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1 Producing the Thames Ditton, Long Ditton, Hinchley Wood and Weston Green 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 Thames Ditton, Long Ditton, Hinchley Wood and Weston Green 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 On 10 May 2011, a community workshop was held at the Vera Fletcher Hall, 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 included a member of the Thames Ditton and Weston Green Residents Association and two local ward Councillors.

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



Studying character at the community workshop

1.5 The second half of the day concentrated on the design process and explained how the SPD would work. Participants had the opportunity to appraise the context and setting of a site in practice using maps and site appraisal notation charts. The site chosen to appraise was located on the edge of a residential area and had potential for a small infill development. It allowed participants to explore possible design solutions having regard to continuing the building line, creating a frontage and a keynote corner. During the site visit, participants were also able to explain the key characteristics of the area including the established building line, settlement pattern and recent developments.

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

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

1.8 Photographs of Weston Green that feature in the character assessment and summary in the main document are courtesy of Keith Evetts and Cllr Shipley (members of the Thames Ditton and Weston Green Residents Association).

2 How to use the settlement area 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 Thames Ditton. Long Ditton, Hinchley Wood and Weston Green Character Assessment



Introduction

3.1 Located in the north east of the Borough, this settlement area consists of four individual settlements providing pleasant and individually distinctive residential areas. The area borders the River Thames to the north with an active river frontage in the east and green rural surroundings to the south. The neighbouring settlement to the east is Surbiton, a town within the London Borough of Kingston Upon Thames, which has a more urban character.

3.2 Some of the local areas identified within this settlement area are well-defined, for example the historic village centre of Thames Ditton, the low density houses to St Mary's Road on the eastern border of the borough and the distinctive suburban character derived from the consistency in design and materials in Hinchley Wood. Other areas are less well-defined particularly the change from Thames Ditton to Long Ditton or Weston Green, these are more subtle and tend to have been defined by the railway dividing these areas which feel like they are separate although they share common themes.

Summary of Key Features

- Tightly enclosed robust townscape in places, for example High Street, Thames Ditton.
- Series of large green spaces integral to the urban and suburban character of parts of the settlement particularly Giggs Hill Green and Weston Green
- Green Belt penetrating into the urban areas from the south
- Limited public access to the riverside but much development, activity and private access to the waterside
- Continuous views from the north of the River Thames into the settlement area
- Distinctive local centres which act as important community hubs
- Areas of very high quality historic townscape (Thames Ditton Village and Giggs Hill Green Conservation Areas), important historic groups of buildings (Long Ditton – Church and Manor House Conservation Area) and important groups with a strong relationship to the landscape setting (Weston Green Conservation Area) ⁽¹⁾
- Large semi-detached and detached houses with some pockets of smaller terraced and semi-detached housing. Limited flatted development
- Some architecturally distinctive and cohesive areas such as Hinchley Wood, St James Park and Hayward Road (former Milk Marketing Board site) and at the smaller scale, older estates such as Basing Way and Basingfield Road
- Some roads, such as St Mary's Road or Station Road (Thames Ditton) are strongly defined by trees to front boundaries but there is a notable lack of street trees or grass verges

1 For more information on these conservation areas and the Character Appraisal and Management Proposals document for Thames Ditton and Giggs Hill Green Conservation Area please see <http://www.elmbridge.gov.uk/planning/heritage/ConAreas.htm>

Issues identified from the Community Workshops

- Obscure glazing was being used as a means to combat issues of overlooking rather than tackling more fundamental issues of design at the planning stage
- The issue of 'garden grabbing' for the development of mini-estates was seen as a continual problem and threat which was changing the character of some parts of the settlement area
- Where large rear gardens are being developed, the proximity of access provisions to existing houses results in poor amenity for both existing and new owners
- Storage and space requirements for shops need full consideration when proposing new retail development
- Integration of public art into development schemes (such as that seen to St James Park – which was considered successful)
- The need for residential guidance on integrating and accommodating wheelie bin storage areas in developments
- Size of gardens in relation to plot proportions in new builds.



All Saints Church, Weston Green

Local Landmarks

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

A. Spire of the Church of St Nicholas, Thames Ditton

B. Engine House, Surbiton Waterworks, Long Ditton

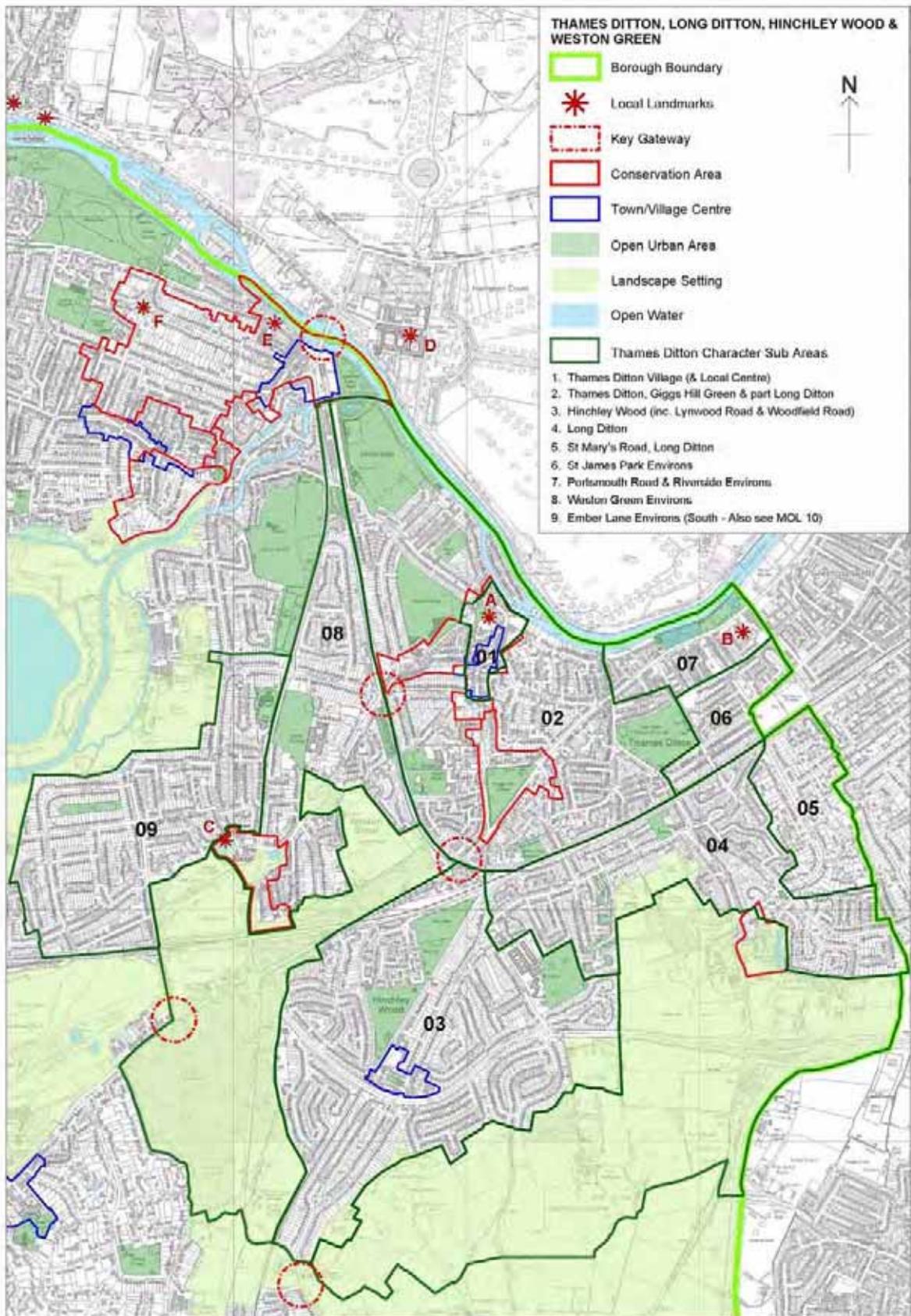
C. Spire of All Saints Church, Weston Green

D. Hampton Court (London Borough of Richmond)

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

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

3.3 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.



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The Sub-areas

DHW01: Thames Ditton Village (and local centre)

Overview

3.4 This sub-area is defined by the historic core of Thames Ditton Village and the frontage to the River Thames (this includes the Home of Compassion, a Grade II listed building which forms an important part of the townscape to the historic core and has a significant frontage to the River Thames).

3.5 This is a very attractive, high quality townscape which is designated as a conservation area and includes a number of statutory and locally listed buildings. ⁽²⁾

3.6 The streets are well-defined throughout, with houses and commercial premises, historic walls or railings defining the back edge of the pavement.

3.7 The village centre includes some carefully considered and thoughtful infill projects which have been successfully integrated into the streetscene.



Houses at High Street and Ashley Road junction

3.8 There is a fine grain of development with the scale of built form being a mix of two or three storey buildings, some with shopfronts to the ground floor.

3.9 Variation to roof form and eaves height forms part of the dynamic character of the townscape with a mix of parapets, gables and pitched roofs.

3.10 Glimpsed views to the tower of St Nicholas are an important part of the historic character of this sub-area.

3.11 There are also high quality views to the river and Thames Ditton Island.



Cast iron bridge linking Thames Ditton Island to the mainland

3.12 The mixed use nature of the sub-area; with residential, office, shops, cafés and restaurants is an important element of the character.



Mixed use to High Street, Thames Ditton

3.13 Historic boundary walls to the fronts and sides of plots are important heritage assets.

Specific issues raised at the Community Workshop

- Poor quality of shop fronts and signage to the local centre

Opportunities

3.14 Development within this sub-area, given the sensitivity of the built form, will need to have regard to the scale and juxtaposition of buildings and how they interact with landscape features such as trees, garden spaces and the river.

3.15 Opportunities for development are likely to take the form of infilling of plots or the replacement of buildings. **Case studies CS1 and CS2** will be relevant.

3.16 For guidelines for new development in and adjacent to the Thames Ditton Conservation Area refer to the Thames Ditton and Giggs Hill Green Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals.

DHW02: Thames Ditton, Giggs Hill Green and part Long Ditton residential suburbs

Overview

3.17 The most diverse of the sub-areas in this part of the Borough, this area is predominantly residential with two schools to the western boundary (formed by the Hampton Court branch train line).

3.18 There is also an important series of short parades of shops and other uses, such as public houses, petrol stations and car showrooms which characterise Portsmouth Road, the principal route through this sub-area.

3.19 Houses are contained within small parcels of development. These can range from the very modest late Victorian two storey terraced or semi-detached houses found for example to Queens Road and Alexandra Road to the north of the sub-area, Rushett

Road to the far eastern corner of the area and Claygate Lane to the south (adjacent to the railway).



Houses to Alexandra Road

3.20 There are isolated pockets of older housing surrounded by Edwardian, inter-war and post-war development generally at a lower density and larger houses, both semi-detached and detached.

3.21 Most houses in the sub-area are two or two and a half storey and there is much variation in roof form and orientation to the road; usually combinations of gables and pitches with dormers or lit gables. This produces roofline interest and well-articulated townscape throughout.



Houses to Thorkhill Road

3.22 Most houses in the lower density areas share common characteristics, being larger family homes, set back in large, often mature plots with trees, both broadleaf and ornamental, within front and rear gardens.

3.23 Parking is often off-street on drives screened from the road.

3.24 To the older, more established roads in this sub-area, there is generally a high degree of architectural quality especially east of Thames Ditton Village (DHW01), in St Leonards Road environs, fronting Giggs Hill Green and to the north side of Station Road.



Houses to the north side of Station Road

3.25 A notable characteristic of this part of the Borough is the close proximity of large open green spaces, ranging from the traditional 'green' at Giggs Hill Green through to large sports and recreation grounds such as those seen between Speer Road and Summer Road and to the east of Ewell Road (Long Ditton Recreation Ground). These spaces are often tree-lined and of high amenity value.

3.26 The views across Giggs Hill Green in particular are characterised by the openness of the green and the distinctive nature of development as buildings emerge and disappear behind tree cover along its edges.

3.27 The spatial qualities of development in this area are apparent, with views between those properties set within large plots.



Views across Giggs Hill Green to houses on the north side

Specific issues raised at the Community Workshop

- Pressure for development at the river frontage changing the scale and character of this part of the borough (especially as this section of the River Thames is in full public view from the north side)

Opportunities

3.28 Development, where appropriate, is likely to take the form of the sub-division of large plots, conversion of large properties to flats, or the complete redevelopment of plots.

3.29 **Case studies CS1 and CS2** should be carefully considered.

3.30 For future development located close to the riverside, please see specific design advice at **section 6** relating to riverside development.

3.31 For guidelines for new development in and adjacent to the Thames Ditton and Giggs Hill Green Conservation Areas refer to the Thames Ditton and Giggs Hill Green Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals.

DHW03: Hinchley Wood (Including Lynwood Road and Woodfield Road)

Overview

3.32 This is a large sub-area mostly developed in the early 1930s with much homogeneity and cohesiveness although the later development of parts of Lynwood Road, Woodfield Road and Hinchley Park vary in character.

3.33 The sub-area includes the well-used local centre adjacent to the station. This is an attractive mixed use group of shops, with residential units above, set around a landscaped square.



Hinchley Wood local centre - Manor Road North

3.34 Large semi-detached and detached houses are generally set in large deep plots with gardens to the front and rear.

3.35 Streets are a mix of straight, sweeping and cranked carriageways, often with grass verges and street trees.

3.36 Some pavements have clay paviors which add to the general high quality of the public realm.

3.37 All houses have off street parking often with garages converted to additional accommodation or integral to later extensions.

3.38 Most houses have been extended to their side boundaries.

3.39 There are groupings of flats in the relatively recently redeveloped east side of Manor Road North adjacent to the Kingston Bypass and to Woodfield Road to the north of the station.

3.40 There is sheltered housing to the west of Manor Road North adjacent to the railway line.

3.41 The consistency in house design and use of materials within roads is a strong part of the character of this part of the settlement area. This is combined with the high quality public realm, particularly the presence of street trees, which accentuates the leafy suburban character.

Opportunities

3.42 Development is likely to take the form of the consolidation of sites and given the highly sustainable location will tend to be at a higher density. **Case studies CS1 and CS2** will be most relevant.

DHW04: Long Ditton

Overview

3.43 Much of this sub-area was developed through the inter-war period with the exception of Kings Road which was laid out and part developed by c1900, with the shopping parade to Fleece Road in place by 1920.

3.44 The presence of two schools, a small local parade of shops, allotments, a sports ground and well-used cricket ground provide this area with a strong sense of community.

3.45 The local shops are especially valued and sit adjacent to a small green with mature trees which acts as a focal point for the community.

3.46 The area is generally developed at a low to medium density with most properties being two storey semi-detached or detached, set back from the roadside, with off street parking and front boundaries.

3.47 There has been some loss of front gardens to parking and this has started to change the character of some roads within this sub-area (parts of Fleece Road for example).



Loss of front gardens, Fleece Road

3.48 Despite a strong sense of community, there is a general sense of impermeability as most development is set within short crescents and cul-de-sacs.

3.49 Grass verges and hedge and tree lined boundaries (mostly ornamental trees) give a general sense of a high quality public realm. There are also mature trees to rear gardens, particularly to Ditton Hill Road, which form an attractive green backdrop.

Specific issues raised at the Community Workshop

- The loss of trees during the course of redevelopment of sites was highlighted as a particular concern.

Opportunities

3.50 Development is likely to take the form of sub-division of plots or the amalgamation of plots to provide a larger development site. **Case Studies 2 and 3** will be relevant.

3.51 In order to address the local community's issues with regards to trees, please read the design guidance on landscaping at **section 5**.

DHW05: St Mary's Road, Long Ditton

Overview

3.52 This part of the settlement area borders the London Borough of Kingston Upon Thames.

3.53 Properties to the edge of the sub-area within Kingston Upon Thames are at a relatively low density and would appear to share similar characteristics in terms of scale and massing.

3.54 However, St Mary's Road is of a superior quality in terms of the original houses which survive in generous plots. These are of high architectural value and reflect a transition between the London suburb and the Surrey urban vernacular with influences from both (see Companion Guide on the character of Elmbridge).

3.55 Properties date from the late 19th century through to the 21st century and vary in scale from single storey to three storey.

3.56 There is much articulation and architectural detailing to large buildings which helps break up their massing and scale.



Traditional houses to St Mary's Road

3.57 All houses are set well back from the roadside in landscaped gardens often lined with trees or hedges giving a very green character to the road – particularly in views along St Mary’s Road.

Specific issues raised at the Community Workshop

- There was concern that the development pressure experienced to the east of the Borough (in Surbiton/ Kingston Upon Thames) was exerting its influence on this part of Elmbridge. This was particularly the case with regard to issues of parking associated with higher density flatted development.

Opportunities

3.58 Development within this part of the settlement area is likely to take the form of replacing the existing housing stock with larger buildings. This should have regard to the adjacent plots and carefully consider the architectural quality and historic merit of existing buildings.

3.59 In some cases reuse and extension of existing buildings may be more appropriate than replacement. **Case Studies CS1 and possibly CS2** will be relevant.

DHW06: St James Park Environs

Overview

3.60 This is a relatively small sub-area which has two distinct phases of development but is similar in scale and density throughout.

3.61 Effingham Road to the south of the sub-area comprises large detached houses from the late 19th /early 20th century. They are generally grand, two and a half storey properties, with bays and projecting gables, which mark this road out as distinctive and somewhat unique in this part of the Borough.



Effingham Road, Long Ditton

3.62 Houses are set within deep plots and development often extends to the edge of the side boundaries creating a terrace like effect in townscape terms.

3.63 To the north of this is the late 20th century development of St James Park built over the filter beds associated with the former Lambeth/Chelsea water works. Architecturally different and mostly comprising three storey townhouses with integral garages and blocks of flats in a neo-Georgian style. Their scale and density is reflective of Effingham Road.



St James Park, Long Ditton

3.64 This private estate is set around a landscaped square with a central fountain and sculpture. There has been careful attention to the landscaping and once mature it will provide an attractive if largely private setting for these properties.

Opportunities

3.65 Development is unlikely to be more than alteration and extension of existing stocks of housing in St James Park given their relatively recent construction.

3.66 Where development does occur, careful consideration of the role and positioning of buildings will maintain the established structure of development already present.

DHW07: Portsmouth Road and Riverside environs

Overview

3.67 This is the most complex of the sub-areas within this settlement area as there is such a diverse mix, scale of uses and built form which includes residential, hotel, marine, leisure and industrial uses. They are, however, unified in their relationship with the River Thames and the general feel of transition and evolution of the role of this key part of the Borough.

3.68 This is a key gateway to the Borough from Greater London and also forms part of the working character of the River Thames with its marina and boat related uses and built form.



Marina adjacent to Portsmouth Road

3.69 The scale, massing and use of buildings within this sub-area varies widely, from two storey terraced and semi-detached

cottages, an industrial area, car showrooms, a five storey hotel and larger footprint industrial buildings.



Holiday Inn, Portsmouth Road

3.70 One of the most attractive elements of the character of this sub-area is the close proximity of the river and ability to view the waterside uses; marinas, moorings and boat repair yards.

3.71 There is a functional aesthetic to the built form which includes older 19th century survival of buildings; public houses and larger houses.

3.72 There is a notable absence of significant mature broadleaf tree cover with most landscaping being relatively recent.

Opportunities

3.73 This area is in transition and recent development has reflected a greater scale of built form which is starting to change the character of this part of the settlement area.

3.74 New development should consider the scale of adjacent buildings and will need to carefully identify the role of any future development.

3.75 For specific design advice relating to riverside development and commercial new builds please see **section 6**.

DHW08: Weston Green environs

Overview

3.76 The historic settlement of Weston Green was centred south of Manor Farm (now the grounds of Esher College).

3.77 Hampton Court Way, constructed in 1932, split the village in two and provided the framework and impetus for much of the later development seen today in the form of residential suburbs created off the principal routes passing through the sub-area.

3.78 Throughout this sub-area houses are rarely more than two storey and are a mix of semi-detached and detached properties, set back in front gardens with off street parking and semi-mature to mature boundaries. Generous plots are regular and often deep.

3.79 Some of the roads (for example Weston Green Road), although not designated as a conservation area, have some fine groupings of older houses and a high retention of architectural detailing and original windows and doors.



Groups of older houses, Weston Green Road

3.80 To the south of the sub area lies Weston Green Conservation Area. The main feature to the west of this area is Marneys Pond, overlooked by the Old Red House, an 18th century Manor House, the public house and All Saints Church, a local landmark.

3.81 The eastern side of Hampton Court Way is characterised by a continuous line of buildings fronting the open space. This group contains a number of local and statutory listed buildings.

3.82 Milbourne Pond lies to the north of these buildings and framed by a row of larger buildings including The Elms, a Grade II* listed building. This area retains a village scale and there is a strong sense of entering a village despite the highly trafficked Hampton Court Way passing through the centre.



Milbourne Pond, Weston Green

3.83 Both the western and eastern sections of the green are located within the Green Belt and there is a strong sense of the natural, well-used and publicly accessible common land penetrating into the developed sections of this settlement area.

3.84 The green, which is a series of linked green spaces, is often the backdrop or frame for views to built form with trees also playing an important role in defining and enclosing parts of the open space.

3.85 Trees continue to form a key part of the character of roads with mature broadleaf trees to front and rear gardens featuring prominently in the local street scenes.



Weston Road

Specific issues raised at the Community Workshop

- There was concern regarding the building on plots in close proximity to the Green Belt which at present sees relatively modest development to its edges thus preserving the openness of the Green Belt, a particularly strong characteristic to this part of the settlement area

Opportunities

3.86 Despite most of the area not forming part of a conservation area, some of the residential roads are of a high architectural quality with well-landscaped and softened boundaries often backing onto or forming the edge of significant green spaces. As such new development should reflect these sensitivities.

3.87 Development is generally confined to extension and remodelling of existing buildings and the area could see some replacement of houses.

3.88 **Case study CS1 and advice in the Home Extensions companion guide** will be of most relevance to the local challenges of development in sometimes sensitive settings.

DHW09: Ember Lane environs (south) – also see sub-area MOL10

Overview

3.89 Please also refer to the description at **MOL10** Ember Lane environs (north), East and West Molesey settlement area.

3.90 This sub-area is a well established residential suburb of large semi-detached and detached houses.

3.91 The consistency to materials, plot division and heights and styles of houses creates an homogeneity to the area.



Houses to Ember Lane

3.92 Most houses have off-street parking giving an uncluttered appearance to streets complemented by mature hedges and ornamental trees to front boundaries.

3.93 Street trees add to the quality of the public realm.

Opportunities

3.94 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.



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