

## MAIN FEATURES OF CHARACTER AREA 9

The commercial centre of Highams Park is focused around the Overground rail station (fig 3). Retail premises fronting Hale End Road, The Avenue, The Broadway and Winchester Road contain mostly two and three storey Edwardian and Victorian buildings with mainly residential on upper floors. The previous Halex factory site to the west of Larkshall Road is now occupied by industrial units, together with a modern development with a large supermarket and some housing. Between Larkshall Road and the railway line are post war office and retail premises. The retail area is designated a District Centre and the industrial estate designated a Borough Business Zone.

## LAYOUT AND STREET FEATURES

The main feature of the area is the railway station, with the re-purposed signal box (build 1925), together with the active feature provided by the level crossing (fig 1). The retail lined roads radiating out from the rail crossing create a “marketplace” feel to the area (fig 2). The Millennium Clock and new landscape features in Signal Walk reinforce the area’s role as the “town centre”.

The modest scale of buildings allows a constant backdrop of mature trees as a key character aspect of the area, complemented by well-established street trees viewed along the radiating streets. The Larkshall Road frontage also has a wide grassed area with mature trees providing a buffer between the industrial buildings of the industrial estate and homes to the east.

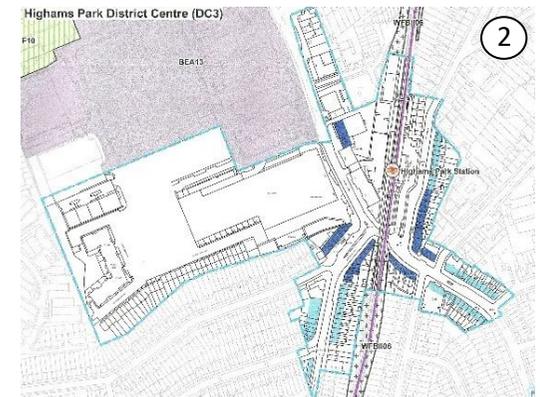
## BUILDINGS AND DETAILS

The Victorian and Edwardian buildings in The Avenue (fig 4) and Hale End Road (figs 6 & 8) are mostly three storey, built in red brick with attractive stone and render detailing. They have a vertical emphasis reinforced by pitched rooflines broken up with parapet walls and chimneys, projecting gables and prominent dividing details between the original modest retail unit widths. Windows are similarly of a vertical format, with the windows and surrounds generally white in colour contrasting with the original brick and render. Bay windows are a prominent characteristic, occasionally with roof features within the terrace module (fig 8). Some original shop fronts remain amongst more modern additions and add to the character of the buildings and frontages.

On The Broadway and Winchester Road (fig 7) buildings are generally two storey terraces with pitched roofs, with retail ground floor and residential above. Some of these Edwardian buildings have flamboyant eaves details and square bay windows at the first floor. Many of these have prominent roofline features which help define the frequency and domestic module of the original shops. These have the common characteristics of vertical emphasis to windows, bay windows, and decorative pilasters between retail units.

All the retail frontages address the building line and the street, where necessary wrapping around corners to avoid blank flank walls (fig 6). Vertical emphasis between units provides a strong architectural rhythm including, in places, interesting stepping of the terrace to respect the street building line (fig 6). Similarly, other uses tend to be of the of the same scale and likewise address the street and corners (fig 5).

On the north side of The Broadway is an attractive three storey 1930s building with residential above retail, beneath a wide hipped roof (Nos. 1-5 The Broadway). The dappled red patterned brickwork is modelled in depth and massing, which together with the regular window framing provides a pleasing symmetry to this Art Deco styles building.



## BUILDINGS AND DETAILS continued

The recently built large retail superstore and carpark on Larkshall Road is “wrapped” with frontage buildings. These are residential over retail fronting Larkshall Road (fig 10), offices to Jubilee Avenue and three storey town houses to Jacks Farm Way (fig 9).

The recently built housing in Jacks Farm Way is a mixture of a street of two and three storey terraced homes with strong vertical emphasis, with the top floor set back from the building line and three modern four and five storey apartment blocks arranged around private, shared garden areas. The massing, unbroken height and roof line, horizontal emphasis and detailing and the arrangement of the buildings which turn their backs to the street is of a character unlike other buildings in Highams Park. Similarly, the apartments in the same development overlooking Larkshall Road (fig 10) have similar, horizontal emphasis, albeit they do have a front door within the main street frontage.

The industrial estate is a mixture of older portal frame buildings with brick cladding and some more recent additions which are of a frame and cladding panel construction. They are largely visually shielded by mature trees from residential areas and Larkshall Road.

The two storey office and retail buildings between Larkshall Road and the station are typical of late 1960s and 1970s buildings, in a mixture of brick, concrete and render, drawing little from the local character of the area. The same is the case for the new retail / residential building at 452-462 Larkshall Road, with its mock “turrets”, lack of rhythm to break down the scale, little interest or variation at roof or top storey and large unused paved setback.

## LANDMARKS AND NOTABLE BUILDINGS

The station is the focal point around which Highams Park has developed with its building (fig 3) dating from 1903 to a design by architect Neville Ashbee in the ‘Domestic’ style characteristic of the Great Eastern Railway at that time. It is a modest and well-proportioned building suffering because of its car dominated immediate surroundings, but then supported in scale by lively small-scale shop units on either side of the station frontage. The Signal Box (fig 1) is a prominent feature of the Highams Park centre which dates from 1925 and is now operating as a specialist café.

The 1935 Art Deco former Regal Cinema building is locally listed (fig 5) and has a fine dark brick façade with inlaid ceramic tiles. The frontage building and rear auditorium are of a similar height to surrounding buildings, though, of necessity because of their original use, of a different style. The auditorium building at the rear is constructed in similar brick to the terraced homes in Beech Hall Road, with vertical brick pillars and rendered panels giving a vertical emphasis in keeping with the terraced houses.

The County Arms public house was built in 1908 (fig 5) and is a particular local landmark.

The post-war Public Library on The Avenue is uncompromisingly modern of its time, setting it apart as the only publicly owned building in Highams Park. It is set back from the road behind mature trees with a small area of public open space and in massing terms follows the scale and roofline height of the adjacent residential buildings

The Greenwich Meridian passes through centre of Highams Park albeit there is little current acknowledgement of this.

