



2

The Site





# 2.1. Site context

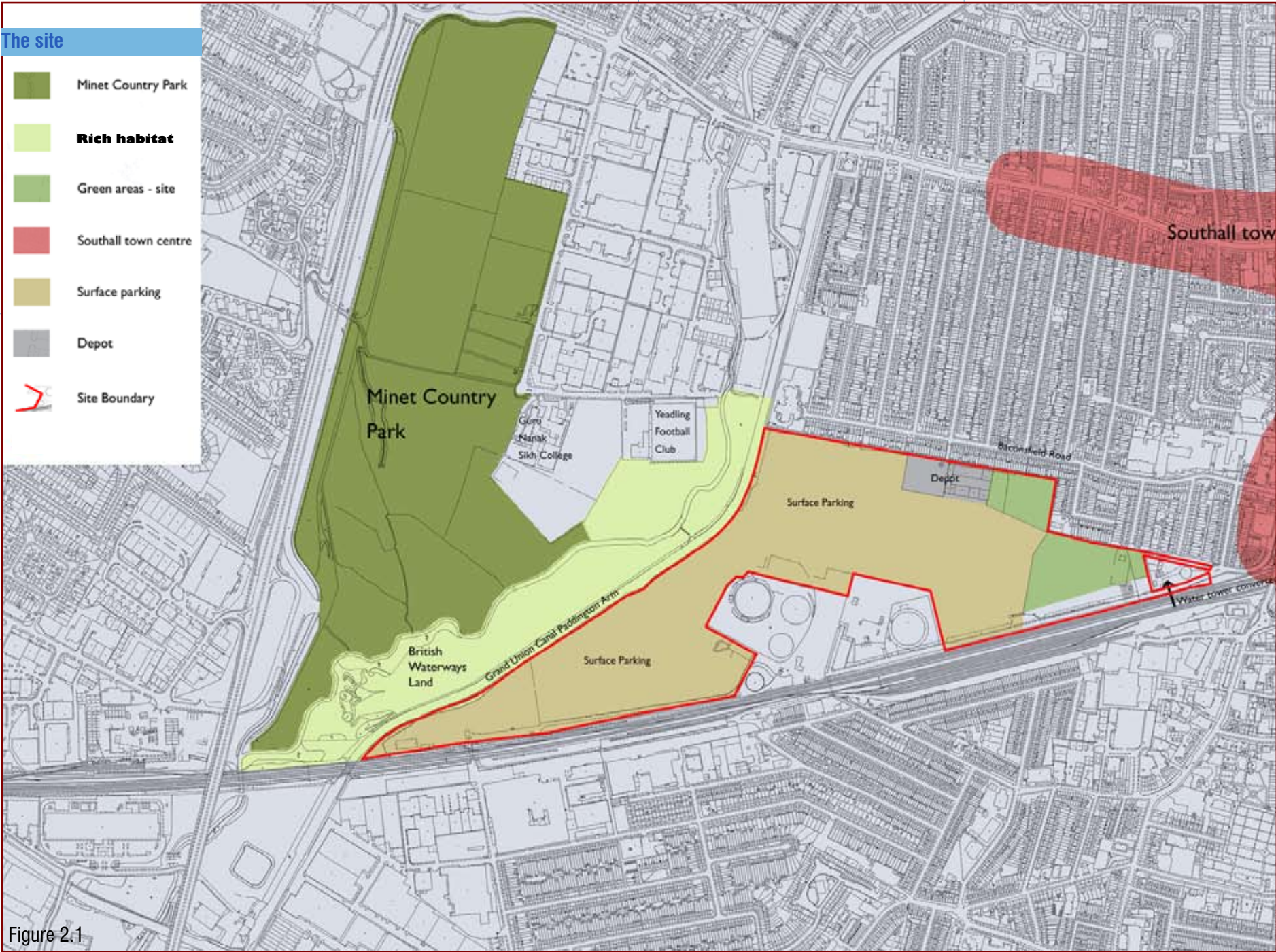


Figure 2.1

## The site

The site is roughly triangular in shape and runs from just to the west of Southall Railway Station for a mile along the main railway line from Paddington to the South West. The site boundary is marked on Figure 2.1.

The site has had a variety of industrial uses in the past including the manufacture and storage of gas. All structures except the gas infrastructure on the land retained by Transco have been demolished. This has left a flat site that is subject to contamination in parts. There are also a number of gas pipes crossing the site. The majority of the site is used for surface parking including long-stay parking for Heathrow Airport as well as new car storage. The western part of the site was formerly a cricket pitch and allotments that have become overgrown and subject to scrub encroachment.

## Surrounding area

The immediate surroundings to the site include the following:

- The gas holders:** The retained Transco area contains three gas holders. The largest of these is a ridged waterless holder, 90m high. (equivalent to a 32 storey building). The other gas holders are telescopic - the western holder rises to 65m and the middle holder rises within a ridged frame to 35m. These holders dominate the surrounding area and can be seen from miles around. The remainder of the Transco land is occupied by pipework and associated equipment.
- The water tower:** At the eastern end of the site is a former water tower that has been converted into flats. This is a listed structure, around 30m high and sits on a triangular site outside SecondSite Property's ownership. It includes a pair of former water workers' homes in the grounds.
- The railway line:** To the south of the site runs the main line into Paddington Station. This carries suburban services (with stations at





Hayes and Southall), the Heathrow Express as well as Intercity services and goods trains. This is a well used line and the tracks are on a low embankment and are therefore a source of noise.

▣ **The canal:** The western boundary of the Main Site is created by the Grand Union Canal Paddington Branch. This is a historic waterway that is used for leisure boating. It is a wide canal and supports residential moorings just to the south of the site.

▣ **Yeadon Brook Corridor:** To the west of the canal is a large area of open space totalling 51 hectares (130 acres). This stretches from the Hayes Bypass eastwards across the valley of the Yeadon Brook to the canal. The area is designated as Green Belt in Hillingdon's UDP. The area to the west of the brook has been developed by Hillingdon as Minet Country Park with active and informal recreation to the north and grassland with some mature tree cover to the south. The area between the Yeadon Brook and the canal has been tipped in the past and has regenerated naturally. The area also includes the Yeadon

Football Club and the Guru Nanak Sikh College. The college has planning consent for expansion including the development of a primary school and playing fields. Yeadon Football Club wish to redevelop the football ground, including relocation of the pitch approx 20m to the south.

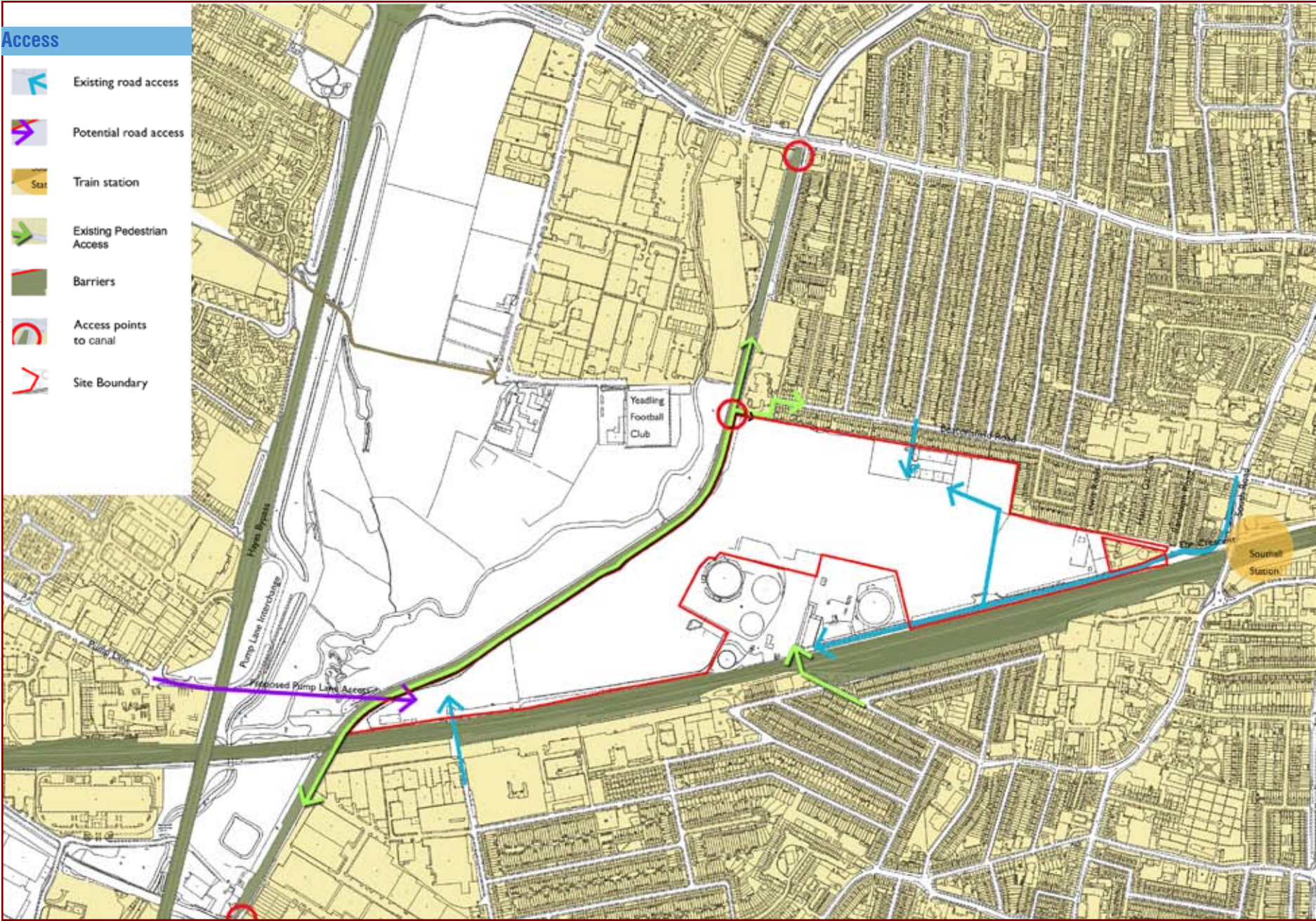
▣ **Housing areas:** To the north of the site is a residential area on a series of north/south streets running down from the Uxbridge Road. This area is predominantly two-storey with some three storey elements on Beaconsfield Road. At the western end of Beaconsfield Road is the Blair Peach school and at the eastern end is Ealing College on the fringe of Southall Town Centre. There are a small number of corner shops on Beaconsfield Road. To the south of the railway is a mixed residential and industrial area. This area is more suburban in character with a mixture of semi-detached units and short terraces. To the west is an industrial area which is well occupied and includes a number of airport related and food processing businesses.





# 2.2.

## Access to the site



Transport issues relating to the masterplan are dealt with in the Transport Assessment by Capital Symonds.

### Road access

Access to the site is very restricted, which is the main reason why it has not been developed in the past. Coal arrived at the gas works by canal and gas was delivered by pipe so that there was no need for significant road access. There are currently only three points of vehicle access:

- The Crescent:** Access from the west is via The Crescent from the South Road traffic lights. The Crescent passes small scale residential properties and the converted water tower to link to The Straight. This private access runs along the railway to the Transco depot.
- Brent Road:** The access for the current airport car parking is from Brent Road to the south. This passes through a tunnel with restricted headroom.
- Beaconsfield Road:** There is an access from the north to a secure

storage depot in the northern part of the site. There are also two other points where access may be possible from Beaconsfield Road. It is also possible to take access from the southern end of Lewis Road, Hanson Gardens and Randolph Road, although none exists at present.

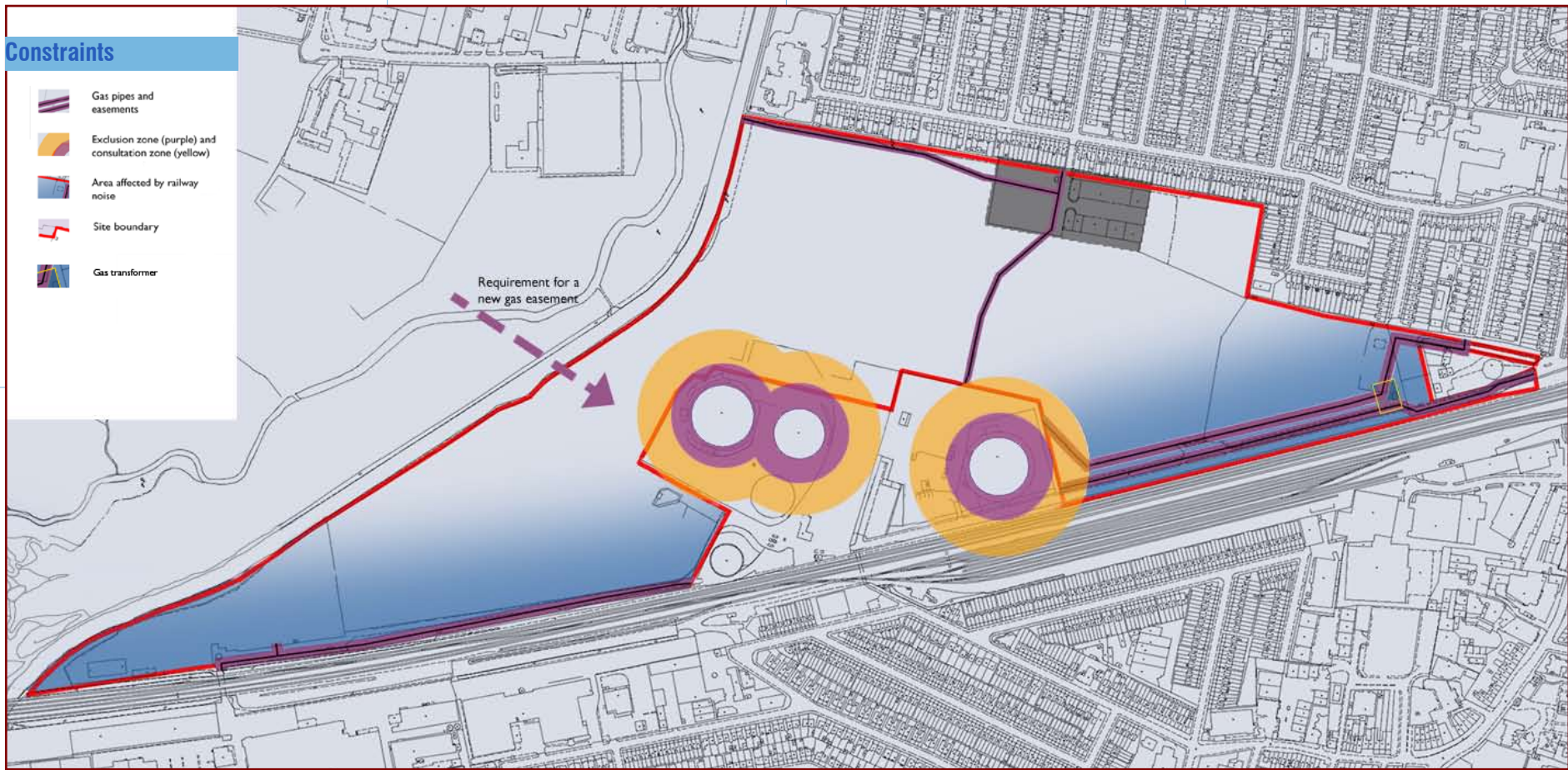
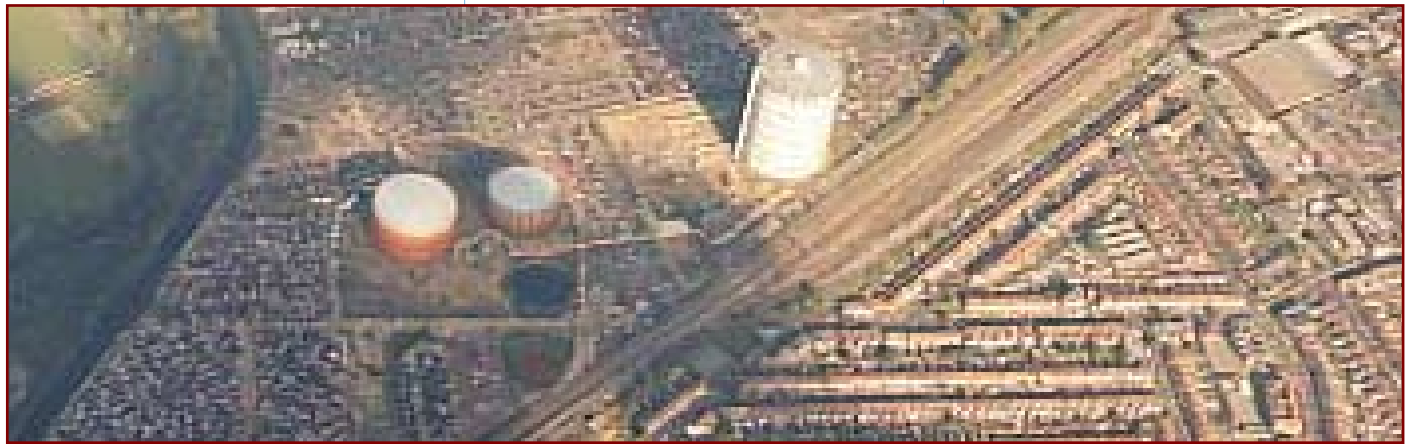
An outline planning consent exists for a link road onto the site from the Pump Lane Interchange of the Hayes Bypass.

### Pedestrian access

There is limited pedestrian access to the site. There is no access between the towpath and the main site. There is a subway under the railway line at the end of Dudley Road - originally an access for workers on the site.



# 2.3. Site analysis



The assessment of environmental issues is covered in detail in the Impact Assessment as presented in the Environmental Statement. This should be referred to for the details of the assessments that have taken place and the mitigation proposed. Here we review the main issues as they affect the Illustrative Masterplan.

**Noise**

The site is subject to noise from a number of sources including aircraft approaching Heathrow Airport, the railway line and road traffic.

The site falls outside the ‘Worst Mode One Day Noise Contour’ for aircraft noise so that aircraft noise is not a major constraint on development. The elevation of the railway and the flat nature of the site mean that railway noise will affect land adjacent to the railway.

with pressure reduction equipment. From this area high pressure pipes run east and west along The Straight and there is a transformer just to the west of the converted water tower. There is a further medium-pressure gas main running north to Beaconsfield Road. In addition there are proposals for a new large gas pipe connecting to the Main Site across the canal.

This new main is subject to a 12m easement on either side of the main (24m in total). The other high-pressure gas pipes have 6m easements while the medium-pressure main has an easement of 4m. This gas infrastructure has been treated as a fixed constraint as part of the Parameter Plans. The exception being the potential to alter the route of the medium pressure main.

The gas holders are subject to a development exclusion zone of 18m around the holders. This affects very little of the Main Site. There is also a consultation zone of 60m. Within this area development is subject to the ‘Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazard (COMAH) Regulations’. This means that the Health and Safety Executive must be consulted on new development. However generally the gas holders are not a major hazard nor are they a constraint on development.

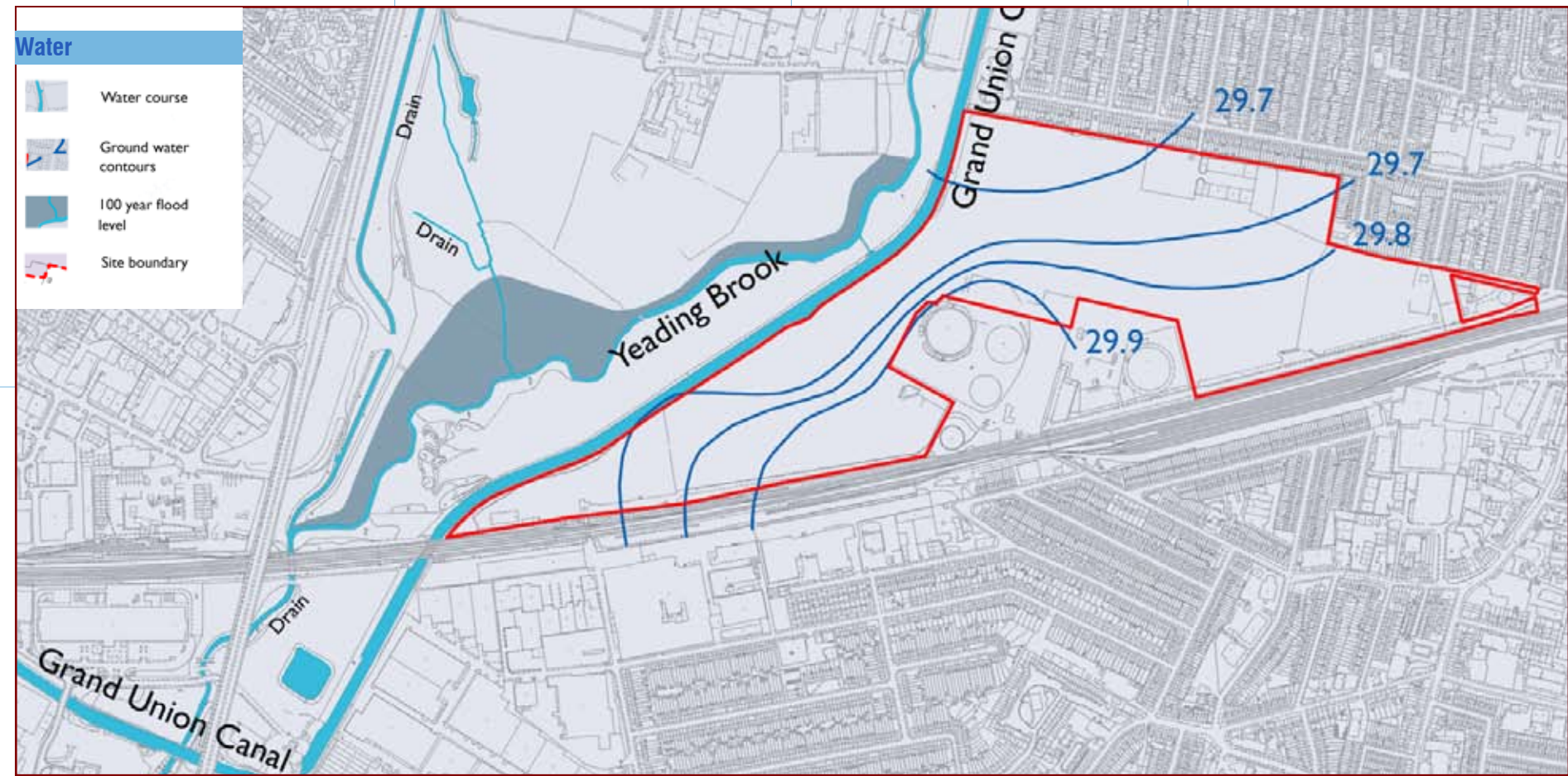
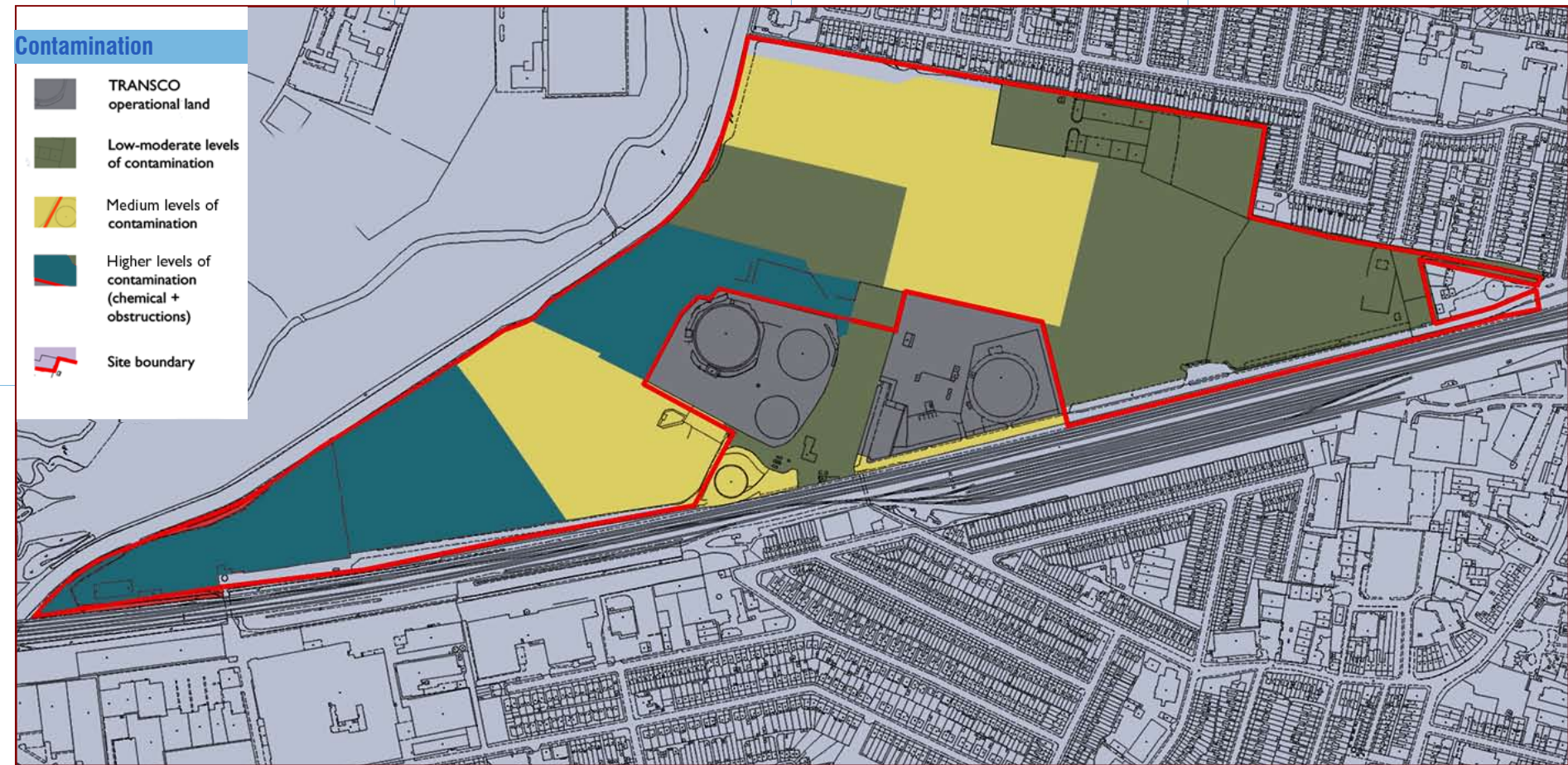
Noise from the gas infrastructure is low level and is not a constraint on development. There is currently no noise disturbance from existing roads.

**Gas Infrastructure**

The gas infrastructure is described in the Utilities and Drainage Report. The central part of the site includes three gas holders - two telescopic holders and a ridged waterless holder along







**Ground conditions**

The site consists largely of ‘made ground’ as a result of the excavation and subsequent filling of brick pits. The natural geology is however of brick earth over Taplow Terrace Gravel which in turn overlays London Clay and the Woolwich and Reading Beds. This should provide no real constraints to development and, with piling, there are no ground condition constraints to the development.

**Contamination**

The site’s industrial past inevitably means that contamination is an issue as described in the Remediation Report by WYG. This includes waste from industrial activities as well as the remains of demolished structures including concrete, timber, foundations and gas equipment. This contamination affects the former site of the gas works to the west of the current gas holders. North of this lower levels of contamination relate to the former coal storage areas while the eastern parts of the site have very low contamination levels.

**Flooding and drainage**

Ground water levels are at about 29.8m AOD, 1.5m below the predominant surface level of the site. The ground water flows northwards and eastwards towards the Yeading Brook. These groundwater levels affect the potential for basement parking.

Yeading Brook flows through a flood plain. However the 100 year flood level does not extend eastwards of the brook because the canal is at a higher level. Flooding is therefore not a major constraint on the Main Site.





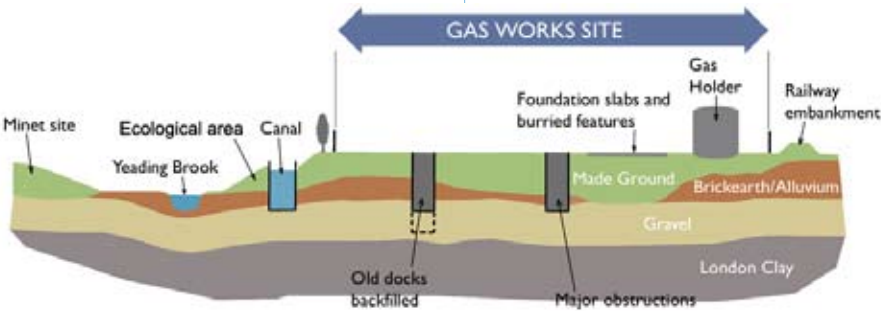
Ecology

A review of the ecology of the site has been undertaken by WYG. No part of the Main Site is designated as an area of nature conservation interest. The majority of the Main Site is hard standing and is treated with herbicide. The only exceptions are a fringe of tree cover and hedge in the northern part of the site and the abandoned cricket pitch and allotments in the eastern part of the site.

The former allotments and cricket pitch area includes formal tree planting along The Straight and the edge of the playing fields. These trees are mature London Planes, Poplars and Oak. Previous survey work has found no evidence of any protected species. The

main part of the site therefore has no ecological value and the eastern part includes only common habitats and species.

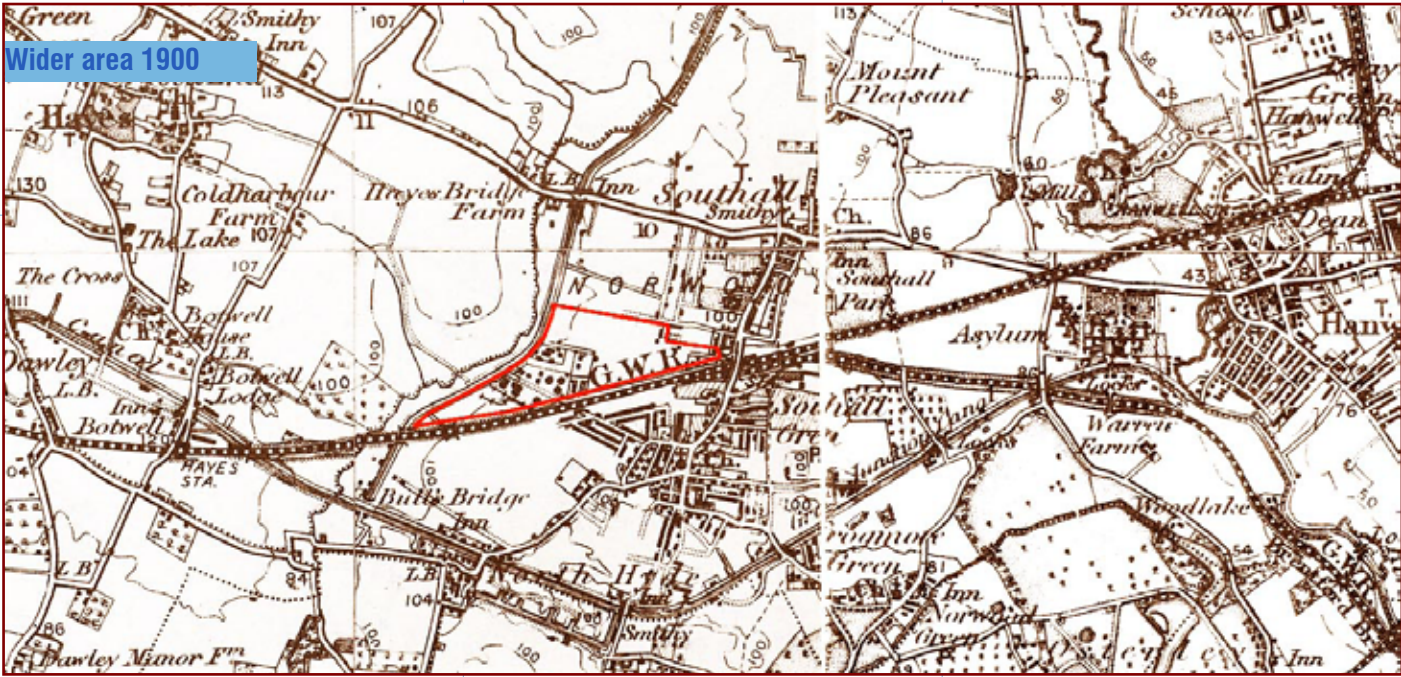
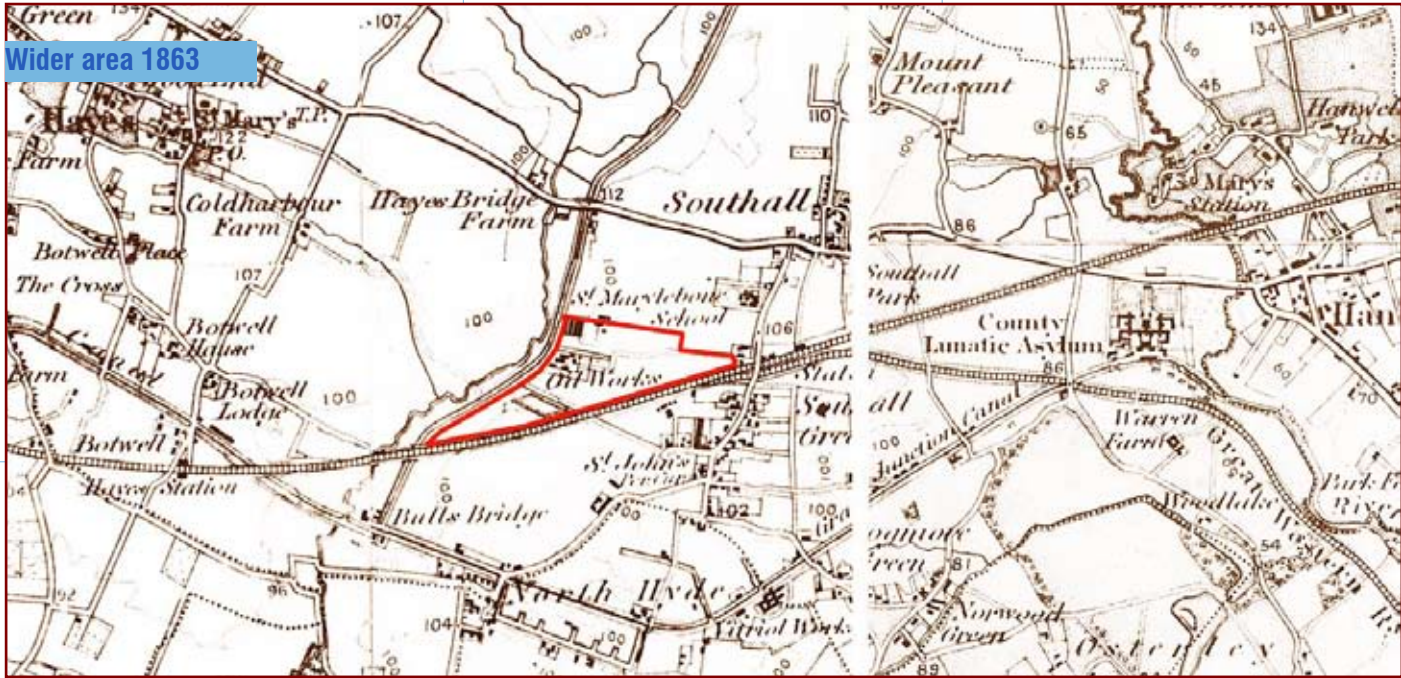
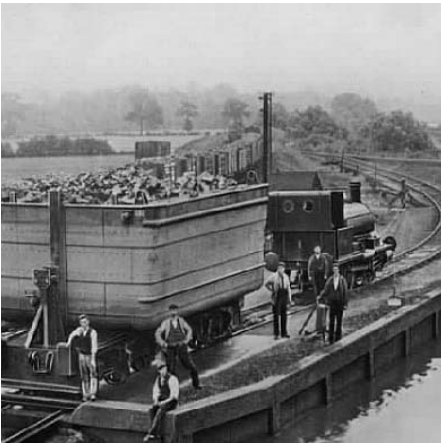
The area to the west of the site along the Grand Union Canal, the Yeading Brook and the Minet Country Park is however of considerable nature conservation importance. The canal is part of the ‘London Canal Site of Metropolitan Importance’ and has been graded by both Ealing and Hillingdon as a Grade 1 ‘Site of Borough Importance’. The canal is rich in aquatic plants, invertebrates, fish and birds. The Minet Country Park to the west includes important wetland, woodland and grassland habitats.





# 2.4. Site history

**Below:** The canal and railhead in operation at Southall.  
**Right:** the High Street in 1900  
**Below right:** The wider area in 1863 (top map) and at the end of the nineteenth century (bottom map) showing the area just before its explosive growth



Southall dates back to Norman times and was granted a market charter in 1698. However it was largely rural in character until the mid 19th century. It was an area characterised by villages and hamlets surrounded by farmland. However in the 19th century it became increasingly subject to the influence of London. There were two villages at Southall, the main settlement on the Uxbridge Road and Southall Green to the south of the railway.

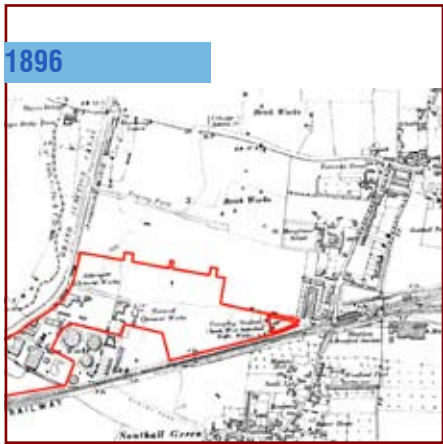
London's influence manifest in a large number of institutions such as asylums and boarding schools that located in the area. It also resulted in the extensive extraction of clay for brick making over much of the area.

The canal opened in 1796 (the Paddington Branch in 1801) and horse drawn barges could reach the centre of London in three hours. The railway followed in 1839 with the station being built in 1859 and by the end of the century there were 65 trains a day stopping at Southall. However neither the canal nor the railway led to the development of the area and in 1892 a traveller was still able to remark of Southall 'a wanderer in search of the picturesque will do well to tramp along the lanes for here the country is quite untouched by suburban London'

Unlike the railways elsewhere in London, the Great Western concentrated on long-distance rather than suburban services so that the areas around the stations remained relatively undeveloped. However the combination of the canal and the railway gave rise to the industrialisation of the gas works site as a coal wharf and oil works. In 1866 The Brentford Gas Company purchased 18 acres of the site to construct a gas works, retort house and gas holder, first producing gas in 1869. By the end of the century this had developed into a gas works with associated industrial activity such as the Aldergate and Norwood Chemical Works. There was also a small area of worker housing on what is now the site of the Blair Peach School. To the east, the water tower and pumping station was completed by the end of the century although the largest ridged gas holder was not erected until 1930.

The land surrounding the site, although scarred by brick pits, remained open until the turn of the century. At this point housing spread rapidly and Southall's population doubled between the 1901 and 1911 censuses. The residential areas surrounding the site were largely





completed by the First World War.

Southall has always been an important industrial area, Dane's margarine factory was set up in 1896 and the industrial area to the south of the railway grew up at the start of the century, based on railheads and sidings. The gas works further expanded and by 1936 it was surrounded by a range of industrial activities. However the eastern part of the site remained as open allotments and playing fields.

Proximity to the airport and the availability of work has long made Southall a magnet for immigration and in 1934 its streets were said to be 'thronged with immigrants from all parts of Britain' especially from Wales. George Orwell wrote in the 1930s 'I struck out into outer London and followed the Uxbridge Road as far as Southall. Miles and miles of ugly houses, and people living dull, decent lives inside them'. Later in the 1950s and 60s the area became a focus for a Sikh community and more recently for Somalis.

The gas works closed in 1973 when the site became a depot for the storage of natural gas.

**Archaeology:**

The site does not lie within an Area of Archaeological Interest in Ealing's UDP. The nearest designated areas cover the historic cores of Southall and Southall Green Villages. However previous work on the site has shown it once had some archaeological interest. Palaeolithic axes and mammoth bones were discovered during the construction of a gas holder in 1890. The Greater London Sites and Monuments Record (GLSMR) also records Meseolithic through to Bronze and Roman finds in the area although nothing from the Saxon or Medieval period when the area was fields surrounding the villages of Southall. The site is therefore not considered archaeologically important. The extensive excavation of brick clay and the subsequent industrial development is likely to have destroyed any archaeology that may have once existed. Archaeology is therefore not a constraint on development.

