarly, the verticality expressed in the façades helps to increase this effect.

- Where the building is more prominent in views along the river (Character Area E) the architectural detailing ensures that the taller block is visible as a high quality addition to this part of Reading.
- The creation of an area of high quality landscaping and open green space fronting the river will ensure that the nine storey blocks will be legible in the townscape, but in a manner that is not dominant or overbearing. This is particularly effective on the experience of Character Areas B and E.

Planning Policy

A new landmark/gateway into Reading

- 9.39 Consideration must also be given to the Council’s aspiration for the Site, which is to establish a new gateway into Reading. The proposed development creates the type of legibility and focal point that will ensure that people find their way, and negotiate the transition for the waterways to the north of the railway (Character Areas E and G) and the city to the south (Character Areas A, B, C and D). The scale of the proposals provides the required emphasis for a gateway or landmark building.

Optimising the Use of the Land

- 9.40 The Site is an urban, brownfield site which has high levels of sustainability being close to the town centre and public transport connections. The Site provides an opportunity to deliver much needed residential development in line with the development and therefore higher density development than the surrounding area achieves policy objectives.

10.0

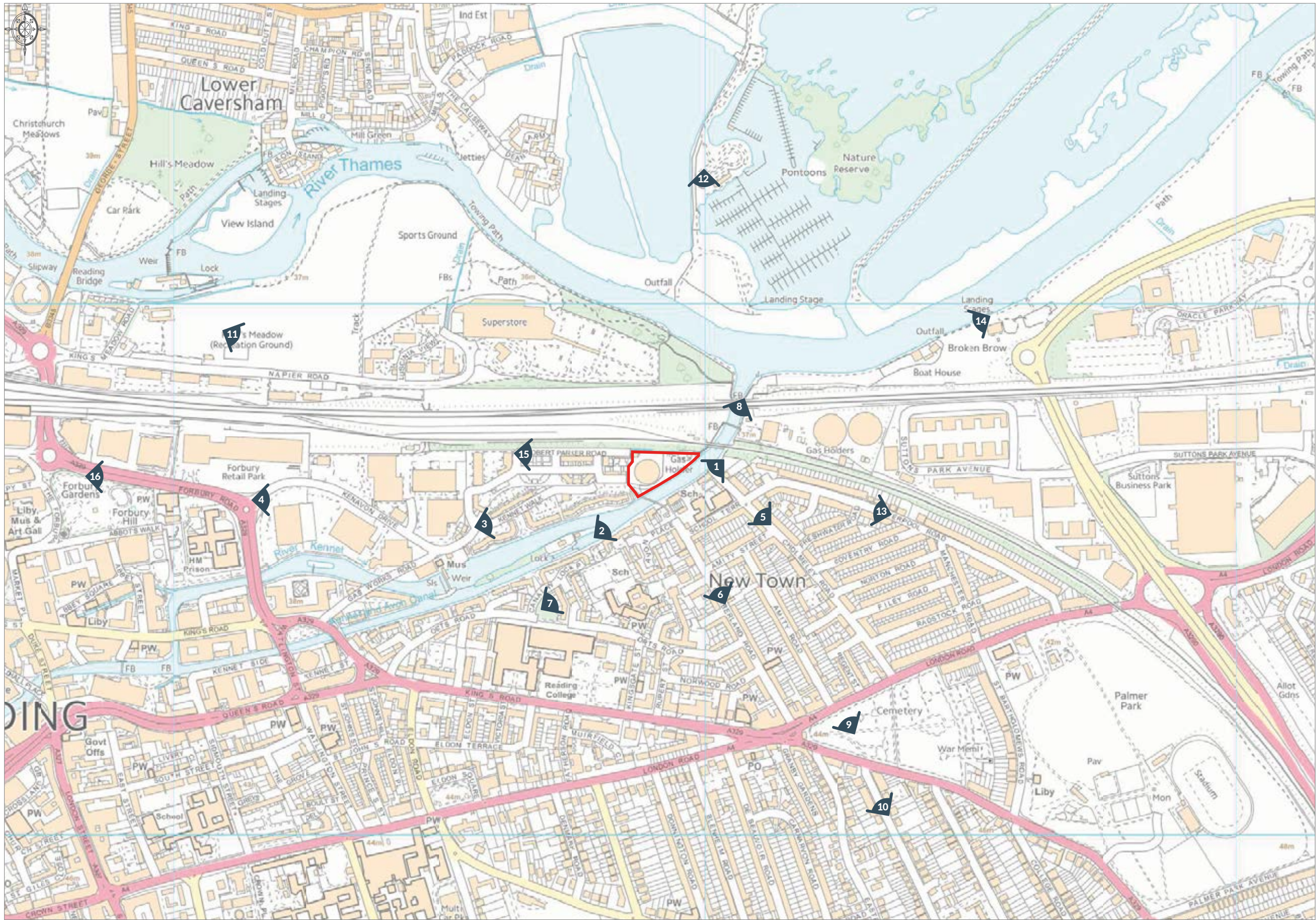
// GAS WORK SITE, READING



Assessment: Visual

10.0 ASSESSMENT: VISUAL

- 10.1 The HTVIA is supported by 22 AVRs prepared by GMJ. The location of the AVR viewpoint locations is provided at **Figure 10.1**.
- 10.2 None of the viewpoints that have been identified are static: they are kinetic and variable and as two-dimensional representations of a complex scenic experience are, and must be considered as, indicative. They have been chosen generally to give an impression of the maximum viewing presence and to explain the scheme. This is, in our experience, a very extensive and representative sample and it has been discussed with the Council. These views, or similar ones have also been used to model the proposals during the design process and in pre-application discussions.
- 10.3 The images shown in this section give an indication of how the proposed development will appear from specific viewpoints. While these are provided for assessment, the image is no substitute for the actual experience of the viewpoint. It is essential when considering these views that the individual is aware of the viewing experience at each location, that is to say, to be aware of traffic noise, weather, the surrounding buildings and any other similar matters. It is strongly recommended that these views are taken on site so as to be able to come to a full assessment.
- 10.4 These viewpoints have undergone a detailed selection procedure which has been based on likely visual receptors, heritage assets and the surrounding townscape. The methodology for choosing these viewpoints is outlined in **Section 2.0**.



VIEWS - LOCAL

1. Riverside path at Cholmeley Road
2. Riverside path south-west of the Site
3. Kennet Walk
4. Forbury Road roundabout
5. Cholmeley Road at junction with School Terrace
6. Cumberland Road
7. Open green space at Canal Way/ Orts Road
8. View from Grade II listed railway bridge
9. Reading Cemetery
10. Hamilton Road
11. King's Meadow
12. Thames & Kennet Marina
13. Liverpool Road at junction with Freshwater Road
14. View north east along the river path (TBS View 18)
15. Robert Parker Road
16. Forbury Road near Forbury Place



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Location:

Gas Work Site, Reading

Date:

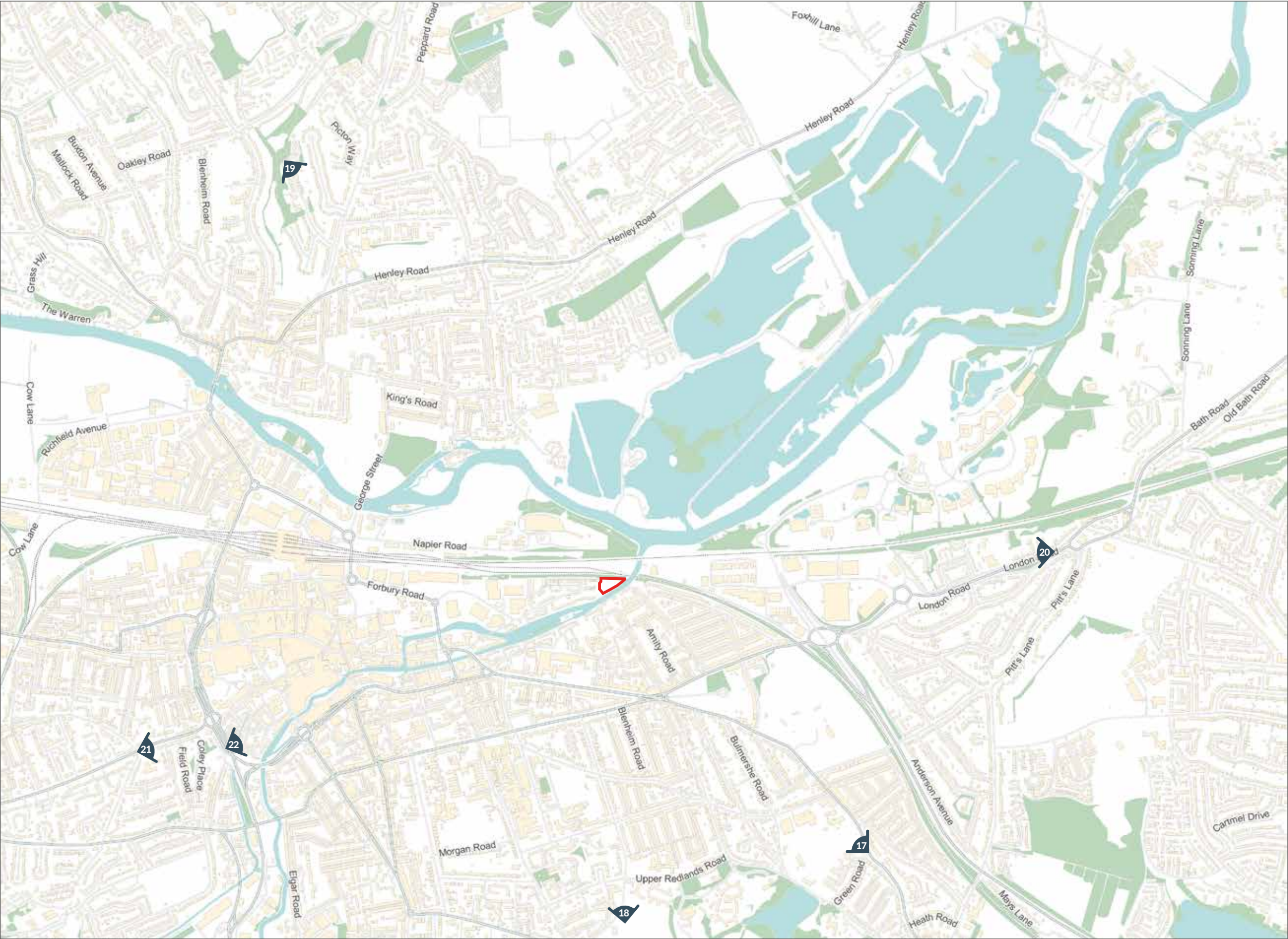
April 2019

Scale:

1:7500 @ A3

Figure 10.1 Map of AVR viewpoint locations.

▲ North



VIEWS - WIDER AREA

- 17. Near junction between Green Road and Wokingham Road (TBS View 2)
- 18. View north from the university sports fields at Queens Drive (TBS View 3)
- 19. Balmore Park (TBS View 14)
- 20. West from the pedestrian crossing on the A4 (London Road) (TBS View 17)
- 21. 1 East from the junction between Bath Road and Coley Avenue (TBS View 23)
- 22. Pedestrian bridge over Caversham Road near Coley Place (TBS View 27)

Location:
Gas Work Site, Reading

Date:
April 2019

Scale:
1:17,500 @ A3

Figure 10.1 Map of AVR viewpoint location - wider area

▲ North

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VIEW 1: RIVERSIDE PATH AT CHOLMELEY ROAD

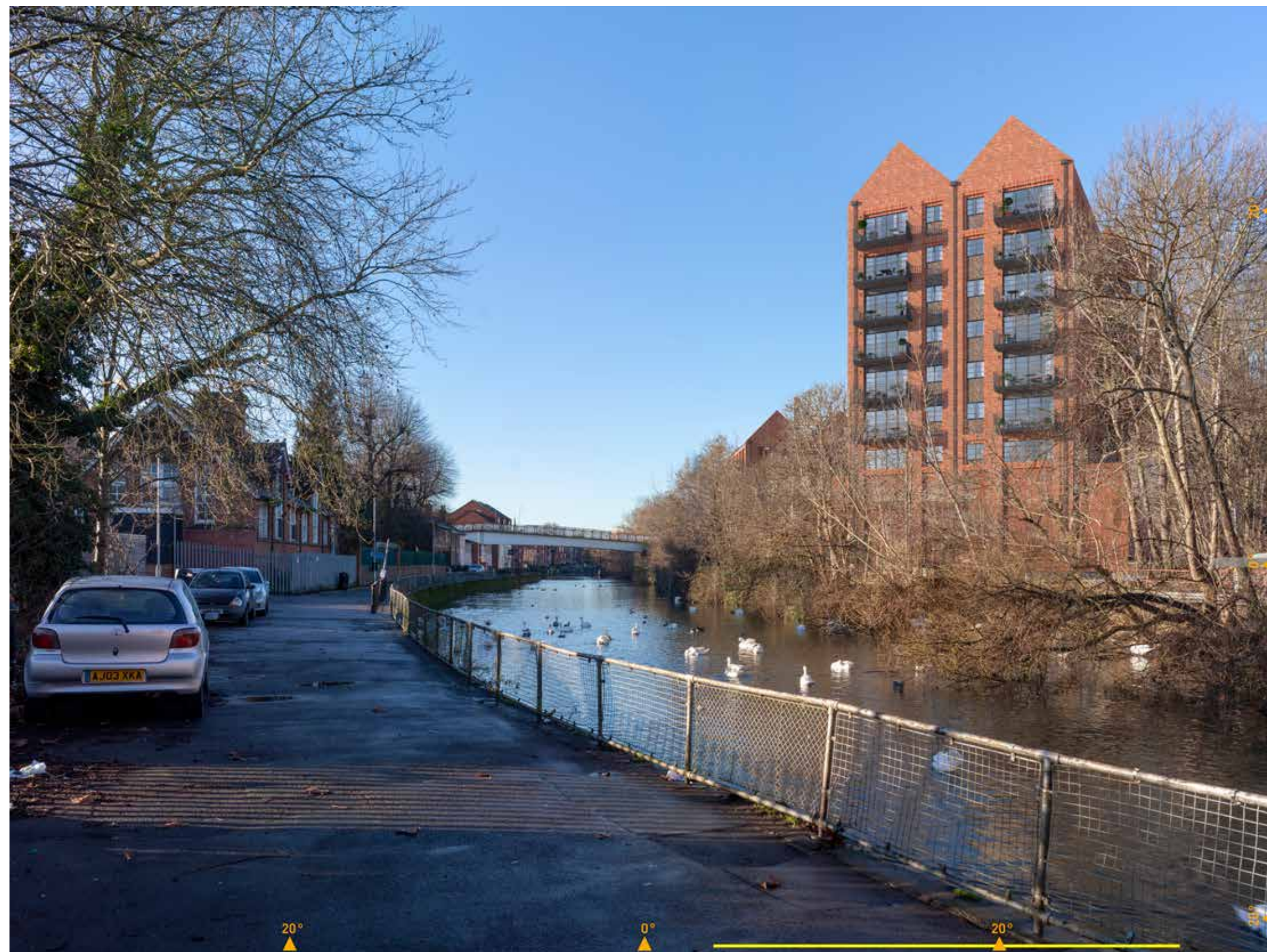
EXISTING

- 10.5 This viewpoint location is taken from the path on the south bank of the River Kennet to the east of the Site. The view is representative of the experience of visual receptors (primarily pedestrians, although some people could be travelling by boat) travelling by the river.
- 10.6 The waterway is the main feature in the view and creates a sense of openness. The path on the south bank is relatively wide and separates the water from built development in the surrounding area which emphasises the open, linear quality.
- 10.7 To the south, the river is flanked by buildings which have a domestic character and scale. The buildings in the foreground are separated from the development in the longer part of the view by the modern pedestrian bridge across the river which shortens the view in the middle-ground. This infrastructure gives a clear understanding of the viewer's location in a suburban context.
- 10.8 On the north (right) side of the river the remaining structures from the former gasworks including the gas holder on the Site are visible. It is a juxtaposition to the domestic townscape to the south. The appearance of the water tower is filtered by the trees, which would entirely occlude the structure when they were in leaf.
- 10.9 The frame of the gas holder is the tallest element in the view but the permeability of the frame means that it is not overbearing on the experience of the river. We note that only the upper half of the gas holder would be visible in the summer months when the trees are in leaf.
- 10.10 The verdant edge on the north side of the river enhances its riparian quality, particularly in the summer, although this vegetation is poorly maintained and not of good overall visual quality.



PROPOSED

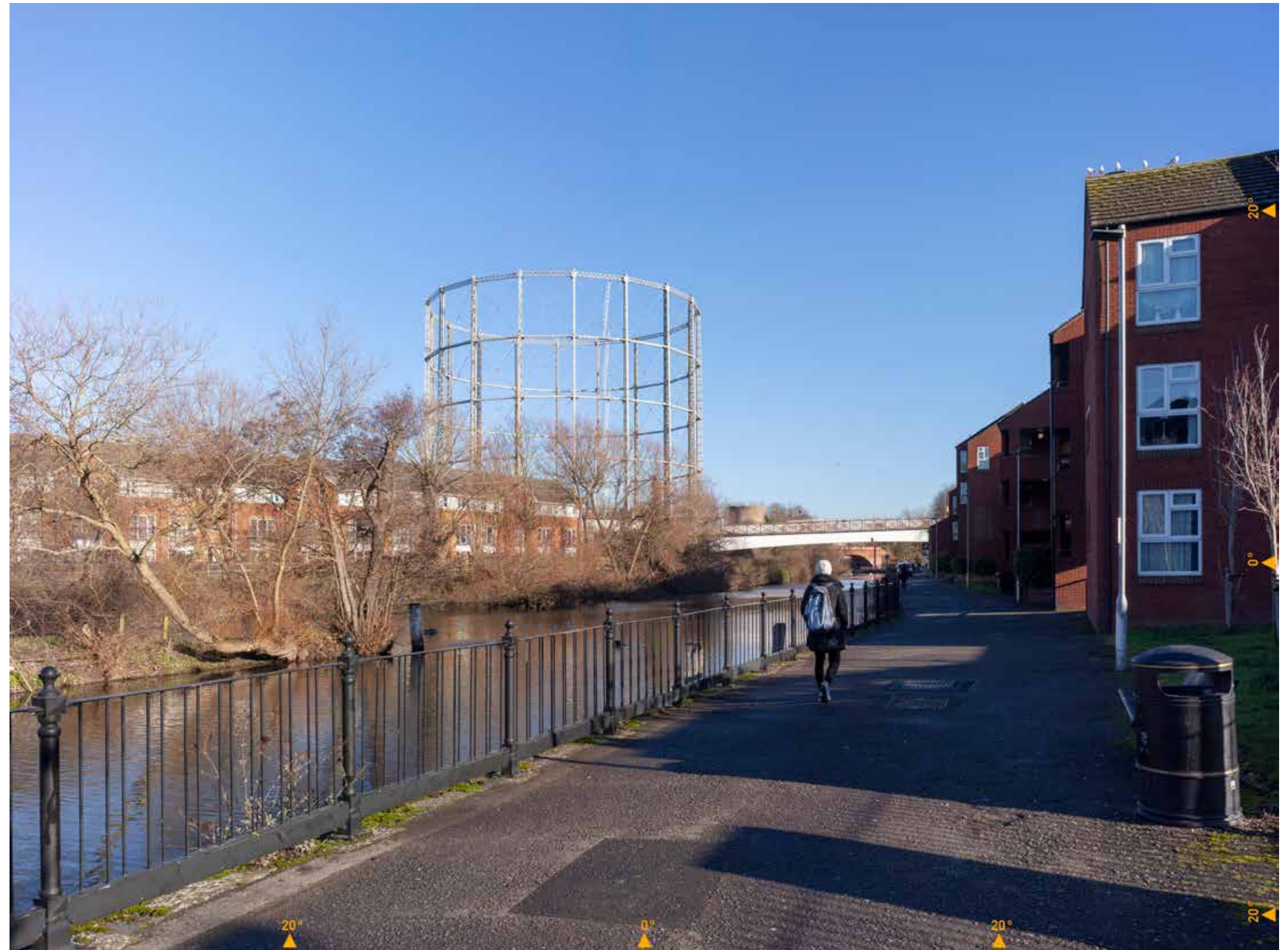
- 10.11 The proposals will enhance the experience of people travelling along the river into Reading by introducing a new, high quality residential development which will mark the entry point into the suburban area at this point on their journey.
- 10.12 The residential use and materiality of the proposed development will be consistent with and complement the domestic townscape on the south bank. This is a significant improvement to the existing experience, where the remains of the former gasworks currently jar against the otherwise pleasant, riparian/suburban character.
- 10.13 The main element of the proposals to appear in this view is the nine storey Block B at the eastern corner of the Site. This view demonstrates how the scale and articulation of the new building achieves the landmark quality envisaged and encouraged in policy.
- 10.14 The fenestration pattern with recesses in the façade and detailed brickwork helps to break down the height and scale of the building, and give it a slender, elegant appearance. This architectural quality is emphasised by the gabled roof profile. The proposed development sits comfortably in the view and does not overbear upon the experience of the river.
- 10.15 It is important to consider that the landscape proposals have not been incorporated in the visual representation. In the area between Block B and the lower Block A, which is just visible in the middle part of the view, there will be an area of green landscaping which will activate and improve the relationship between the Site and the river.
- 10.16 On that basis we consider that the visual amenity for the identified receptors would be beneficial.



VIEW 2: RIVERSIDE PATH SOUTH-WEST OF THE SITE

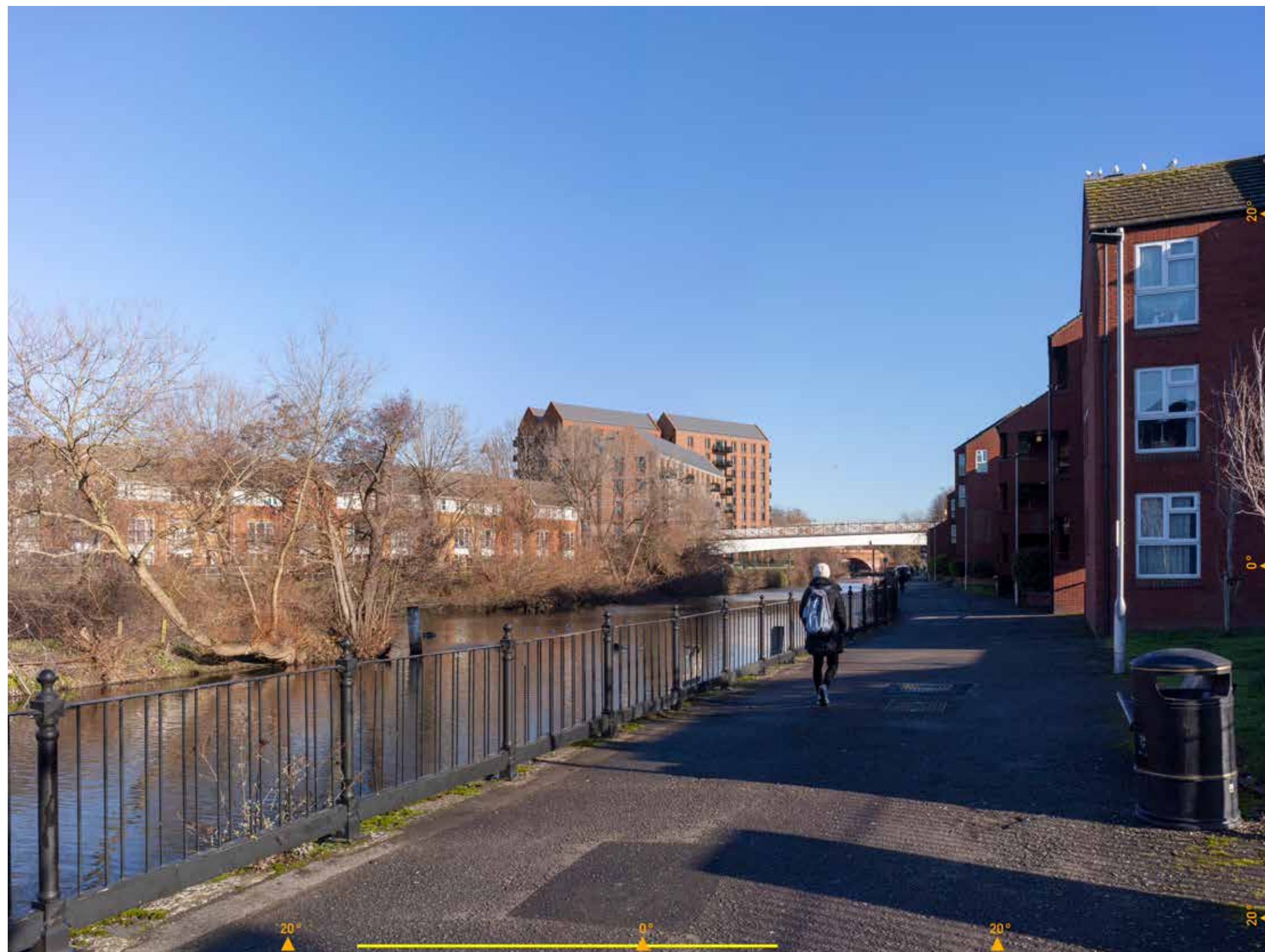
EXISTING

- 10.17 This viewpoint location is taken from a point along the river path to the west of the Site. It represents the experience of receptors – primarily pedestrians but also people travelling by boat – travelling east along the river.
- 10.18 In contrast to View 1, the river is more enclosed from this location as a result of the island in the river, the narrower pathways and the modern residential developments which flank either side. The residential development in the foreground on both sides of the river is three storeys and the primary materials are exposed red brick.
- 10.19 On the north (left) side of the river the upper storey is rendered white and this creates a line in the perception of the observer towards the white pedestrian bridge which cross the river in the middle part of the view. There is a glimpsed view of the red brick railway bridge beneath the modern pedestrian bridge. This bridge is not listed (the listed Brunel bridge being further to the north-east) but is a historic component of the view.
- 10.20 We note that the development on the north bank would be almost entirely occluded from this view when the trees at the river's edge are in leaf. In the summer months, the river would be more contained.
- 10.21 The redundant gas holder on the Site appears in the middle part of the view, rising above the modern residential development on the north bank of the river. Its height and scale is reduced by the permeability granted as a result of the nature of the frame. The former water tower is just visible, although it blends in with the vegetation in the backdrop.
- 10.22 The view has a strong suburban character. The industrial character of the built form on the Site juxtaposes with the scale and character of the domestic development.



PROPOSED

- 10.23 The proposals will enhance the experience of travelling along the river by increasing the sense of openness in views from the west, as demonstrated by this AVR. The removal of the gas holder and configuration of the proposed residential blocks on the Site creates a greater depth in the view and, we consider, a new and highly attractive focal point.
- 10.24 In this view, the five storey Block A addresses the line of the river which is contiguous with the existing development in the foreground. The step up in height is managed by the articulation of the massing, which is broken down into two parts surmounted by gable ends.
- 10.25 The brickwork detailing and fenestration helps to relieve the scale of the massing and introduces visual interest to the view through the high quality articulation.
- 10.26 Block A provides a transition to the taller, nine storey Block B which sits at the northern boundary of the Site. There is a strong familial likeness created by the consistency of the warehouse typology and materiality used in the proposed development.
- 10.27 The ridgeline of the taller blocks is perceived as consistent with the height of the modern development in the fore- and middle ground which the viewer experiences on the south bank of the river. The proposed development therefore sits comfortably in the established context and does not appear taller than or overbear upon the river or residential areas. The extent of sky is preserved.
- 10.28 The roof profiles of the taller blocks introduce a linearity in the view which increases its depth, and draws the eye along the river, making the most of the suburban riparian environment.
- 10.29 Overall, the development will have a beneficial effect on visual amenity.



VIEW 3: KENNET WALK

EXISTING

- 10.30 This viewpoint is located approximately 460m west of the Site. It is a mid-range local view which looks into the area of modern residential development at Kennet Walk. The foreground of the view comprises the entry point to Blake's Lock which includes restaurant/public house and museum. The receptors experiencing this view will primarily be patrons of the businesses at Blake's Lock and residents.
- 10.31 There is a mixed townscape character in this location with mid-20th century, two storey houses in the middle ground and a longer view to the taller, later 20th century development. The height in the long part of the view is increased further still by the redundant gas holder on the Site which appears above the rooflines.
- 10.32 The permeable nature of the gas holder frame means that it is relatively unobtrusive to the residential townscape in the foreground which would hold a viewer's attention.
- 10.33 The buildings which comprise Blake's Lock are listed at Grade II as well as the first house to appear in the right of this view, in the backdrop to the 'Bel & The Dragon' sign. The historic development in this location is not an overtly evident feature of this view, however.



PROPOSED

- 10.34 The yellow wireline which appears just above the roofline of the four storey, late 20th century residential development in the long, central part of view (Kennet Walk) demonstrates how the proposed development will appear from this location near Blake's Lock.
- 10.35 **It is important to note that the gas holder will also be removed from the view. The gas holder is retained in the AVR, however, to clearly demonstrate that the proposals will not exceed the height of the structure.**
- 10.36 The very limited visibility of the proposals in this view is judged to have a negligible effect on the visual amenity and experience of the people using this area. For clarity, the loss of the gas holder is not considered to have a detrimental effect on their experience either.



VIEW 4: FORBURY ROAD ROUNDABOUT

EXISTING

- 10.37 This viewpoint is located approximately 740m west of the Site at the exit from the Forbury Road roundabout into Kenavon Drive. The primary receptors will be pedestrians and road users travelling into the area to visit the business or residential areas beyond. The main visual receptors are motorists and pedestrians.
- 10.38 The hoarding around the vacant site in the foreground of the view indicates that change is taking place, and the development which is currently visible on the horizon in the distant part of the view will be soon be occluded by interposing new development. This development is the Berkeley Homes scheme at the former Homebase/Toys R Us site.
- 10.39 At the time of submission, the townscape has a commercial character with the retail park and former commercial buildings in the fore- and middle ground. The line of trees on the north side of Kenavon Road takes the eye of the observer towards the commercial buildings in the central part of the view, which are oversailed by modern residential development in the distant part of the view. This is the recently completed Bellway Homes scheme.
- 10.40 The contrast between the residential and commercial use is shown by the different materiality, articulation and scale of development. The former is has a red, brick-like tonality with regular fenestration which is typical of modern, town centre residential buildings. The commercial development is low rise, pale render with signage and public entrances.
- 10.41 The redundant gas holder on the Site is another layer of the distant backdrop visible above the Bellway development. It is a permeable feature which is a part of the varied horizon.
- 10.42 The visual quality of the townscape in this view is low.



PROPOSED

- 10.43 The yellow wireline shows how the proposed development will appear slightly above the roofscape of the Bellway development in the foreground. It is consistent with the height in this part of the view which has been established by the recent residential development.
- 10.44 **It is important to note that the gas holder will also be removed from the view. The gas holder is retained in the AVR, however, to clearly demonstrate that the proposals will not exceed the height of the structure.**
- 10.45 As with AVR View No. 3, the development of the vacant site in the foreground of this view will occlude views of the proposed development from this location.
- 10.46 Moving into Kenavon Drive from the roundabout exit, the proposed development is not considered to affect the experience of the townscape or visual amenity.



VIEW 5: CHOLMELEY ROAD AT JUNCTION WITH SCHOOL TERRACE

EXISTING

- 10.47 This viewpoint has been identified to represent the effect of the redevelopment of the Site on New Town to the south and the Newton School (Grade II) in particular. It is located at the junction of Cholmeley Road – a north-south axial route in the area – with School Terrace off to the west (left) of the view.
- 10.48 The viewpoint is located in a residential area and residents on foot and in cars are the primary visual receptors. Their experience would be informed by the character of the area through which they have travelled to get to this point, which has been described as Character Area B in the townscape assessment (see **Section 9.0**).
- 10.49 The listed school building is the primary focal point in the central part of the view, see **Section 5.0** for a description of the heritage asset's significance. Its attractive Gothic architecture draws the focus of attention and lifts to the overall visual amenity of the area.
- 10.50 In the backdrop to the school the built form on the Site is visible. The former water tower appears in the long part of the view provided by Cholmeley Road and the redundant gas holder appears above the historic roof profile of the school. The gas holder's permeable frame means that the structure does not compromise the primacy and robust architectural character of the school building in the foreground.



PROPOSED

- 10.51 The purpose of this assessment is to describe the effect on the visual amenity of the area for people using it. The effect on the designated heritage assets and townscape character shown in the view is assessed separately (**Sections 8.0 and 9.0** respectively). This view is used to inform those assessments, however, and there is an inevitable degree of overlap in the analysis and judgements which are made.
- 10.52 The removal of the redundant gas holder will enhance the contribution that the school makes to the visual quality of the area because it will remove a feature which interferes with the historic roof profile.
- 10.53 The water tower will also be removed which represents an improvement because it will take a low quality, redundant industrial structure out of the experience of the residential context.
- 10.54 The AVR shows how the proposed development will appear in the backdrop to the school, set off to its right and away from the primary parts of the listed building.
- 10.55 The alignment and materiality of Block B is complementary to the school buildings in the foreground. Its height is commensurate with the ridgeline of the school and does not challenge it as the primary visual feature, or appear as overbearing element in the townscape.
- 10.56 The articulation of the proposed elevations helps to break down the massing, and the architectural detailing is simple in contrast with the more decorated Gothic architecture in the foreground. It is elegant and well-resolved, contributing to the overall high quality of the new building as a feature of the view.
- 10.57 Overall we conclude there will be a beneficial effect on the visual amenity of the receptors who would experience this location.



VIEW 6: CUMBERLAND ROAD

EXISTING

- 10.58 This viewpoint is located within the area of residential development to the south of the Site. Cumberland Road is one of the main axial, north-south routes through the area which has a direct line of sight to the Site.
- 10.59 The viewpoint is located in a residential area and residents on foot and in cars are the primary visual receptors. Their experience would be informed by the character of the area through which they have travelled to get to this point, which has been described as Character Area B in the townscape assessment (see **Section 9.0**).
- 10.60 The view is characterised by the 19th century residential development, and the townscape has an enclosed linear character created by the two storey terraces which populate the regular street pattern.
- 10.61 In the long part of the view looking north, created by Cumberland Road, the redundant gas holder on the Site is the only part of the Site which is visible. The structure is now only a frame which means it is permeable, and its height and massing is not overbearing on the view.



PROPOSED

- 10.62 The AVR shows how the proposed development will appear in the view. Block A will terminate the view at the end of Cumberland Road and there will be a partial view of Block B rising above the roofs of the development in the foreground.
- 10.63 A comparison of the existing and proposed conditions demonstrates that the proposed development will sit well below the height of the gas holder – which extended to a much greater height in reference to the cream building at the corner with Sun Street.
- 10.64 The proposed development will appear as consistent with the established heights in the view, and the materiality and colour palette is complementary to the residential area in the foreground. In particular, the roof colour and the exposed red brick.
- 10.65 The regular fenestration which is set within recessed pilasters through the façades adds interest to the view and helps to break down the appearance of the massing.
- 10.66 Overall, the experience of people using the area is considered to be enhanced by the visual appearance of the new, high quality architecture of the proposed development. The new buildings help to increase the sense of openness and space in the view, and reinforce the residential character of the townscape.



VIEW 7: OPEN GREEN SPACE AT CANAL WAY/ORTS ROAD**EXISTING**

- 10.67 This viewpoint was selected because of the potential visual effect on the area of open, public green space within the area of later 20th century residential development in the western part of New Town. The main visual receptors would be residents, pedestrians and people using the amenity space.
- 10.68 The open grassed area is the primary component in the view. It is enclosed by mid-late 20th century, two storey residential development in the middle ground. This development prevents longer views in or out of the area. The redundant gas holder on the Site is the only feature of the wider townscape which appears in this view. It is not an important focal component of the view and does not make a particular contribution to the people's visual experience from this location.

