THE ENVIRONMENT PARTNERSHIP

UXBRIDGE ROAD GASHOLDER STATION

UXBRIDGE ROAD, SLOUGH

HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING REPORT

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OASIS Report Form

The Environment Partnership (TEP)

Job Number:	**8119**
Project Name:	Uxbridge Road Gasholder Station, Slough
***OASIS* Number:**	Theenvir1-414487

PROJECT DETAILS:		
Short description	The Historic Environment team at The Environment Partnership (TEP) Ltd undertook historic building recording and a watching brief prior to and during the demolition of Gasholder 4 at the Uxbridge Road gasholder station (formerly Uxbridge Road Gasworks), in Slough. The site commenced gas manufacturing in c1902 and Gasholder 4 was built in 1935 to expand the site's storage and distribution capability. The gasholder was built by the Manchester-based company R and J Dempster and was a spirally-guided gasholder with three lifts and above-ground tank. The inter war period saw a large number of gasholders built at gasworks across the country, and the spirally-guided design as recorded at Uxbridge Road was typical of the approach to these structures and remained essentially the standard for gasholder design into the 1960s.	
Project type	Historic Building Recording	
Previous work	None	
Current lane use	Vacant	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type and period	Modern Gasholder	
Significant finds	None	
PROJECT LOCATION:		
County	Berkshire	
Site address	Uxbridge Road Gasholder Station, Uxbridge Road, Slough	
Easting Northing	SU 98836 80252	
Area (sq ,/ha)	-	
Height aOD	25m aOD	
PROJECT CREATORS:		
Organisation	The Environment Partnership Ltd (TEP)	
Project brief originator	Montagu Evans, on behalf of National Grid	
Project design originator	The Environment Partnership Ltd (TEP)	
Director/Supervisor	Amir Bassir	
Project manager	Jason Clarke	
Sponsor or funding body	National Grid	
PROJECT DATE:		
Start date	March 2020	
End date	July 2020	
ARCHIVES:	**Contents**	**Location** (Accession No.)
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1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 The Historic Environment team at The Environment Partnership (TEP) Ltd undertook historic building recording and a watching brief prior to and during the demolition of Gasholder 4 at the Uxbridge Road gasholder station (formerly Uxbridge Road Gasworks), in Slough. The site commenced gas manufacturing in c1902 and Gasholder 4 was built in 1935 to expand the site's storage and distribution capability.

1.2 The gasholder was built by the Manchester-based company R and J Dempster and was a spirally-guided gasholder with three lifts and above-ground tank. The inter war period saw a large number of gasholders built at gasworks across the country, and the spirally-guided design as recorded at Uxbridge Road was typical of the approach to these structures and remained essentially the standard for gasholder design into the 1960s.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 The Environment Partnership (TEP) Ltd was commissioned by Montagu Evans acting on behalf of National Grid to undertake archaeological recording of a redundant 1930s gasholder at the former Uxbridge Road Gasworks in Slough, ahead of and during its demolition.

2.2 The work was carried out in response to a brief by Montagu Evans (ME 2020) and in accordance with an Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (TEP 2020a). The recording methodology was specified as *Basic Level 2* in accordance with the Historic England guidance documents *Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice* (HE 2016) and *Gasworks and Redundant Gasholders: Guidelines for their Evaluation and Recording* (HE 2019).

2.3 This document report supersedes a previous interim report (TEP 2020b) and has been produced in accordance with current best practice as defined in the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for the Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings* (CIfA 2019) and the Historic England document *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (HE 2015).

Site Location

2.4 The site is located at Uxbridge Road, Slough, SL2 5NT centred at approximately National Grid Reference SU 98836 80252. This is referred to throughout this report as 'The Site' or 'Recording Area'.

2.5 The former gasworks is located approximately 0.5km north-east of Slough town centre. The gasworks occupied an area of land situated between the Great Western main train line and the Slough arm of the Grand Union Canal. At the time of recording the former gasworks site had been almost fully cleared and now serves as a Cadent compound with offices and carpark and with a PRS station located alongside the now-redundant gasholder, which is the only one of four historic gasholders to remain extant.

2.6 The areas immediately adjacent to the gasworks comprise modern industrial units and areas of car parking. The surrounding areas are characterised by residential housing estates with a mix of 19th and 20th century properties.

2.7 The local planning authority is Slough Borough Council. The Historic Environment Record relevant to this site is held by the Berkshire Archaeology Historic Environment Record.

Aims and Objectives

2.8 The objectives of the survey and report were to:

- Produce a comprehensive drawn, photographic and written record of the gasholders and associated infrastructure prior to and during demolition;
- Provide an account of historic fixtures, fittings, and architectural features where visible or accessible; and

- Provide a written account of the recorded structures and the site, outlining and analysing any features of archaeological, historic or architectural interest and to disseminate these findings in the form of a report and orderly archive.

2.9 The objective of Level 2 historic building recording is to provide a descriptive record of an extant structure, before and during demolition or conversion, where the building is known or suspected to retain limited historic significance. This provides a basic record in accordance with the Historic England document *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice* (HE 2016).

2.10 Basic Level 2 is described as *'a descriptive record drawn from a visual inspection of the interior and exterior of a structure, advised by historical research and accompanied by a photographic survey'*.

2.11 Specific objectives highlighted in the brief were as follows:

- Use of historical survey drawings for comparable investigation relating to building form and function, identification of fixtures and fittings where visible or accessible;
- Provide an account of fixtures, fittings and architectural features where visible or accessible; and
- Provide a photographic record of the structures in context.

2.12 An initial 'Phase 1' recording was carried out on the 6th May 2020, prior to the commencement of dewatering and dismantling works. A visit was undertaken on the 21st July during the demolition works and the interior of the gasholder was recorded.

2.13 As part of research for this report a search was undertaken of the National Gas Archives which provided historic photographs, maps and plans of the site. Due to Covid-19 restrictions it was not possible to visit the County archives, however a search was made of available online resources as well as the National Gas Archive in order to support the historic background.

2.14 The site was not assessed as part of the Gas Industry Step 3 Report (Trueman 2002)

3.0 Historic Background

3.1 Historic Ordnance Survey maps of the late 19th century show that the area of the Uxbridge Road Gasworks was at that time located outside the limits of Slough in a predominantly agricultural landscape. The Great Western Mainline railway, opened in c1840, passed to the immediate north of Slough, later influencing the siting of the gasworks. From 1870 to 1899 a small off-shoot area of detached settlement, labelled as Langley New Town, developed adjacent to the modern site and the Slough Branch of the Grand Junction Canal was also opened a short distance to the north. During this period and into the 20th century there was an expansion outward from the historic settlement core with new residential and industrial areas being constructed in the former agricultural land to the north of the railway lines. An examination of historic mapping of 1876 shows a small gas works located within the town at the intersection of Wellington Street and Chandos Street.

3.2 The National Archives records the following about the Slough Gas and Coke Company:

"The Slough Gas Light and Coke Co. Ltd was formed as a non-statutory company in 1848. The company gained statutory powers in 1866. The works were situated on Uxbridge Road in Slough with a later holder station being built on the Trading Estate. The area of supply covered Slough, Langley, Farnham Royal, Stoke Poges and Datchet. It came under the control of the South Eastern Gas Corporation in 1937 and the works were subsequently extended. On nationalisation in 1949 the company was vested in the NTGB (North Thames Gas Board)".

3.3 The Uxbridge Road gas works of the Slough Gas Company was inaugurated in November 1902 as documented in the Journal of Gas Lighting and Water Supply (Nov 18 1902, p1339). The new gasworks depended solely upon the inclined system of carbonization which was noted as unusual for a gas works with a relatively small annual output (45 million cubic feet) *"therefore, Slough, among the smaller gas companies, lead the way in putting entire confidence in this system; and, consequently, the working of Slough will certainly be scrutinized very carefully, and with great interest, by the gas engineers of the country".*

3.4 The journal further noted that the old works were reaching maximum capacity, and were cramped, with out of date plant which prevented economical operation. It was therefore recognised that construction of a new works was necessary, for which purpose four acres of land were purchased in close proximity to the Great Western Railway and Canal to which the works was joined by a private road, sidings, and wharf. The contract for the entire works was secured by Messers. R. & J. Dempster.

3.5 The retort house measured 70 feet x 52 feet and contained a bench of six retorts each 16ft long on the slope and erected by the Winstanley Speciality Company. Adjacent to the retort house was a coal store of similar proportions. The boiler, exhaust, pump-houses and workshop were located as a separate block nearby. The gasholder is described as having lattice standards and girders with a capacity of 100,000 cubic feet. This gasholder worked initially in unison with the gasholders at the old works until their eventual replacement.

3.6 The Ordnance Survey map dated, 1924 shows the gasworks which had been constructed in 1902. The site was located to the immediate west of Langley New Town and bound by Uxbridge Road to the east and the railway lines to the south. To the west of the gasworks and also occupying land to the immediate north was a large Paint and Varnish Works. Rail sidings are shown branching off towards the gasworks and the paint and varnish works from the main railway line. The area to the north of the canal remained largely agricultural but a brick works and the Windsor Engineering works were located to the west of the aforementioned Paint and Varnish Works. The gasworks, labelled as the Slough Gas Light & Coke Co., included two gasholders; one original to the 1902 construction and the other more recent and replacing the old gasholders at Wellington Street which had been demolished by this date. The layout of buildings shown on this map corresponds with the 1902 description with a retort house, likely extended by this date, located adjacent to the coal store, and with other buildings located between the gasholders and around the site.

3.7 The Britain From Above online aerial photograph archive includes a number of photographs dated to the 1920s. These are focussed on the paint and varnish works however the gasworks is captured at a distance at the periphery of several of the photographs. A view of 1924 shows two gasholders, one spirally-guided and the other with lattice standards rising from the above-ground tank (EPW009939 & EPW009943). By 1928 they had been joined by a third gasholder (EPW020650). The site of the present gasholder is shown as undeveloped and empty.

3.8 Ordnance Survey mapping of 1932 shows that various new structures had been built on the site by this time. A large extension can be seen to the immediate south of the retort house and a new linear building is shown to the north of the coal store building. Two small tanks, like tar or liquor tanks can be seen to the north of the gasholders. The Paint and Varnish Works had been significantly expanded and residential development had begun to enclose the wider area including to the north of the canal where large nurseries were located.

3.9 A description of the Slough Gas Works was provided following a visit to the site in 1947 by members of the Eastern District of the south Southern Association of Gas Engineers and Managers (G11/SLO/5521). By this date the site was producing over 1 million cubic feet of gas and the original retort house had been re-built. The works now included Glover West Continuous Retorts arranged in three benches and served by hydraulically powered waggon tipplers. No. 1 bench was originally constructed in 1935 and reconstructed in 1946, no. 2 was also constructed in 1935 and no. 3 was put into operation in 1942. The site also included an office and store building constructed in 1940; the building included a lecture theatre and it is noted that the building had already become too small for the needs of the Company and plans were in place for its extension. This linear range of buildings remains presently extant at the eastern side of the site, fronting onto Uxbridge Road. Other buildings on the site included a gas fitter's training shop. At the time of the visit new Carburetted Water Gas Plant were under construction which would have a capacity of 1,500,000 cu. ft. per day.

3.10 The gasholder operational data sheet for Gasholder 4 provides its date of construction as 1936 by R and J Dempster showing that it was constructed just prior to the site coming under the control of the South Eastern Gas Corporation. The 1947 description of the works lists three gasholders: these were each three-lift and spirally-guided and constructed by R & J Dempster. The capacities were provided as 300,000, 500,000, and 2,000,000. This indicates that the original 1902 lattice standard gasholder had been replaced by this date.

3.11 With regards future development at the site, it is stated that it was intended to make the Slough Works the major manufacturing station of the area to the west of London under the control of the South Eastern Gas Corporation Ltd. This development was noted as corresponding with the post-war increase in population at Slough which was scheduled to reach over 100,000, double the pre-war population. The scheme for extension was scheduled to include a new vertical retort bench, installation of a third water gas plant, new compressor and exhauster house, bringing total manufacturing capacity to 10 million cubic feet per day.

3.12 Following nationalisation of the gas industry in 1949 the company became vested under the North Thames Gas Board. A plan of 1956 (Fig 1) provides a detailed layout of the gasworks at that time (NT/SW/SLO/E/E/1). This included Gasholder 2, 3, and 4 with various relief holders and oil and tar tanks. Between these, at the west side of the site were an exhauster house, purifiers and CWG plant. At the centre of the site were the vertical retort building and adjoining boiler house, and two purifier buildings. Rail sidings entered the site from the south and branched towards the coke stores, retorts and the large coal storage area at the north of the site, adjacent to Gasholder 4. It is noted on this plan that the original route of Uxbridge Road, at this date narrower and with a more marked bend adjacent to the gasworks, was due to be deviated to a straighter and wider path with is its present form.

3.13 As part of a national trend, following the discovery and exploitation of North Sea Gas the gas manufacturing plant had become redundant and the site was re-purposed for the distribution of natural gas. A plan of 1966 shows only Gasholders 3 and 4 remaining (NT/SW/SLO/E/E/2). The retort house, boiler house, and principal purifiers had been demolished and replaced by distillate reforming plant and control building. The former coal storage area was by this date occupied by a control building, LDS tanks, substations and furnace. Between the two gasholders remained an exhauster house, purifiers and relief holder.

3.14 An aerial view of the site in 1948 (NT/NTG/E/F/3/35) shows that Gasholder 3 had been demolished by this date and shows some clearance of structures and plant seen on the 1966 plan including the demolition of the control building. At the time of survey almost all of the former gasworks site had been cleared and was utilised for storage by Cadent. The 1940s office buildings remain extant and the control building, dating to c1966 remains in use with an extension on its northern side.

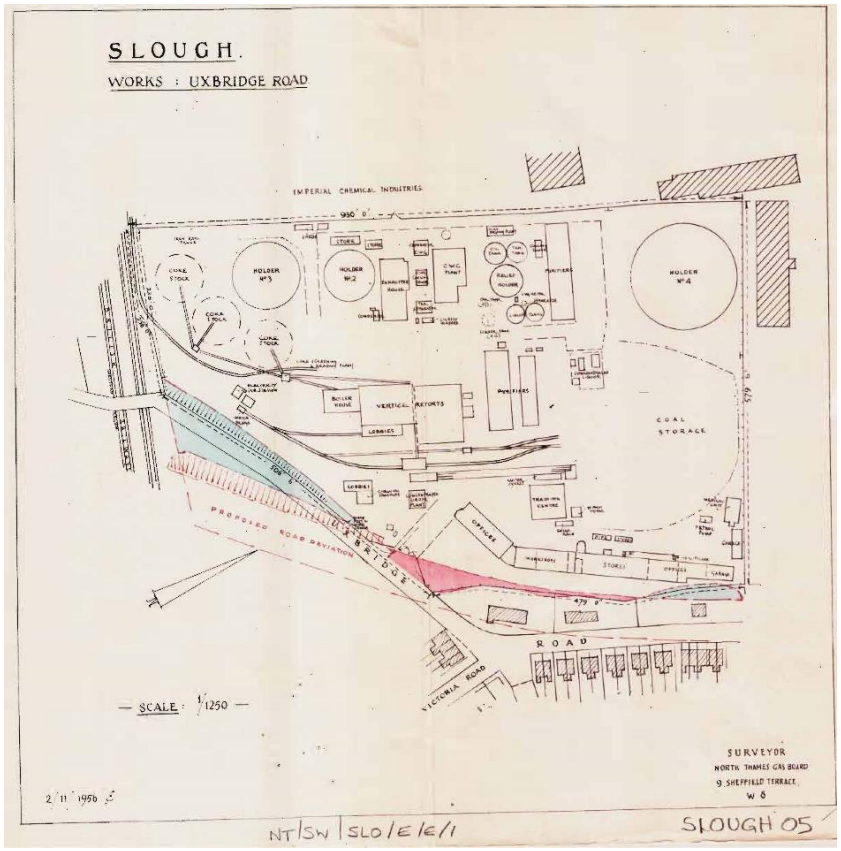

Figure 1 Plan of 1956 showing the Uxbridge Road Works (NGA ref: NT/SW/SLO/E/E/1).

Figure 2 Undated (post 1970s) view of the former site (NGA ref: NT/NTG/E/F/1/38).

4.0 Historic Building Recording

4.1 Gasholder 4 was located at the north-west corner of the present Cadent compound and is fenced all around. An active PRS (pressure reduction station) was located to the immediate south-west of the gasholder and access could not be gained to that area. At the time of recording various demolitions and groundworks were taking place in the areas to the north and west of the Cadent Compound.

4.2 The gasholder had three lifts and was spirally-guided with above-ground tank (Fig 4). It was constructed in c1935 by R and J Dempster. A commemorative plate was attached to the side of gasholder adjacent to the stairs and read *'R & J Dempster Ltd / Manchester / Makers 1935'* (Fig 8). The gasholder designation was stencil painted onto the side of the tank.

4.3 The gasholder measured approximately 50m in diameter and stood to a height of c11m, occupying a footprint of c196 sq. m. The gasholder tank was constructed fully above ground and was seated on a flat concrete base. It was constructed of elongated rectangular steel sheets joined together by riveted seam plates on the inner and outer sides of the tank (Fig 5). The lowest of the seven courses was measured as 1.20m in height and the second course 1.5m. The seam plate on the lower course was 0.47m in width while those on the 2nd to 5th courses were diminished in width to c0.3m. An example rivet head was measured as 50mm in diameter. The sheets of the top two courses were overlapped at the seams and riveted. The lift sheets were of smaller dimensions and of thinner gauge than those of the tank and were also overlapped and riveted. Channel stiffeners were attached to the inside face of the 2nd and 3rd lifts and the 1st lift had larger I-section RSJ vertical stiffeners which supported the crown frame. In order to support the tank roller carriages full-height vertical columns comprising lattice-joined pairs of channels were fixed to the inside face of the tank walls (Fig 3).

4.4 The principal dimensions of the gasholder were as follows:

Table 1: Gasholder 4, principal dimensions.

	Tank	1st lift (inner)	2nd lift	3rd lift (outer)
Diameter	50.37m, 165' 3"	47.7m, 156' 6"	48.62, 159' 6"	49.53m, 162' 6"
Depth	10.9m, 35' 10"	10.7m, 35' 0"	10.7m, 35' 0"	10.7m, 35' 0"

4.5 The tank walkway was projected outward from the tank edge and supported over pairs of tapered plates attached through the tank sheeting to the internal vertical stiffeners (Fig 6). The walkway was lined with safety rails with the posts being joined to the tank sheets.

4.6 The tank stair was located at the south-east side and was of a typical design, comprising a straight flight with mid-level break over a stanchion (Fig 7). The sides of the flights were formed of iron channels to which the iron treads were riveted. The stanchion was built onto a concrete pad and comprised angle irons forming the sides and joined by riveted flat bar lattice. A cage barrier was installed at the stair entrance and the sides of the stair were enclosed with safety rails. At the top of the stair was an electrical control box marked 'Intrinsically safe circuits digital', this being a modern addition.

4.7 The 24" inlet and outlet pipes were located at the south-west side of the gasholder (Fig 10). The pipes incorporated standard flood prevention by rising to the height of the tank. The valve pits measured 2.3m x 3.3m and were covered with iron grates. A buried tank with manhole and adjacent manually operated valves were located at the north-west of the gasholder. Inside the gasholder the pipes rose to the level of the crown on which hydraulic access boxes were located to allow for inspection of the pipes (Fig 16).

4.8 The crown was comprised of steel sheets arranged into concentric rings. The top curb sheets were aligned parallel to the crown edge while the main sheets were elongated towards the centre (Fig 11). The sheets were overlapped and riveted together at the edges. Seam plates were placed over the top curb sheets and joined to the underlying crown frame rafters. The crown rise was 2.9m (9' 6") in height. At the crown apex were 4" gas and air vents and hydrostatic tanks were located at the periphery.

4.9 The crown frame consisted of a series of radiating trusses of the standard form comprising steel channel upper chords joined by vertical struts to flat bar lower chords (Figs 14, 15). The upper chords joined to a central steel pipe and at the crown top curb were joined to tapered gusset plates at the top of the vertical stiffeners of the inner lift (Fig 18). Concentric rings of iron angles laid over the trusses helped to support the crown sheeting.

4.10 The cup and grips were square section, 300mm (11") in width with an overlap of 0.6m (1' 11"). The gasholder roller carriages were each fitted with four wheels rather than two. The tank roller carriages were set onto steel base plates supported over vertical stiffeners and the rollers were attached to a single axle held down by means of bolted housings (Fig 12). The lift roller carriages were of a different design, comprising two pairs of rollers on independent axles and interacting with the upper and lower sides of the guide rails (Fig 13). These were set onto raised angled footings. The spiral guide rails were fitted with plate runout stops which appeared to be original rather than later additions.

4.11 The lift stairs were of a standard design supported on upright and horizontal lattice girders with diagonal bars (Fig 9). The elements were joined by means of riveted plates. Spiral rails were attached to the inside face of the stair riser.

4.12 The gasholder utilised steam anti-freeze with lagged pipes being carried around the sides of the tank and rising vertically towards the lifts. The flexible anti-freeze pipes were carried to the lifts as they rose by means of pivoting cable trays which when at rest folded down at the south-east side of the gasholder.

4.13 High and Low alarms and maglocks with associated knock-off arms were located at the south-east side of the gasholder close to the tank stair and the anti-freeze cable trays. Also located in this area was a water overflow pipe connecting to a buried interceptor.

4.14 The gasholder was built onto a concrete base and the floor surface was covered by riveted steel sheets arranged in straight rows aligned from east to west.

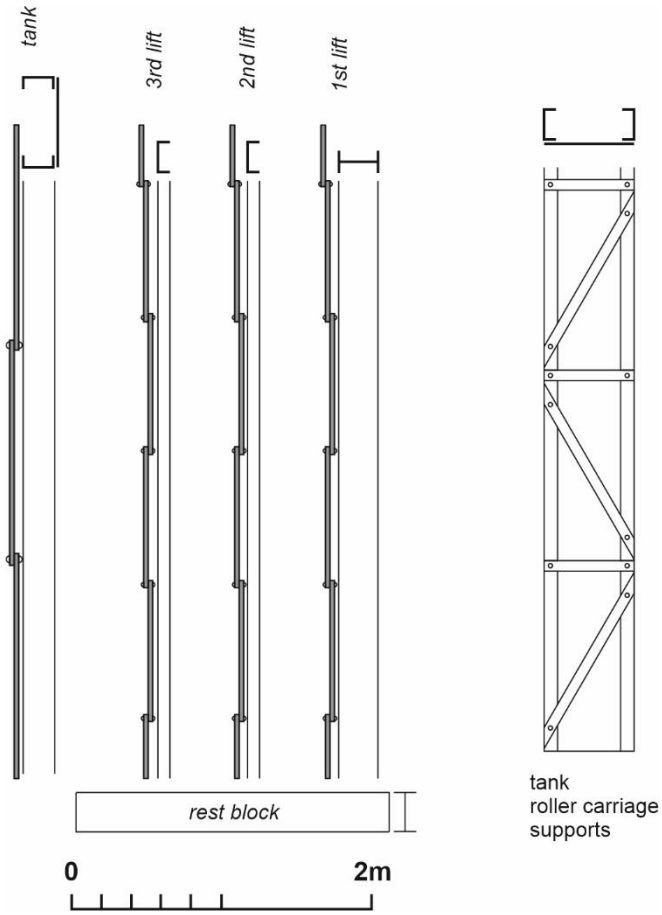

Figure 3 Cross-section of the tank and lifts, showing vertical stiffeners / carriage supports.

5.0 Photographic Record

Figure 4 General view of the gasholder, looking north-west.

Figure 5: Detail of the tank structure.

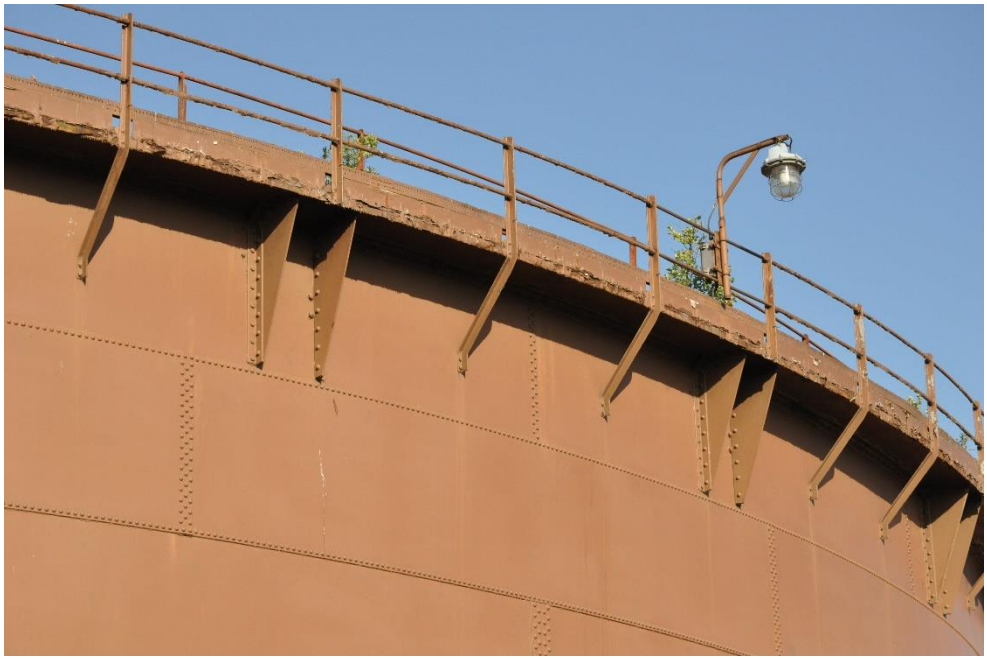

Figure 6: Detail of the walkway supports.

Figure 7: View of the tank stair.

Figure 8: Detail of manufacturer's plaque.

Figure 9: Example of the lift stairs.

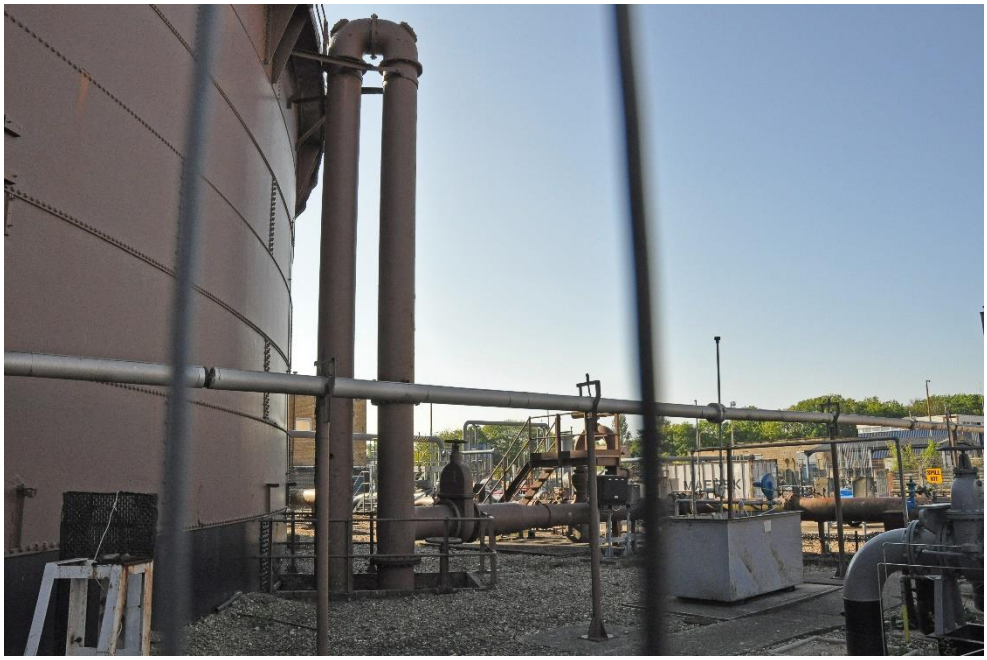

Figure 10: The inlet / outlet pipes and PRS station.

Figure 11: View of the crown, looking south-west and showing maglock knock-off arms and a hydrostatic tank.

Figure 12: Example of the tank roller carriages.

Figure 13: Example of the lift roller carriages.

Figure 14 The interior of the gasholder, looking south-east.

Figure 15 The crown frame and central pipe.

Figure 16 The inlet and outlet pipes.

Figure 17 View of the tank sides with vertical stiffeners, rest blocks and manhole access.

Figure 18 The crown top curb with rafter to vertical stiffener attachment.

6.0 Discussion

6.1 Commencing operations in 1935, Gasholder 4 was the last of four gasholders to be built on the Uxbridge Road Gasworks which had begun gas manufacture in c1902. The gasworks was built to replace an earlier works located in the town in an inconvenient and cramped location which was inadequate to meet customer demand. The new works initially had a single gasholder described as a having lattice standards and vertically-guided; this was joined by other gasholders of the spiralling design, with each new gasholder providing increased capacity than its predecessors.

6.2 Gasholder 4 was in most respects typical of spirally-guided gasholders of its time, comprising an above-ground tank with three lifts, and constructed of riveted steel sheets. Spirally-guided gasholders were first designed in the 1890s and became increasingly common into the 20th century where they were often used to replace vertically-rising gasholders. Gasholder 4 was built with its tank above-ground which was the typical approach to the construction of new gasholders that were not replacing a pre-existing one. The crown was supported by trusses which were fixed to the top curb and which rose and fell with the lift. Earlier gasholders, and very typically column-guided ones utilised a static frame attached to the gasholder dumpling. It was not uncommon for these static frames to be retained when replacing column with spirally-guided gasholders. The design as seen in Gasholder 4 remained essentially unchanged into the 1960s at which time the construction of new gasholders largely declined. The company R and J Dempster were among the more prolific manufacturers of gasholders and gas plant throughout the 20th century.

6.3 Following the exploitation of North Sea gas in the 1960s, and in common with other gasworks nationally, the Uxbridge Road Site was converted to distribute natural gas, and the redundant gasholders and the former gas manufacturing plant and buildings were demolished.

References

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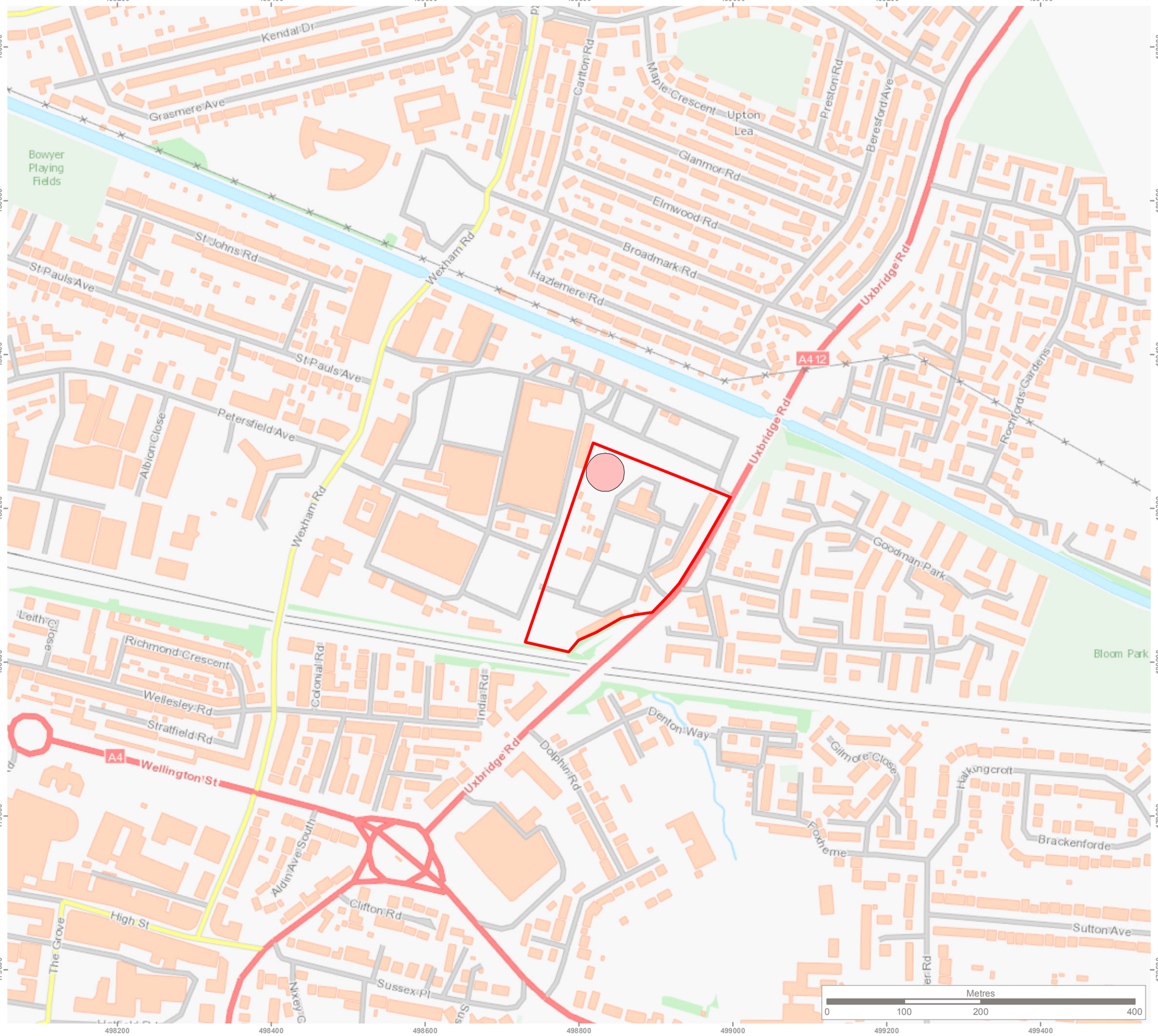
APPENDICES



KEY

Extent of the former gasworks

Gasholder 4

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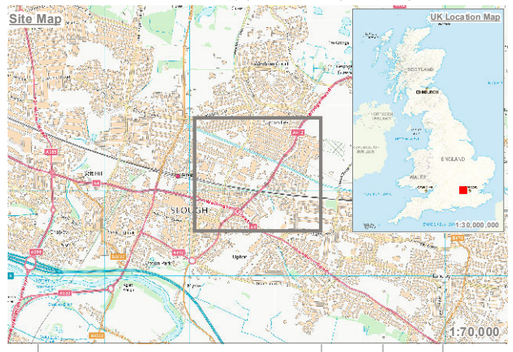

Rev	Description	Drawn	Approved	Date

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Project
Uxbridge Road, Slough

Title
Site Location

Drawing Number
G8119.001

Drawn	Checked	Approved	Scale	Date
AB	SA	JC	1:5,000 @ A3	04/06/2020

Gas valves / manhole

interceptor

valve

anti-freeze up

anti-freeze up

valve pit

Gas and air valves

Gasholder 4

gas vent

gas vent

lift stairs

lift stairs

lift stairs

redundant gas pipe

High / Low alarms, mag locks

mains pipes

manhole access

PRS Pipes

valve pit inlet / outlet pipes

anti-freeze trays

tank stair

plaque

overflow pipe

interceptor

PRS Compound

14 15 16 17 5 6 9 11 13 12 R 7 4 10

0 10m

Rev	Description	Drawn	Approved	Date

THE ENVIRONMENT PARTNERSHIP

Genesis Centre, Birchwood Science Park, Warrington WA3 7BH
Tel 01925 844004 e-mail tep@tep.uk.com www.tep.uk.com

Project: Uxbridge Road, Slough

Title: Plan of Gasholder 4

Drawing Number: D8119.001

Drawn	Checked	Approved	Scale	Date
AB	SHB	JC	1:250 A3	28\07\20

Uxbridge Road, Slough - Gasholder 4

Nikon D90, Nikon D300S, 06/05/2020, 21/07/2020

Photographic Index

DSC_3084	Access cut into north-west side of gasholder by demolitions contractor
DSC_3085	Interior of the gasholder, looking south-east
DSC_3087	Interior of the gasholder, looking south-east
DSC_3088	View of the inlet / outlet pipes
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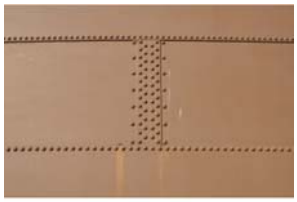
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