



Proposed CGI of the Thames View from Christchurch Bridge





2.0 Site Context and Character

2.1 Site Location

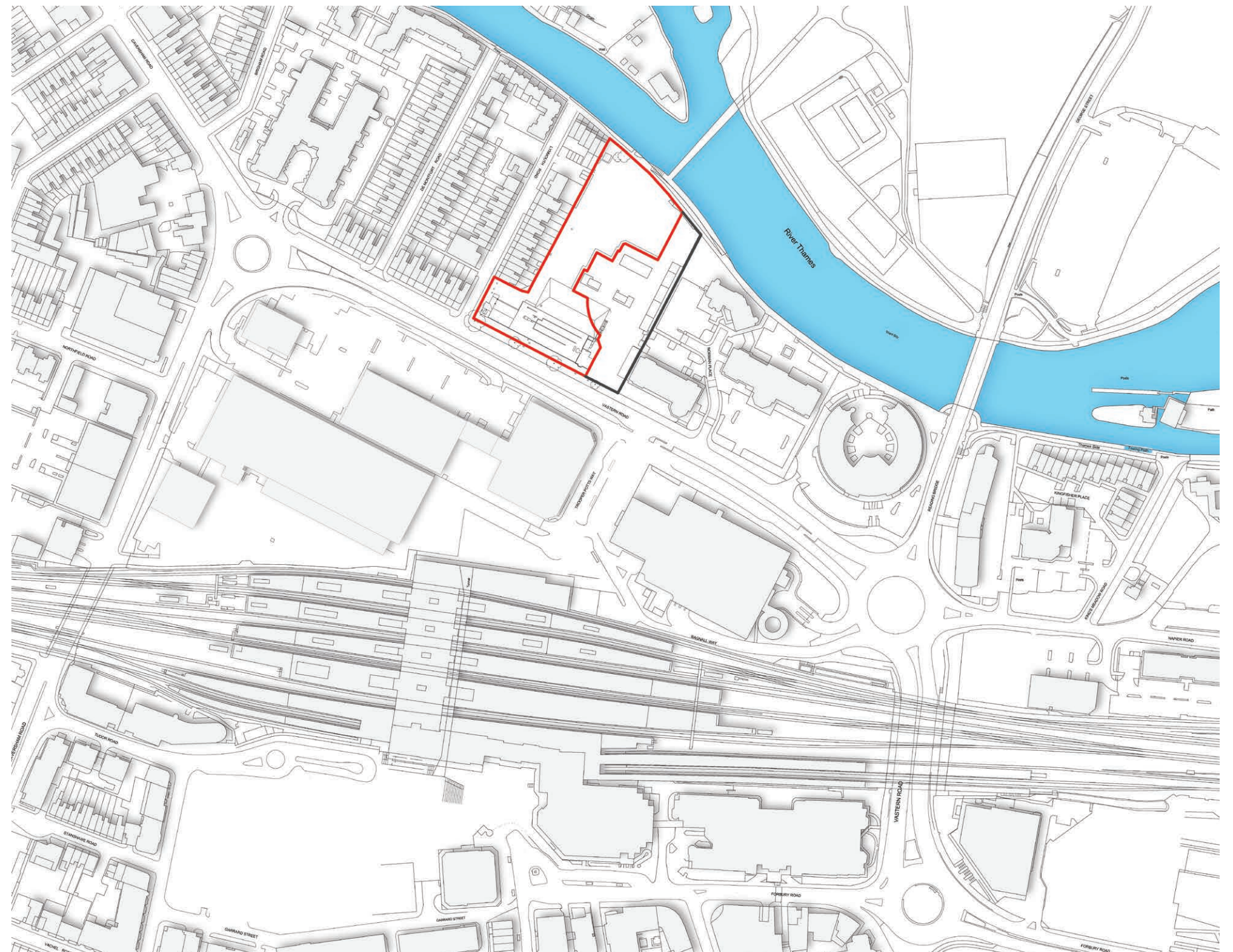
The former SSE Office site on Vastern Road is an allocated site within the Reading Borough Council Local Policy for redevelopment for residential use.

Key points within the allocation include:

- Maintain and enhance public access along and to the Thames;
- High quality green link from north of the station to the Christchurch Bridge;
- Potential for an area of open space at the river side;
- The main use should be residential;
- Development should take account of mitigation required as a result of a Flood Risk Assessment.

Our proposal will aim to respond to the key elements of the allocation as well as delivering our vision for the site.

It is important to note that both the Reading Station Area Framework and the Reading Central Area Action Plan were based on the entirety of the SSE site coming forward. Subsequent to the publication of these documents it has become clear that the operational equipment on the site needs to be retained by SSE and therefore the entire site is not available.



 Site boundary
 SSE land

THAMES QTR



READING STATION
CROSSRAIL



READING STATION PARK



ROYAL MAIL



VASTERN RD

LYNMOUTH RD

THE SITE

RIVER THAMES

CHRISTCHURCH BRIDGE

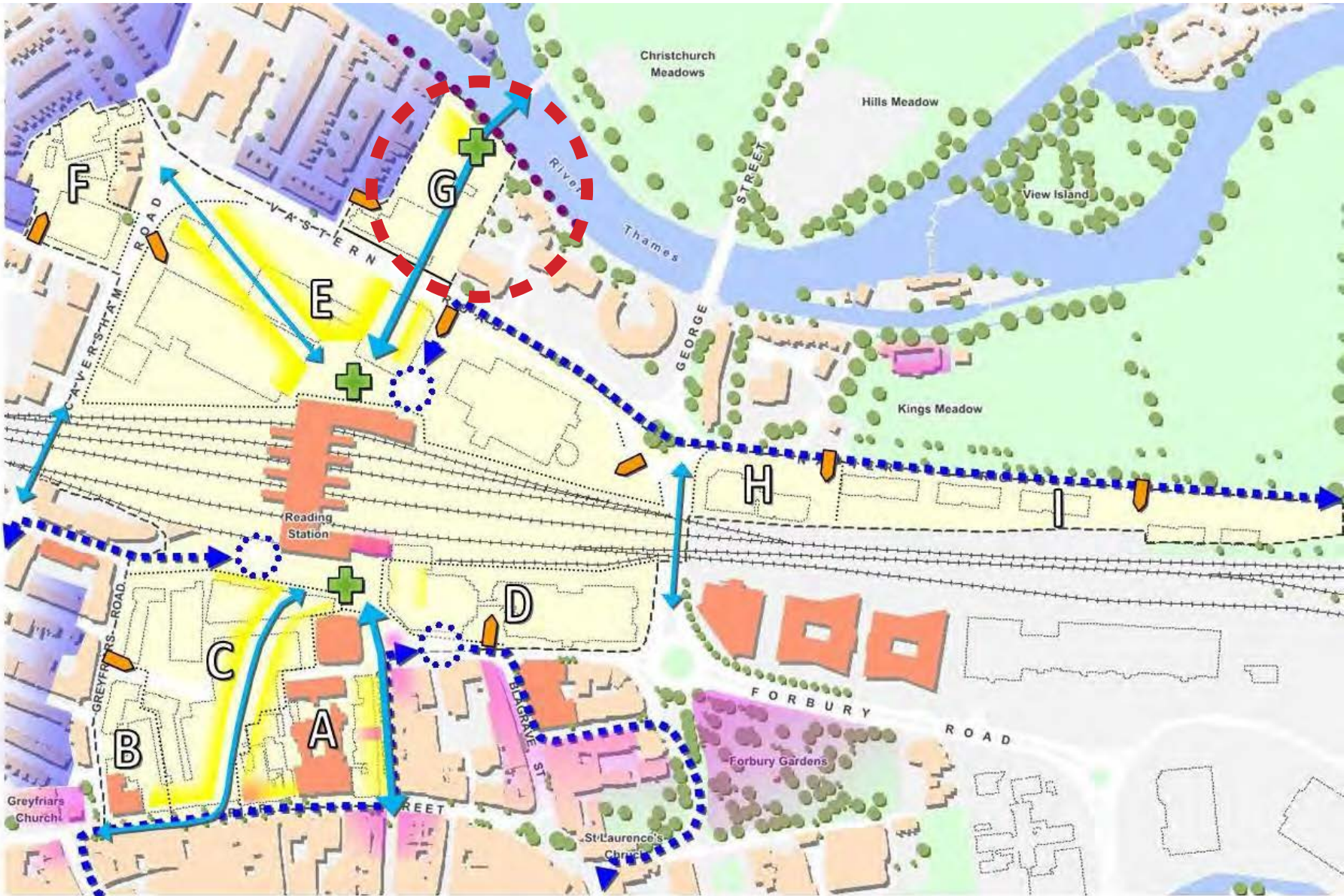


2.2 Planning Policy

Please see adjacent pages extracted from a number of local planning policy document sources as captioned.

These diagrams have been taken from the following documents:

- Reading Borough Local Plan
- Reading Station Area Framework



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Reading Borough Council. Account No. 100019672. 2016

Key		Sub-Areas	
.....	Sub-area boundary	A	CR11a: Friar Street and Station Road
□	Major Opportunity Area	B	CR11b: Greyfriars Road Corner
□	Footprint of existing building in Major Opportunity Area	C	CR11c: Station Hill and Friars Walk
□	Existing building	D	CR11d: Brunel Arcade and Apex Plaza
□	Recent building or building under construction	E	CR11e: North of the Station
□	Nearby sensitive location—low-rise residential	F	CR11f: West of Caversham Road
□	Nearby sensitive location—heritage assets	G	CR11g: Riverside
+	New area of open space	H	CR11h: Napier Road Corner
→	Vehicle access point	I	CR11i: Napier Court
↔	Key movement corridor (pedestrian and/or cycle)		
○	Location of transport interchange		
→	Proposed Mass Rapid Transit route		
...	Retained or new public access along waterways		
■	Activation of key routes and spaces with town centre uses		

Extracted from the newly adopted Reading Borough Local Plan - Pg 150
Diagram showing the “Station/River Major Opportunity Area Strategy”

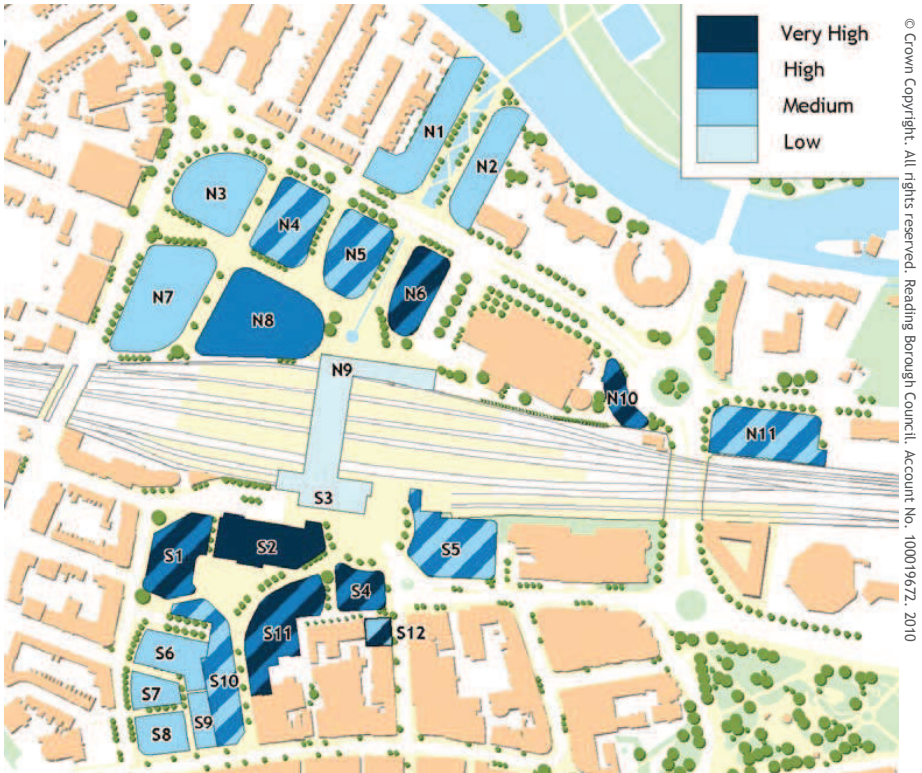


Figure 6.6 Indicative appropriate densities for individual development plots

Plot reference	Density range
N1	Medium
N2	Medium
N3	Medium
N4	Medium - High
N5	Medium - High
N6	High - Very High
N7	Medium
N8	High
N9	Low
N10	High - Very High
N11	Medium - High
S1	High - Very High
S2	Very High
S3	Low
S4	High - Very High
S5	Medium - High
S6	Medium
S7	Medium
S8	Medium
S9	Medium
S10	Medium - High
S11	High - Very High
S12	Medium - Very High

Figure 6.7 Density guidance



Figure 6.8 Main development plots

Plot reference	Benchmark	Landmark
N1	4	None
N2	6	None
N3	6	None
N4	7	Local
N5	8	Local
N6	*	Local
N7	6	None
N8	8	Local
N9	6	None
N10	8	Local
N11	8	Local
S1	*	Local
S2	*	District
S3	4	None
S4	*	Local
S5	6	Local
S6	6	None
S7	6	None
S8	6	None
S9	6	None
S10	8	Local**
S11	8	District**
S12	*	Local

* Benchmark height likely to be at least 10 storeys - refer to tall building policies and design guidance.

** Only parts of the plot within the Tall Buildings Clusters as defined by the RCAAP are appropriate for landmarks.

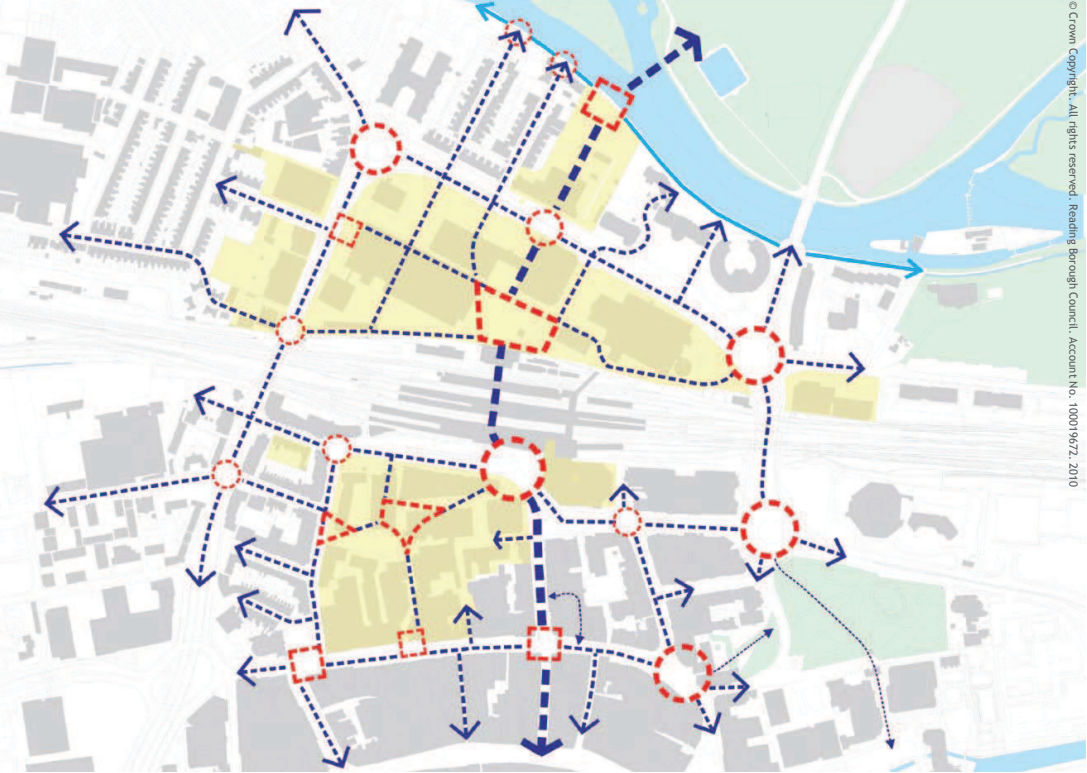


Figure 8.2 Framework structure

- Major path/ pedestrian link
- Minor path
- Public space/ square, important intersections and point of orientation (may not reflect exact shape shown)
- Water-side footpath
- Development opportunity sites

2.3 Historic Context

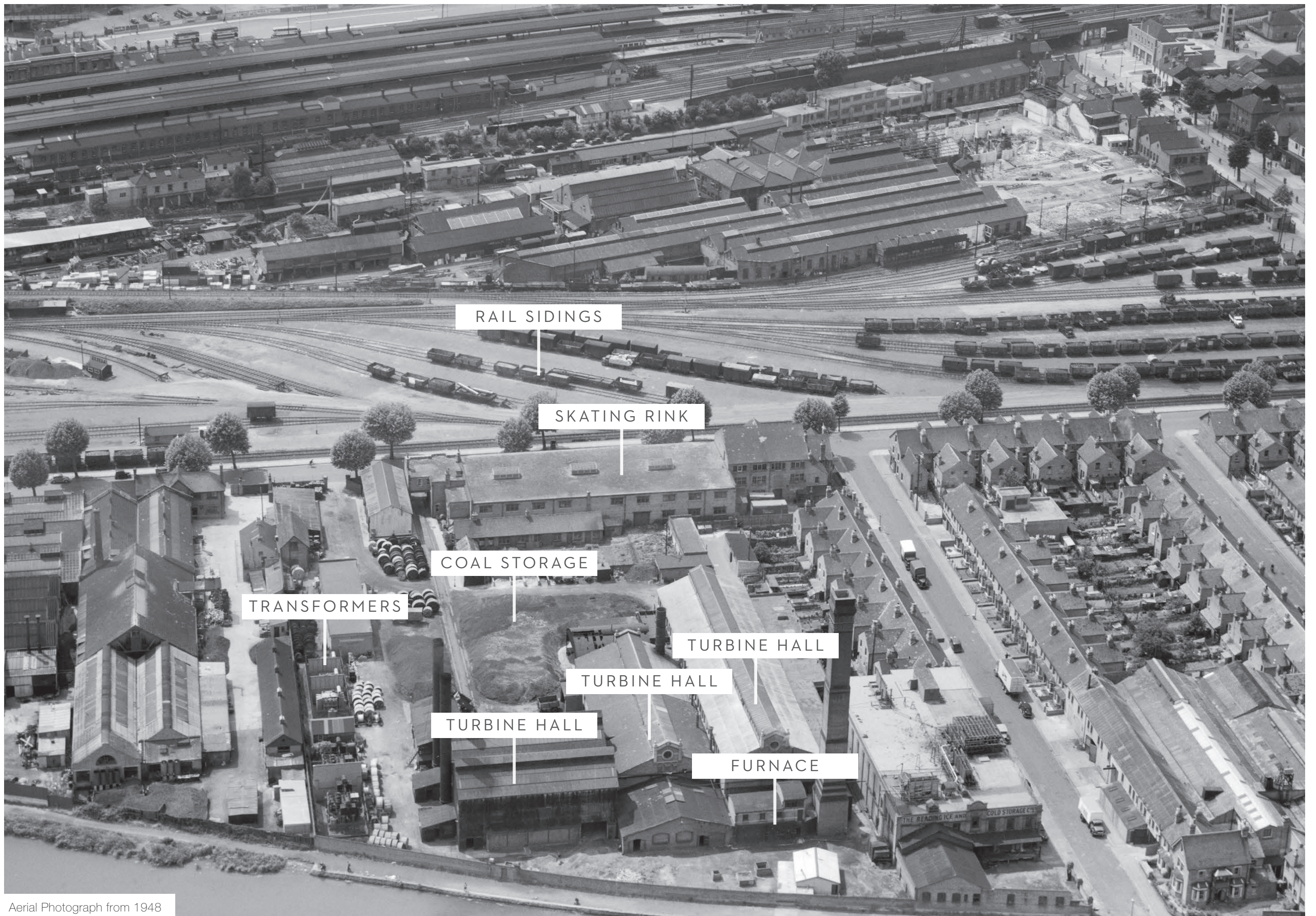
The Vastern Road site was the local power station in Reading from the turn of the twentieth century owned and operated by Reading Electric Supply Co. Ltd. Electricity, at the time, was a luxury item and was at first distributed locally at different voltages and frequencies by small independent power stations, which often meant intermittent provision for customers.

The furnaces which powered the turbine halls were fuelled by coal. The river fronting buildings used the water for cooling in the turbine halls hence the location of the halls and chimney. With the evolution of the railways, the site was well placed to receive deliveries of coal by train with access directly off Vastern Road to the centre of the site as can be seen in the adjacent photograph.

Throughout the twentieth century the site was owned and occupied by Reading Electricity Co. Ltd, British Electricity Authority, the Central Electricity Generating Board and finally Scottish and Southern Electric who still occupy part of the site along with the high voltage electrical equipment located on the site of the old coal stack.

With the establishment of the Central Electricity Generating Board in 1957, there was a drive to regularise electricity production across the country. The transition from a full electricity generation site to a distribution facility occurred in 1943 with the opening of Earley Power Station on the outskirts of the town, leaving a key part of Reading's industrial heritage unused. Demolition of the iconic chimney occurred in 1970 leaving the riverside frontage without a landmark which had been present on the site since the turn of the century.





Aerial Photograph from 1948

2.3.1 Site development

When considering the design for the Vastern Road site, it has been necessary to understand the history of the site and how it has evolved over time.

The time-line below demonstrates how the Reading Electric Supply Co was the first registered use of the site in 1894, according to Kelly's street index. The Electricity works evolved over time and extended back towards Vastern Road. In addition, a roller-skating rink was constructed on the Vastern Road frontage which became a Depository in 1936 and eventually SSE's offices on the site.

The chimney and wharf buildings were demolished in 1970 and replaced with a car show room, among other uses, before SSE's major operations were relocated to a new site in Reading leaving a small office and HV electrical equipment on site.

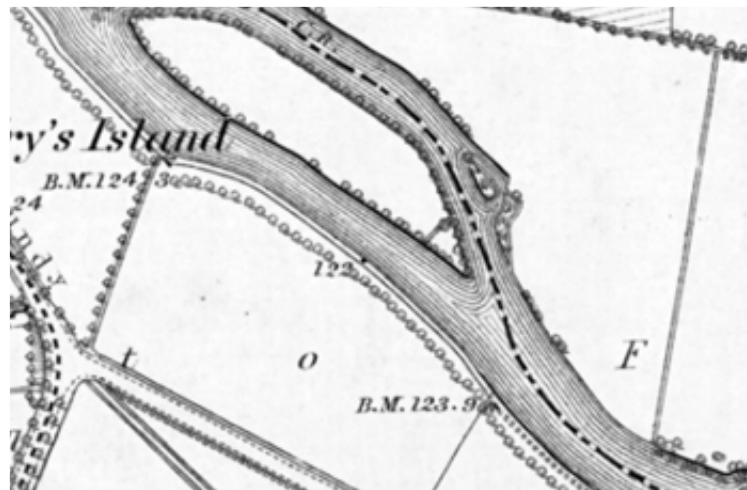
The design team have worked with the appointed heritage consultant to document the history of the site.

- Additional research has also included:
- Engagement and visits to Reading Museum
 - Engagement and visits to Berkshire Records Office
 - Engagement with SSE Heritage team
 - Engagement with RIBA Library
 - Engagement with local history group forums
 - Extensive Web research
 - Consultation with CADRA (Caversham and District Residents' Association)

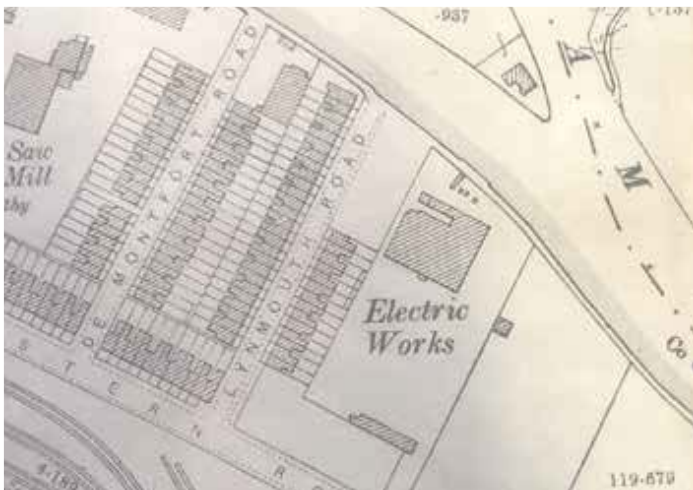
Time-line:

- 1894** Frederick W Albury won the tender to design buildings for the Reading Electric Supply Co. Ltd.
- 1898** Buildings first appeared on a map with a small building close to Vastern Road and the main works building adjacent to the Thames (for ease of coal
- 1900** Reading Electric Supply Co. Ltd

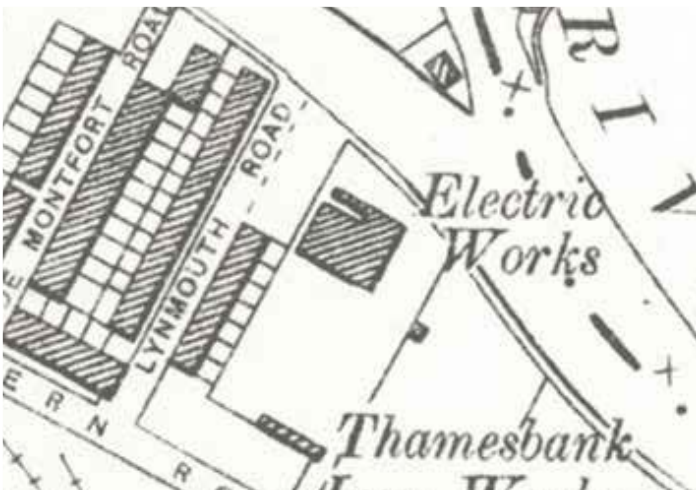
- 1912** Reading Electric Supply Co. Ltd (E Rowley Hill engineer and manager) & Reading Roller Skating Rink (on Vastern Road)
- 1920** Reading Electric Supply Co. Ltd & Collier & Catley (building & timber yard) & Allen & Simmonds Co. Ltd (foundry & motor sales depot)
- 1930** Reading Electric Supply Co. Ltd (Walter Barnes FCIS)
- 1940** Reading Corporation Electricity Dept. (J.W. Arthur engineer & manager). John Edwards listed at 55 Vastern Road (possible first reference to locally listed building as accommodation)
- 1950** British Electricity Authority (Southern division) generating station.
- 1960** Central Electricity Generating Board & Southern Electricity Board
- 1970** Central Electricity Generating Board & Southern Electricity Board. Demolition of the chimney and river fronting warehouse buildings



1882 Prior to development



1898 Reading Electric Supply Company Ltd



1900 Reading Electric Supply Company Ltd



1913 Reading Roller Skating Rink constructed on Vastern Road 1903 Store extension to main building also visible



1920



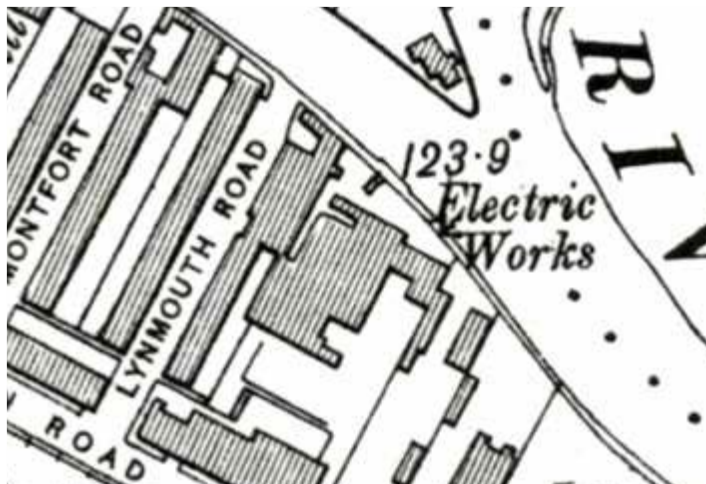
1928



1948



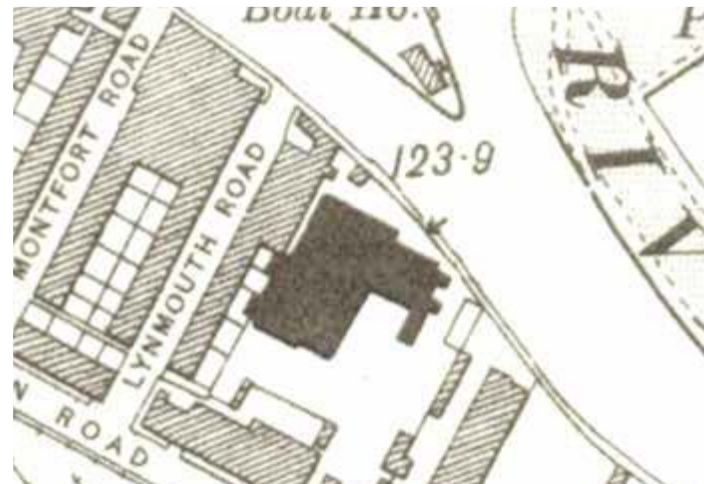
1948



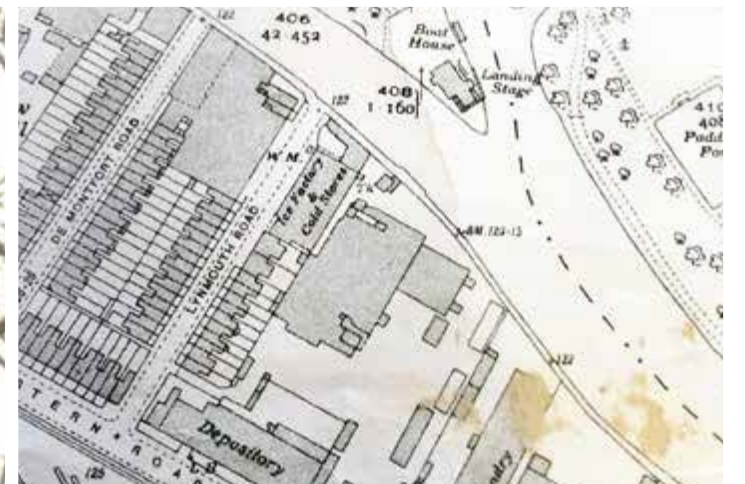
1914 Site buildings unchanged



1932 Reading Electric Supply Company Lt



1935 Reading Electric Supply Company



1935 Vastern Road building now shown as Depository

2.3.2 Architectural Details

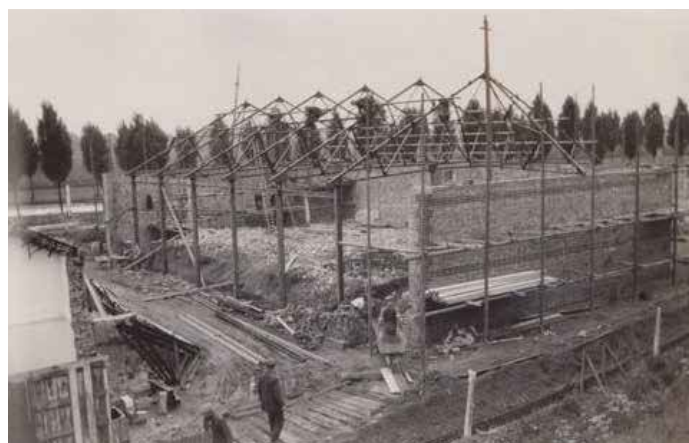
Whilst there is little historic imagery of the Vastern Road site and its buildings, the SSE website provides an insight into the building types that have been adopted over the years. The photographs to the right are for a stores building constructed in 1933 which is of a similar style to Vastern Road.

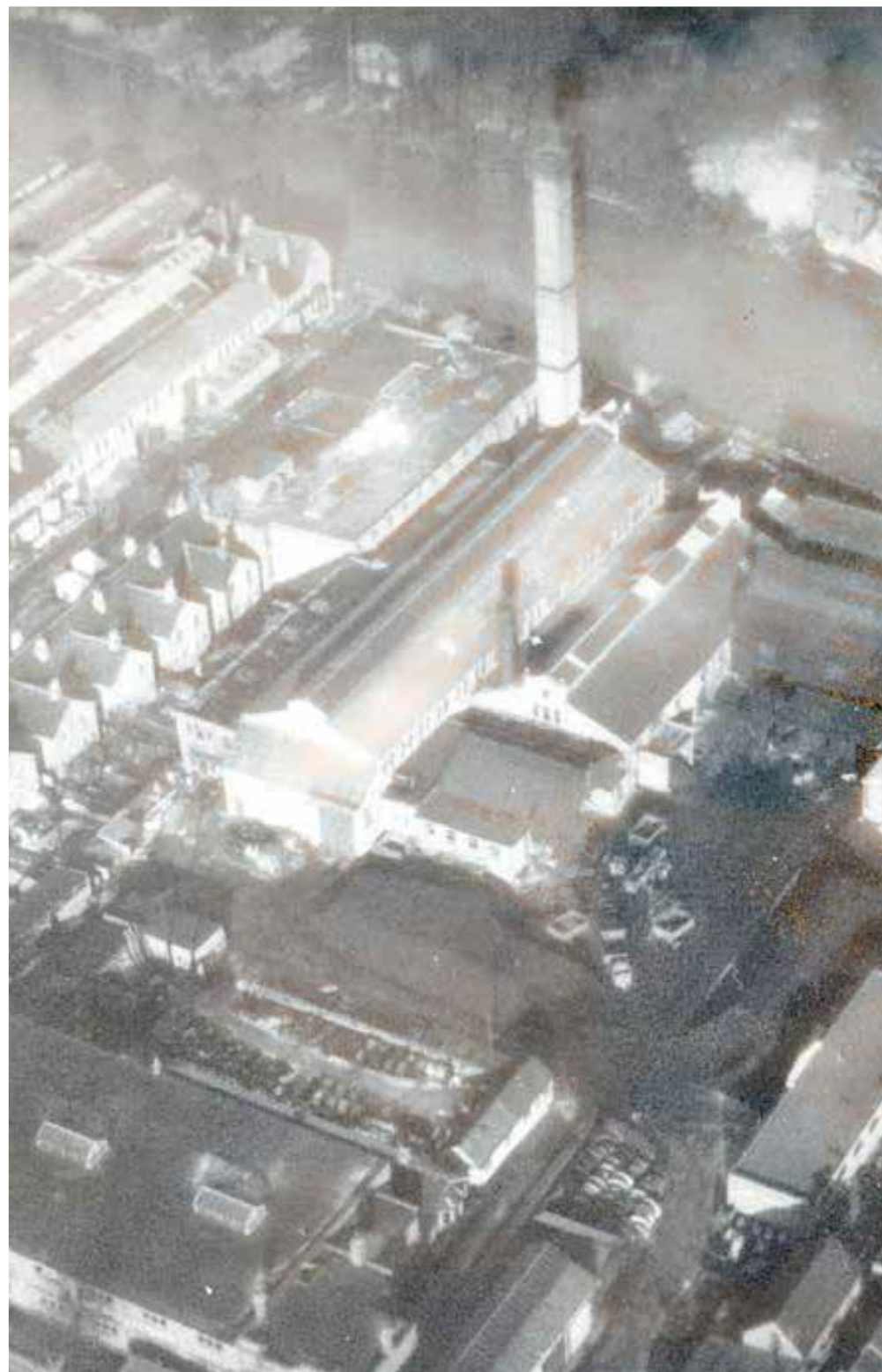
The images demonstrate similar features and characteristics as Vastern Road such as the pitched roof, contrasting brick window surrounds and feature gables – as can also be seen in the detailed photographs of Vastern Road.

In an extract taken from the RDNB of 1903 (Reading Drainage News Bulletin) the commentary by John Bowe, Borough Engineer and Surveyor describes the construction of a building on the Vastern Road site for WCs and stores which can be seen as an extension to the main building on the OS maps of 1913 on the previous pages.

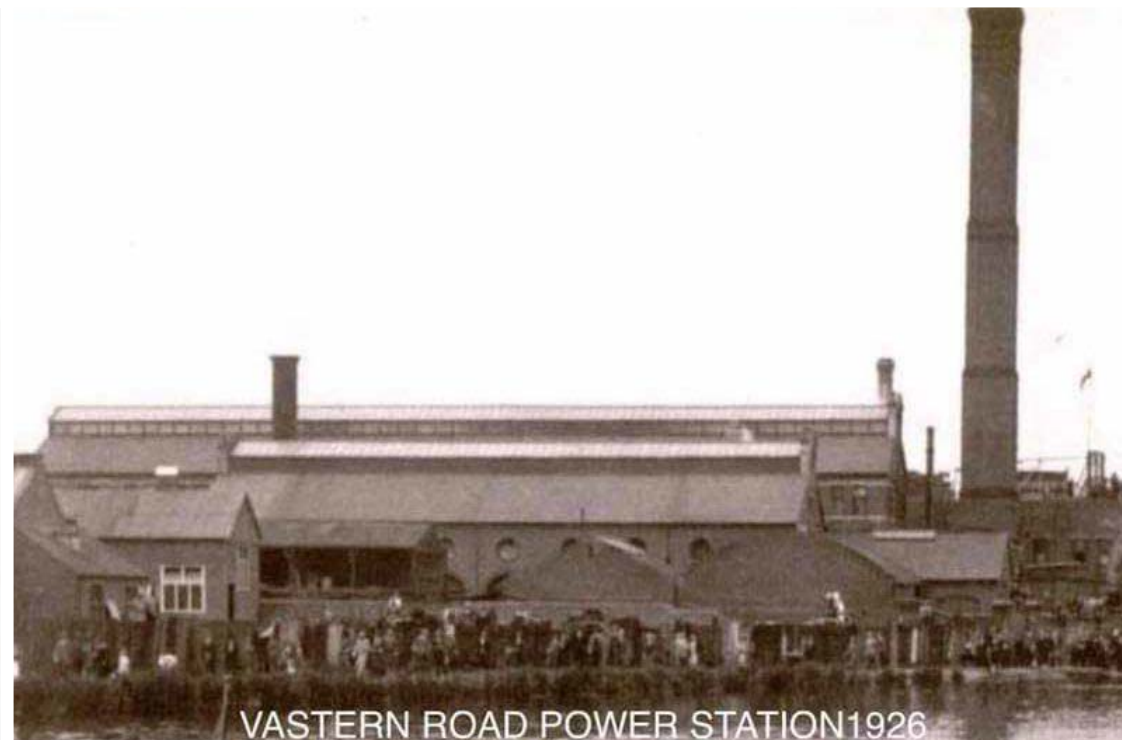
'The building as you are aware is of fireproof construction and composed of solid rolled steel columns of various diameter, and of steel girders bolted thereto. The floors are of breeze concrete about 8 inches thick supported by steel joists about 3ft 3in apart.

There are about 210 steel columns throughout the building and these are, I am informed, rolled up to 8.5 in diameter and forged when above that.'





View of chimney and coal powered works



View of the site from the River Thames 1925



View from the top of chimney towards Christchurch Meadow during demolition 1970



Aerial view from south-west - 1948



1930s

2.4 Wider Site Context



Kings Meadow, located a short walk east, along the River Thames



Station Square, north of the town centre, at the foot of Thames Tower



Christchurch Bridge, located north of the site connecting to Caversham

Reading

- To the south of the site is Reading town centre: 500m / 6 minutes walk.
- To the east of the site is Reading College campus: 1.5km / 20 minutes walk.
- To the west of the site is Caversham Road and bridge with local services and facilities: 600m / 7 minutes walk.
- To the north of the site is Christchurch Meadows: 600m / 2 minutes walk.
- Reading's train station provides connections to the main London terminals, Basingstoke, Oxford, Birmingham and the north.
- The A4 (Bath Road) A329 (Caversham Road) and the A3290 connect Reading to the M4 at junctions 12, 11 and 10 respectively.
- The surrounding area is a mixture of private residential, retail, commercial and light industrial accommodation.
- The concentric rings on the overlay indicate 100m increments from the centre of the site: this equates to a walking time of approximately 1.2 minutes or 6 minutes to travel 500m.

- ① 53-55 Vastern Road
- ② Reading Train Station
- ③ Christchurch Bridge
- ④ Reading Bridge
- ⑤ Christchurch Meadows
- ⑥ Thames Water
- ⑦ Reading Bridge House
- ⑧ Vastern Court Retail Park
- ⑨ Reading station Car Park
- ⑩ Reading Station Underpass
- ⑪ Forbury Gardens
- ⑫ Thames Tower
- ⑬ Royal Mail Sorting Office
- ⑭ Kings Meadow
- ⑮ Fire Station
- ⑯ Station Square
- ⑰ Hills Meadow
- ⑱ Westfield Park
- ⑲ Rivermead Leisure
- ⑳ Complex
- ㉑ The Oracle