

APPENDIX A

Character Appraisal – Hamilton Road Conservation Area (No.72)

History and Development

This area began as a pattern of agricultural fields within the River Crane valley, lying north of the historic settlement around Twickenham Green and along Back Lane (now Colne Road). Development began from the 1880s with the laying out of groups of workers cottages on Staten Gardens, Albert Road, Marsh Farm Road and Talbot Road. The development of these houses was associated with the nearby South Western Railway line, which had been driven through the valley in the mid 19th century. The land to the west of these early developments remained farmland and market gardens, at this time owned by the Pouparts of Marsh Farm in the river valley.

After great debate Twickenham Town Council accepted an offer in 1900 from Edmundsons Electricity Corporation to begin the electrification of the area. The Twickenham and Teddington Electricity Supply Company was created and bought the land west of Talbot Road on which to build an electricity works. The original works buildings survive as no.37 Hamilton Road, begun in 1901 by the builder Mr T J Messom. Electricity supply began in 1902 providing power for a modest 3,000 lights at first and quickly expanding. The works buildings were substantially extended to the west after WW1 as the works began to supply a larger area now including Hampton and Hampton Wick as well as Twickenham and Teddington. It was only in 1931 that the Town Council declared that all the remaining gas lamps were to be converted to electricity. These later extensions were subsequently removed much later in the century and a modern electricity sub-station installed on this part of the site. The terraces of houses directly to the south of the works buildings were built on land initially purchased by the Twickenham and Teddington Electricity Supply Company and resold for residential development very soon after the works became operational. The terraced houses of Hamilton, Warwick and Edwin Roads were built together and directly wired to the electricity supply of the neighbouring works. This is remarkable for modest workers housing to be so well serviced, considering that at this time many of the earlier nearby residential streets remained lit by gas. These streets were intimately connected with the electricity works buildings, buildings apparent at the north end of each road and both lit by the works and housing many of its employees.

Special Interest

This area is focused on, and dominated by, the remarkable electricity works buildings at no.37 Hamilton Road. Dating from 1901-2 this is a robust utilitarian industrial building group. The group is made up of distinct office and works parts of two and three storeys with larger units with pitched roofs to the rear overlooking the open space of the Crane River valley. This is a key landmark building for the surrounding area. The works are of brown stock brick dressed with red brick surrounds to openings. To emphasise the separation of uses the works part of these buildings tend to have cambered brick arches to openings, whereas the brick heads to the openings of the office part are flat with a greater use of red brick aprons below window cills. The buildings retain traditional timber sliding sash windows to the office part and characteristic metal-framed windows to the works parts.

The electricity works buildings form the termination of the view north along Hamilton Road, its larger scale and distinctive gable end to its office part appearing to command the more modest terraced cottages from above. There is both a strong spatial and historic relationship between

the works buildings and the streets of terraced houses directly to their south. Before the partial demolition of works buildings towards the end of the 20th century, the views north along Hamilton and Warwick Roads were both dominated by these industrial buildings. That part of the industrial site to the north of Warwick Road remains in use as a modern electricity sub station.

Hamilton, Warwick and Edwin Roads are a cohesive contemporary group of uniform terraced houses dating from the early 20th century. They are arranged in even groups along these dead straight roads separated by narrow passages connecting to an alleyway at the rear. These are simple and consistent two storey houses of brown stock brick dressed with red brick stringcourses and surrounds to windows and doors. Interestingly the materials used for these houses and the associated works buildings are comparable. These houses have distinctive round arched porches to their recessed front doors and pitched slate roofs with consistent brick chimneys. Some traditional timber sliding sash windows survive. However a number of these houses have been subject to inappropriate changes such as modern replacement windows, the painting or rendering of their facades, infilling of porches etc. resulting in the loss of original materials and architectural features.

This is a distinctive and well defined area of key industrial buildings and associated housing, which is historically and visually distinguishable from surrounding development. The historic evolution of Richmond upon Thames means that there is comparatively little industrial archaeology within the Borough. This emphasises the importance of the survival of this area and its buildings. The electricity works buildings and associated townscape illustrates an important chapter in the historic development of Twickenham towards a modern town.