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# 1 Producing the East and West Molesey Settlement Area Character Assessment

This companion guide forms an integral part of the Elmbridge Design and Character SPD. The guides provide a reference source for considering the character of an area as part of the design process for new development.

1.1 The following Character Assessment for East and West Molesey has been developed in partnership with the local community assisted by design consultants (Forum Heritage Services and Context 4D) and Elmbridge Borough Council.

## Community Involvement

1.2 A community workshop was held at Mole Hall on 11 May 2011, which allowed local people to talk about the character of their local area and suggest ways in which that character might be maintained and enhanced in light of future development.

1.3 Community participants that attended the workshops included a member of the East Molesey Conservation Area Advisory Committee, a local ward Councillor and a member of the Molesey Business Association.

1.4 The first half of the workshop concentrated on defining character. As well as providing a wealth of information about their local area, participants were instrumental in the subdivision of character areas and the identification of key features.



1.5 The second half of the day focused on the design process including an explanation of how the new SPD would work in practice. This included a site visit where community participants had the opportunity to appraise the context and setting of a site, using maps and notation charts to assist them. The site chosen involved an infill development and highlighted issues of height pattern, scale and massing and explored the notation of retaining existing buildings on site. The site visit also allowed participants to point out issues within the West Molesey centre looking at recent development, historic assets and trees within the streetscape.

1.6 The issues expressed at the workshop have been incorporated into the assessment and are featured within the text boxes.

1.7 A feedback session held on 15 September 2011 allowed participants to add any additional comments, clarification and further information.

## 2 How to use the settlement and sub-area analysis

**Step 1:** Identify the settlement area and sub-area your development site falls within, using the character area map to help you. The maps also provide an overview of the wider context of the area.

**Step 2:** Read the introduction to the settlement area, which gives a brief overview and a summary of key features, providing you with a snapshot of settlement character and highlighting key issues identified from community workshops.

**Step 3:** Read the sub-area analysis, taking note of specific local concerns and where to find additional design guidance.

**2.1** In order to inform your design proposal, it is important to evaluate and understand the key characteristics of the settlements and their sub-areas. Understanding an area's character will help to deliver high quality development that contributes to the distinctiveness of the local area and sense of place. In order to do this effectively, the Borough has been subdivided into 8 settlement areas, reflecting those in the Core Strategy. Each settlement area has been further divided into sub-areas, derived from fieldwork and group discussions at the community workshops.

**2.2** The sub-area analysis describes its predominant characteristics such as building types, use, scale, grain, tree cover and any heritage assets. Reference may be made to specific design guidance you should take account of when considering your development proposal. In some instances, reference is also made to case studies that may be particularly relevant to the type of development likely to occur in the sub-area. These are contained within the main document and illustrate the process of understanding local character through context and site appraisal, which will generate a

design concept and indicative design. Each case study offers just one solution to how a site could be developed and there may be instances when other case studies are relevant, depending on the nature of the development.

**2.3** Where the community workshop identified specific issues affecting a particular sub-area, a box is included to highlight these concerns. This is intended to help you carefully consider the local context and the sensitivities of the site's surroundings. It provides an opportunity to show how you might address specific concerns highlighted in relation to sub-areas. These may not be exhaustive but are provided as prompts for consideration.

**2.4** For sites that fall on the edge of two sub-areas or settlement boundaries, you will need to take into account adjoining sub-areas, which may have an impact on the context of the site. In many ways the design requirements of these sites are more complex to resolve as they may be at a key transition between one type of development and another.

**2.5** You should use the settlement and sub-area analysis as a starting point to develop a clear context for your proposal. This should be considered in more detail through site visits etc, taking account of the specific location of the development site.

The analysis of character and context should be an integral part of a Design and Access Statement.

## 3 East and West Molesey Character Assessment



### Introduction

**3.1** East and West Molesey is a predominantly residential area but includes 5 distinct shopping areas including the district centre at East Molesey, the local centre at Bridge Road/Hampton Court, West Molesey and the local parades at Pool Road and Central Avenue. Molesey Industrial Estate, in West Molesey was built in the 1930s and offers a range of accommodation for industrial, storage and business uses.

**3.2** Across this settlement area there is much variation in terms of house type, age and tenure with a very distinct time line of development being clearly evident from east to west. This has created a distinct series of neighbourhoods which give this area a vibrancy. Despite these varied neighbourhoods there is a strong cohesive sense of community which stretches across the settlement area.

**3.3** This settlement area has developed significantly through the last few centuries. This is most apparent to the east of the settlement where two key transport links were created. The first bridge that linked Hampton Court with East Molesey across the River Thames was built in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century and the coming of the railway in 1849 had major impacts on the development of the area. Hampton Court Station is located opposite Bridge Road and is a key gateway for visitors to Hampton Court Palace. The Palace continues to have a significant influence on the character and in particular the mix of uses

in Bridge Road and Creek Road. This enclave of shops, cafes, and restaurants with residential units above has become a very distinctive and attractive part of the settlement area. The Hurst Park Estate has a mixture of residential dwellings and flatted development built in the 1970s.

**3.4** The area is almost entirely surrounded by water with the River Thames to the north, River Ember to the east, and a series of reservoirs and gravel pits to the west and south. Bridges over the River Thames and Ember provide key gateways to the settlement area. The rivers provide important linking routes and contribute to the area's wider landscape setting and local identity. There are also a number of key open spaces both within and adjoining the urban area, including Hurst Park.



**Hurst Park Meadows**

### Summary of Key Features

- Very distinct time line in terms of built form (with notable historic exceptions – such as the churches) moving from Old Town and the 1860s of Kent Town in the east through the 1930s Howards Houses and industrial estate to the west, with later infill to the north (Hurst Park) and far west.
- Large number of open green spaces which include recreation and sports grounds, parkland (Hurst Park), a large cemetery and allotments.
- Open amenity riverside spaces with direct access to the waterside of the River Thames and routes which link

- pedestrians and cyclists to the extended network of the Thames corridor
- Very well-defined gateways across the River Ember and Thames and at Hampton Court Station
  - Significant heritage assets including conservation areas and statutory listed buildings <sup>(1)</sup>
  - Influence of Hampton Court Palace on the character and use of buildings along Bridge Road
  - Some areas strongly defined by extensive mature tree cover such as Kent Town and parts of Old Town (East Molesey)
  - Very little variation in topography with key landmarks such as the church spire and other architectural features often glimpsed in views
  - Much extension, alteration and remodelling of housing
  - Good quality, mostly independent shops, often retaining older shopfronts with use of decorative materials – such as terracotta tiles (this includes historic signage)
  - Survival of important historic boundary walls in places (particularly Bridge Road and Old Town Conservation Areas)

### **Issues identified from the Community Workshops**

- Strong desire to keep East and West Molesey as a cohesive area rather than try and compartmentalise what is already an area seen as having some fragmentation and disconnectivity
- The area south of Island Farm Road adjacent to the Molesey Industrial Estate is seen as an area undergoing significant change
- Trees within private gardens and on streets were seen to make an important contribution to the character of the area
- Increasing the densities of development within West Molesey needed to be supported by the expansion of social infrastructure in order that this did not have a negative impact on the character of this part of the settlement area
- Loss of traditional street lighting was highlighted as of major concern particularly in relation to the character and appearance of the conservation areas in the East Molesey area.



**Traditional street lighting in Matham Road,  
East Molesey**

### Local Landmarks

As featured in the settlement map. Landmarks D-F fall outside Molesey but are included on the map as they can either be seen or form part of the setting of the sub-area/settlement.

A. Spire of the church St Paul, Palace Road, East Molesey

B. Gothic spire to the belvedere of No.16 Riverbank (cnr of Riverbank & Feltham Av.)

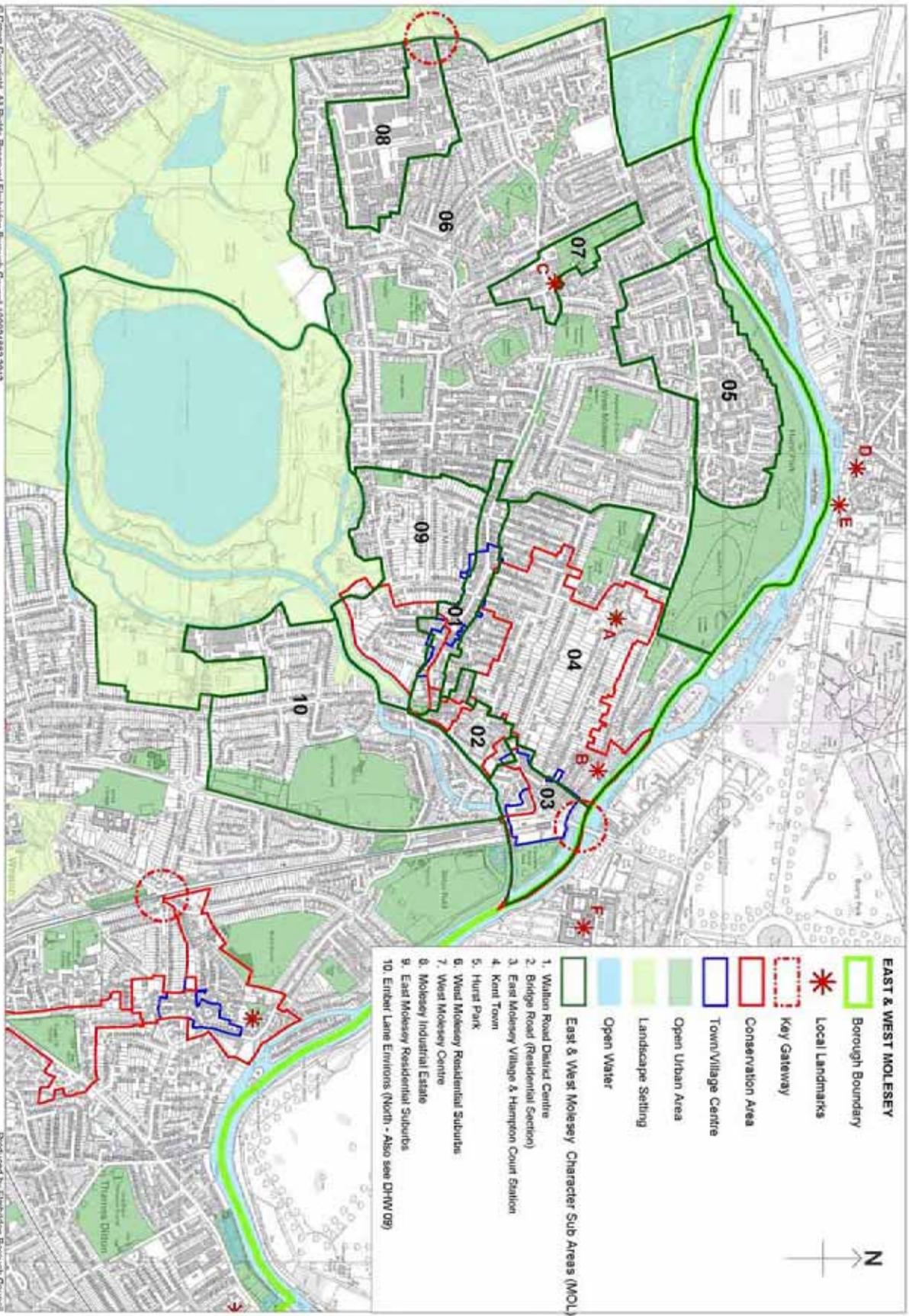
C. Tower of the Church of St Peter, Walton Road

D. Tower of the Church of St Mary, Hampton (London Borough of Richmond)

E. Garrick's Temple to Shakespeare, Hampton Court Road (London Borough of Richmond)

F. Hampton Court (London Borough of Richmond)

**3.5** The following map can be viewed in more detail using the Council's interactive mapping system 'My Elmbridge' which is located on the Elmbridge Borough Council homepage



## The Sub-areas

### MOL01: Walton Road District Centre

#### Overview

3.6 This sub-area is the main district shopping area for East and West Molesey.

3.7 It is a busy and vibrant part of the settlement area which has retained a fine grain of development originating from the late Victorian period onwards. This is largely due to its mixed use nature and retention of smaller shop units with independent retailers, cafés, restaurants and public houses, in addition to a post office and other local amenities.



**Shops along Walton Road**

3.8 Buildings are predominantly set to the back of the pavement providing a well-defined building line and giving a sense of enclosure.

3.9 Building height varies between two and three storeys but with taller buildings grouped or defining important corners.

3.10 Many traditional shopfronts have been retained.

3.11 Street trees play an important role to the western end of the sub-area softening the increased scale of buildings and helping to further define a 'sense of place' within the long run of commercial premises.

3.12 The trees are visible for some distance along the road and act as a significant, positive local landmark.



**Street trees add to the townscape quality of this part of Walton Road**

3.13 The eastern section of Walton Road, around the junction with Matham Road, is identified as an area of High Archaeological Potential.

#### Opportunities

3.14 New development should seek to retain the fine grain of this part of the settlement area, follow existing building lines and pay careful regard to the scale of surrounding properties.

3.15 The role of the development will be important in this well-established locally distinctive district centre.

3.16 The sub-area falls across two conservation areas. For guidelines for new development in and adjacent to the conservation areas refer to the East Molesey Bridge Road and East Molesey Old Village Appraisal and Management Proposal.

3.17 Please see **section 5 on the roles with the streetscape** and **Case Studies CS5, CS6 and possibly CS4**.

## **MOL02: Bridge Road (residential section)**

### **Overview**

**3.18** This is an area of mixed character and transition between the commercial Walton Road to the west and the village of East Molesey (Bridge Road and Creek Road) to the east.

**3.19** Much of this character area is conservation area and there is a diversity of building types including modest two storey terrace cottages, large two and three storey late Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian houses; and three storey flats of the 1930s, inter-war and post-war.



**Kingfisher Court 1930s flatted development, Bridge Road**

**3.20** Part of its character is that it does not easily fit with adjacent sub-areas which are far more clearly defined. This does not diminish the quality of this part of the settlement area as it has some very architecturally accomplished buildings, some of which are statutory listed.

**3.21** The proximity of the River Ember to back gardens makes this an attractive and highly desirable part of the Borough particularly development that can provide a river frontage.

**3.22** There are a number of key corner sites within this sub-area derived from the rigid plan of the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century Kent Town meeting the more organic and historic route of Bridge Road.

**3.23** Part of the Bridge Road area is identified as an area of High Archaeological Potential.

### **Opportunities**

**3.24** Development should have regard to the conservation area status of this sub-area, with the role of proposed development being an important aspect of any design proposals.

**3.25** For further advice, please see **section 5** of the general design guidance with regards to the roles within the streetscape.

**3.26** For guidelines for new development in and adjacent to the conservation area refer to the East Molesey Bridge Road Character Appraisal and Management Proposal.

## **MOL03: East Molesey Village and Hampton Court Station**

### **Overview**

**3.27** This sub-area comprises the attractive historic village of East Molesey immediately adjacent to the Hampton Court Railway Station.

**3.28** The Grade II listed bridge and the views across the River Thames towards Hampton Court Palace provide some indication of the importance and sensitivities of this sub-area.

**3.29** Bridge Road and Creek Road is a mixed use area of considerable charm and character, with a fine grain complimented by a strong palette of traditional materials and the survival of traditional shopfronts and other architectural features.



**Traditional shopfronts to east side of Bridge Road**

**3.30** All of the sub-area falls within the East Molesey (Kent Town) Conservation Area.

**3.31** There is variation in scale, with modest two storey buildings often adjacent to three, and occasionally four, storey buildings. This gives a far more organic feel to this part of the settlement area.

**3.32** Much of the townscape comprises shopfronts or active frontages to the ground floor with residential or office accommodation above.

**3.33** A particular feature of the units adjacent to the river and bridge is tables and chairs to the front of cafés providing interest, movement and activity to this part of the commercial core.

### **Opportunities**

**3.34** Development opportunities in this sub-area are likely to take advantage of its proximity to key transport links.

**3.35** For guidelines for new development in and adjacent to the conservation area refer to the Kent Town Character Appraisal and Management Proposal.

**3.36** **Case Studies CS4, CS5 and CS6** will be particularly relevant to this part of the settlement area.

## **MOL04: Kent Town**

### **Overview**

**3.37** This part of the settlement area is almost unique to Elmbridge.

**3.38** It comprises large detached villas in both classical and Gothic Revival styles set in generous plots with the use of London stock bricks, stucco, decorative plaster and natural slate roofs. These are set within a street pattern of straight, wide tree lined roads.

**3.39** There is a strong hierarchy to the roads on travelling from north to south with the largest, most prestigious houses (sometimes up to four storey) to the north moving through to the more modest two storey cottages in the south and ultimately leading to the commercial premises of Walton Road.



**Trees lining Palace Road, looking towards Bridge Road**

**3.40** Building lines within roads are consistent, with properties generally set back from the roadside with front gardens or parking courts.

**3.41** Trees form a very important part of the woodland character of Kent Town. Street trees, trees to front gardens and significant groups to rear gardens, frame and/or form an attractive green backdrop to development.



**Trees seen to the rear of houses in Palace Road**

**3.42** Front boundary walls, hedges and gardens are continually under pressure for change as these areas are converted to parking spaces often accompanied by the addition of large security gates. This is changing the character of some parts of the sub-area.

**3.43** There are important views to St Paul's church spire within the conservation area and from Hampton Court Bridge towards the gothic spire on the Riverbank, an important local landmark.



**Gothic spire to 16 Riverbank, seen from Hampton Court Bridge**

**3.44** The trees of Kent Town and along the riverside significantly contribute to the quality and established character of this residential suburb.

### Specific issues raised at the Community Workshop

- Loss of trees to the rear of properties particularly to Palace and Wolsey Roads
- Increased scale of replacement houses
- Replacement of existing semi-open boundaries with higher non-permeable brick walls with boarded gates
- Increased use of security gates on individual and small developments separating them from the wider community and impacting on the character of the sub-area.

### Opportunities

**3.45** Development within this sub-area should have regard to the sensitive heritage setting. For guidelines for new development in and adjacent to the conservation area refer to the Kent Town Character Appraisal and Management Proposal.

**3.46** In order to address the specific issues raised by the community, advice contained in **Case Studies CS1 and CS2** will be most relevant as well as the general design guidance contained within **section 5**.

**3.47** Any development located close to the riverside should take account of advice detailed in **section 6 on Riverside Development**.

### MOL05: Hurst Park

#### Overview

**3.48** A spacious, well laid out medium to high density housing estate (c1970s) comprising mostly long terraces of two and three storey houses deriving much of their style, material, use and layout from the earlier successful Span Developments found in other parts of the Borough.

**3.49** There are high rise flats to the north of Victoria Road which is a distinct landmark along Hurst Road.

**3.50** Houses are generally set back from the roadside facing wide grass verges with street trees and mature landscaping.



**Houses off Buckingham Avenue**

**3.51** Building lines are mostly consistent throughout but with some staggered adding variety to the streetscape.

**3.52** The car dominates in places and much of the space to the front of properties and to roadsides is used for parking.

### **Opportunities**

**3.53** Consideration needs to be given to the impact of development on long views from the north side of the River Thames where the roofscape is consistent and non-intrusive.

**3.54** Development should have regard to general advice particularly its impact on the wider riverside setting (see **section 6** for further advice).

**3.55** Care should also be taken in retaining the spatial qualities of the existing estate layout when proposing new development.

## **MOL06: West Molesey residential suburbs**

### **Overview**

**3.56** This large sub-area is predominantly residential and laid out on a series of grid plan roads between Island Farm Road and Walton Road, and Walton Road and Hurst Road.

**3.57** Included within this area is a high degree of public and semi-public open green space including recreation, sports grounds and allotments.

**3.58** To the far west of the character area (to the north and south of Grafton Way) a green wedge winds through post-war development and links to larger recreational grounds giving a very successful and well-used pedestrian alternative to the roads and providing excellent permeability to this part of the sub-area.



**Green space adjacent to Grafton Way**

**3.59** Houses are mostly semi-detached with some detached housing and terraces.

**3.60** Almost all houses are two storey with some bungalow development. House types tend to be repeated within a street giving some identity and homogeneity. This is accentuated by the long views along streets.

**3.61** There are areas of flatted development, mostly to the south of the sub-area, notably along the High Street.

**3.62** The estate of Howard Houses (c1933) is focused around First Avenue and includes some 300 properties. The majority of these have been altered, particularly with the addition of a pitched roof.



**'Howard Houses', Walton Road**

**3.63** Wide verges, ornamental trees to front and rear gardens, and some street trees are notable public realm features to some of the estates.

**3.64** There is a well-used small parade of shops at Central Avenue to the western edge of the sub-area. This provides a community hub (separate to the historic village centre) for this part of Molesey.

#### **Specific issues raised at the Community Workshop**

- Increased use of security gates on individual and small developments separating them from the wider community and impacting on the character of the sub-area.

#### **Opportunities**

**3.65** Development in this sub-area is likely to take the form of higher density infill to sites. General advice in the Design Guidance section will provide assistance.

### **MOL07: West Molesey centre**

#### **Overview**

**3.66** This sub-area is focused around the junction of High Street and Walton Road where the tower of the Grade II listed church of St Peter dominates the townscape.

**3.67** There is a small shopping parade, a public house and former school (now Surrey County Council offices). This is an important centre for West Molesey and serves a large catchment.



**The stone church tower with West Molesey's shops beyond**

**3.68** Buildings are between two (houses) and three storey (flats).

**3.69** The character of High Street in particular has recently changed with the development of higher density housing to the west side of the road and to the junction with Walton Road.

**3.70** The wide section of the highway to the High Street, with deep grass verges to one side, helps to accommodate the increase in scale of buildings on the west side.

**3.71** The location of individual trees, the survival of a small number of older buildings including the church, and the curve in the road give this area a sense of place.

## Opportunities

**3.72** Continued development to the High Street should have regard to guidance contained in **Case Studies CS5 and possibly CS4 and CS6** should the opportunity arise.

### **MOL08: Molesey Industrial Estate**

#### Overview

**3.73** The Molesey Industrial Estate to the western edge of the settlement area provides important local employment and comprises a low to medium density coarse grain mix of small and medium sized industrial units with some limited ancillary office uses.

**3.74** Buildings are generally set in areas of hardstanding used for parking and/or storage.

**3.75** Building footprints vary (almost entirely rectangular in plan) laid out on a simple grid parallel and perpendicular to Central Avenue.

**3.76** Building lines are consistent to the grid. This generally gives a uniform and rigid structure to the sub-area although unlike most industrial estates there is some variation to the design of buildings and use of materials which provides a sense of place to this sub-area.



**Industrial units to Island Farm Road**

**3.77** There is virtually no tree presence or soft landscaping to this sub-area. This gives a harsh, uncompromising and functional character to the townscape.

## Opportunities

**3.78** Development will need to have regard to the specific advice relating to commercial development at **section 6**.

### **MOL09: East Molesey residential suburbs**

#### Overview

**3.79** This sub-area has a similar housing stock to MOL04: Kent Town, but is more organic in its layout and development pattern reflecting its 15<sup>th</sup> century origins.

**3.80** A notable characteristic of the historic environment is the survival of very early brick boundary walls associated with the enclosure surrounding Matham Manor.

**3.81** Generally, the older detached two and three storey houses and larger villas date from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and sit in large tree lined plots.



**Houses in Matham Road**

**3.82** At the other end of the scale, the small cottage style two-storey terraced housing sits to the back of the pavement providing a strong sense of enclosure to sometimes narrow lanes. This creates a strong village character particularly with the glimpsed views of the spire above the rooflines.

**3.83** Broadleaf trees and groups of trees form a very important part of the character of this part of the settlement area. There are

large groups to the rear boundaries of properties which feature in views over and between houses.

**3.84** In addition to this, front garden trees strongly define the public realm.



**View along Matham Road**

**3.85** The Old Village Conservation Area covers the eastern half of this sub-area and there is a relatively high concentration of Grade II listed buildings.

### **Opportunities**

**3.86** Development will need to have regard to the high quality historic environment and there is a varied scale to development across this sub-area which will need to be carefully considered.

**3.87** For guidelines for new development in and adjacent to the conservation area refer to the East Molesey Old Village Character Appraisal and Management Proposal.

**3.88** **Case Studies CS1 and CS2** will be of most relevance when considering any new development in this area.

### **MOL10: Ember Lane environs (north) – also see sub-area DHW09**

#### **3.89 Overview**

**3.90** An area of mixed residential development with two key phases; the late 19<sup>th</sup> century two storey cottages of Summer

Road environs; and through to the larger detached and semi-detached 1930s houses of Ember Farm Way and Broadfields.



**View looking along Ember Farm Way**

**3.91** All houses in this medium density sub-area have good sized gardens, and with the exception of Summer Road, most are set back from the roadside behind low front boundary walls.

**3.92** Those on Summer Road have largely been removed to accommodate parking to the front of properties. This has had an impact on the character of some parts of the sub-area.

**3.93** Road carriageways are generally narrow and there are street trees on grass verges through most of this sub-area giving a very green suburban feel to the roads with good enclosure throughout.

**3.94** There is good access to the riverside with a series of footpaths which cross into the Old Village area to the north (MOL09).

**3.95** Imber Court Trading Estate is located to the south of this sub-area and has a commercial use in contrast with the residential area. There are a number of large industrial buildings with large areas of hard standing used for storage and parking.

## Opportunities

**3.96** Development is generally confined to extension and remodelling of an existing and flexible housing stock; side, rear and roof extensions are common. The **Home Extensions Companion Guide** provides advice when considering alterations and extensions to existing dwellings.

**3.97** Redevelopment and new development should have regard to **Case Studies CS1 and CS2**.

**3.98** For guidance on the design of future commercial development, particularly with regard to the protection of neighbouring residential amenity, please see **section 6**.