

Dan Edwards

Stakeholder and Community Manager

SGN

St Lawrence House

Station Approach

Horley RH6 9HJ

25 January 2019

Dear Dan

An Open Letter

Gas Holders 7 & 8, Bell Green, London SE26 - Urgent Request to Halt Demolition

We are writing to you regarding the demolition of Gas Holders 7 & 8 on your Bell Green site. Although no demolition has yet taken place, enabling works are underway. The Sydenham Society, working with Discourse Architecture, has embarked on the development of a community-led master plan for the wider Bell Green site. We believe that the gas holders, which are an important expression of our local industrial heritage, should be retained as part of this new vision. All stakeholders, yourselves included, stand to benefit from this long overdue re-appraisal of the area, which, we believe, has the potential to increase its economic value for freeholders, as well as the amenity value for local people. Accordingly, we appeal to you to instruct an immediate halt to the demolition, enabling a proper process of community consultation to take place. We plan to launch the masterplan at a community festival in November of this year.



The Gas Holders are an important feature of our neighbourhood. Their drum-shaped structures frame the sky and create constantly shifting geometrical patterns as you move around the site, lending distinction to the bland environs of the new retail park. They are also the last remaining elements of the South Suburban Gas Company, along with the adjacent Grade II Listed Livesey Memorial Hall and the bowling green, which provided recreational amenities for employees. The associated memorial to the fallen of the First World War, now sadly in a dilapidated state, features an elegant bronze sculpture.

As you may know, the hall was built in commemoration of Sir George Thomas Livesey (1834-1908), a Director of the Company for 30 years, a remarkable engineer, industrialist and philanthropist, who first conceived the use of gas in a domestic setting. The gas holders are visible beyond the Memorial Hall, a tangible legacy of both the visionary engineer and the gas industry that funded these community facilities.

Under the heading '*Responsibility*' on your website, a statement from John Morea, SGN Chief Executive reads:

'What we do as a business affects your lives and the communities we all live and work in. It's vital we listen to what's important to you, keep you informed about our business activities and ensure your feedback becomes part of our decision-making process and is part of our everyday way of working.'

We appeal to you to stand by the commitments made in your statement of corporate responsibility, listen to the community, and do the following:

- Call an immediate halt to the demolition of the gas holders 7 & 8
- Arrange an urgent meeting between your company and representatives of the local community to discuss options for the future of the gas holders
- Provide a stay of execution on the demolition of the gas holders while options for the retention of the structures are reviewed

More than a hundred years ago Sir George Thomas Livesey demonstrated his vision that the gas industry could make a positive contribution to the local community and society. We like to think that SGN would be proud to follow his example

Yours sincerely

Annabel McLaren

Sydenham Society

Bruno Tonelli Simon McCormack

Discourse | Architecture

cc	John Morea,	Chief Executive Officer SGN
	Damien Egan	Mayor of Lewisham
	Cllr Chris Best	Ward Councillor
	Cllr Jacq Paschoud	Ward Councillor
	Cllr Alan Hall	Ward Councillor
	Cllr Liam Curran	Ward Councillor
	Cllr Tom Copley	Ward Councillor
	Michael Abrahams	Forest Hill Society
	Viv Evans	Lewisham Planning Department
	David Syme	Lewisham Planning Department
	Joanna Ecclestone	Lewisham Planning Department
	Christopher Costelloe	Chair Victorian Society
	Griff Rhys Jones	President Victorian Society