

**PROPOSED GROTTO HILL CONSERVATION AREA  
CHARACTER APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**Thanet District Council**

**PUBLIC CONSULTATION DRAFT**



This document has been written for Thanet District Council by:

The Conservation Studio  
1 Querns Lane,  
Cirencester,  
Glos GL7 1RL.

T: 01285 642428

E: [info@theconservationstudio.co.uk](mailto:info@theconservationstudio.co.uk)

W: [www.theconservationstudio.co.uk](http://www.theconservationstudio.co.uk)

## **Contents**

### **Executive Summary**

## **PART 1 THE PROPOSED GROTTO HILL CONSERVATION AREA – CHARACTER APPRAISAL**

### **Executive Summary**

#### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 Summary of the special interest of the proposed Grotto Hill Conservation Area
- 1.2 The control of conservation areas
- 1.3 Community involvement

#### **2 Location and setting**

- 2.1 Location and context
- 2.2 Setting, topography and geology
- 2.3 Biodiversity

#### **3 Historical development**

- 3.1 Archaeology
- 3.2 The development of Margate
- 3.2 The development of the proposed Grotto Hill Conservation Area

#### **4 Spatial analysis**

- 4.1 General character and plan form
- 4.2 Focal points, focal buildings, views and vistas
- 4.3 Open spaces and trees
- 4.4 Boundaries
- 4.5 Public realm

#### **5 The buildings of the conservation area**

- 5.1 Building types and dates
- 5.2 Listed buildings
- 5.3 Locally listed buildings
- 5.4 Positive buildings
- 5.5 Building styles, materials and colours
- 5.6 Activities and Uses

#### **6 The extent of intrusion or damage**

- 6.1 Key negative features
- 6.2 Summary of issues

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 Map 1 Development Phases

Appendix 2 Map 2 Townscape Appraisal Map

## **PART 2 THE PROPOSED GROTTO HILL CONSERVATION AREA - MANAGEMENT PLAN**

### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 The purpose of the Management Plan
- 1.2 Relevant documents
- 1.3 Summary of issues

### **2 Recommended actions**

- 2.1 The control of new development
- 2.2 The protection of views
- 2.3 The public realm
- 2.4 The control of car parking and traffic
- 2.5 The control of unlisted buildings (Article 4 Directions)
- 2.6 Buildings at Risk
- 2.7 The Local list
- 2.8 Education and guidance
- 2.9 Monitoring and review

### **3 Action Plan**

### **4 Contact details**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cliftonville in east Margate is a well preserved Victorian seaside resort, and most of the original streets, spaces and buildings remain relatively unaltered. Built to high standards of design and construction from the 1860s onwards, the buildings provide a fine example of historic seaside architecture which is compatible in quality to similarly dated seaside developments elsewhere in England. Against this remarkable survival must be balanced the fact that today, the Margate Central and Cliftonville West wards are amongst the most deprived wards in the south east (as defined by the Indices of Deprivation October 2015).

In their report following a visit to Margate in 2010, the Urban Panel of the Commission for Architecture and Built Environment (CABE) stated that "Cliftonville could, by a different fluke of social history and demographics, be one of the most desirable parts of the country to live". For the past few years, the District Council and its partners have been taking a strategic approach towards the social and economic regeneration of Margate Central and West Cliftonville, as evidenced by the designation of new conservation areas, the provision of grant aid, and the provision of new planning policies and guidance. A successful future can often be secured by keeping and improving that which is best from the past.

Cliftonville has also been identified as important part of the local heritage by officers of the District Council, by Historic England (this Appraisal was in the main grant funded by Historic England), and by the local community, which has been consulted on initial drafts of this document.



*Clifton Road*

Conservation Area designation is not intended to prevent change or adaptation but simply to ensure that any proposals for change are properly considered. Restoration of the historic built environment will not impede its regeneration, and, indeed, designation will enable the District Council as the planning authority to incrementally improve the appearance of the buildings and the spaces between them, providing an impetus for private investment. Further work is being done by the District Council under separate initiatives to encourage larger residential units and the creation of more owner-occupied property.

This document provides a detailed analysis of the special interest of the proposed Grotto Hill Conservation Area and records those features which make the Conservation Area worthy of designation (the 'Character Appraisal'). It also provides proposals for enhancements (the

'Management Plan'). All of the recommendations will be subject to funding and staff resources being made available.

The production of up-to-date Character Appraisals assists the Council in making decisions on planning applications within or on the edges of the Conservation Area. Character Appraisals also help the local community understand what is 'special' about their area and encourages local involvement in the planning process. In the Grotto Hill area, a local residents' group has already been established and it is hoped will be fully involved with the implementation of recommendations within this document. Whilst some of the recommendations in the Management Plan will have to remain aspirational for the time being, it is considered good practice to identify where improvements are needed so that actions can be taken promptly if, and when, funding becomes available.

Subject to public consultation, it is anticipated that the proposed Grotto Hill Conservation Area could be designated during 2016 by Thanet District Council. Other conservation areas may be designated in Cliftonville as part of a review of the Cliftonville area which commenced in the summer of 2010. This Character Appraisal and Management Plan will be subject to an eight week public consultation between 11 January 2016 to 7 March 2016 after which any necessary amendments will be made to the document and the accompanying mapping. The final Appraisal and Management Plan will be approved by the Council in due course as a material document for development management purposes.



*Houses in Grotto Gardens*

This Grotto Hill Conservation Area Character Appraisal with its attendant Management Plan has been produced for the Council by The Conservation Studio. The survey work and background research were undertaken between August 2010 and March 2011. The general format of these documents follows guidance produced by Historic England on the effective management of conservation areas.

### **Conservation Area Designation**

Despite what some people think, conservation area designation is not a bureaucratic way of preventing property owners from exercising their rights to alter their buildings as they wish. Conservation areas designation does not preclude development, but seeks to ensure recognition of the area's historical value in planning that development. Conservation area designation is aimed at managing change so that positive qualities of an area are protected and opportunities for improvement identified. Designation of a conservation area therefore, has a number of benefits that

a wider community can enjoy including:

- The positive identification of an area is designed to focus attention on its qualities, which may include the historic layout and development of the area, scale and detailing of their individual buildings and spaces between them, construction materials, open spaces and trees, walls etc. The interaction of the buildings and spaces within designated areas create unique environments that contribute irreplaceable components of our local, regional and national heritage.
- Conservation area designation brings the advantage of living, working and socialising in an attractive area with a unique sense of place and where local identity and architectural and historical distinctiveness are fostered and maintained.
- People value conservation areas for their distinctiveness, visual appeal and historic character and research by the London School of Economics and Historic England has found that this value is reflected in the price of properties in conservation areas and overall there is no negative attitude toward planning regulations.
- The planning controls that come with conservation area designation are more limited than many people imagine and are designed to benefit the wider community.
- The designation of a conservation area is intended to encourage a sensitive approach to proposals for development. The legislative duty that designation brings provides a framework to achieve higher quality of development and promote more sensitive improvements in conservation areas.
- Conservation area designation brings the requirement to apply for planning permission to demolish most buildings. Outside a conservation area, planning permission is not required for the demolition of buildings leaving many buildings not protected and vulnerable to removal. Designation provides a framework to protect buildings that make a significant contribution to the character of an area.
- Additional benefits of conservation area designation include the possibility of accessing grant schemes. Where appropriate it may provide the basis for the local planning authority to make bids under the Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) scheme such as the one which operates within Dalby Square Conservation Area. This scheme provides financial assistance to property owners with works to the fabric of their buildings or to restore derelict properties. THI is a grant programme administered by the Heritage Lottery Fund for the repair and regeneration of historic buildings. Projects are generally led by local partnerships.
- The local authority is under a general duty to take into account the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character of the area when determining planning applications affecting conservation areas.

## PART 1

# THE PROPOSED GROTTO HILL CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Summary of the special interest of the proposed Grotto Hill Conservation Area

The Grotto Hill Conservation Area forms part of the distinctive grid pattern of streets which were developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as part of Cliftonville, a residential suburb located on the eastern edge of the old fishing village of Margate. Between 1880 and 1910 Cliftonville became a very popular and upmarket centre for visitors, who were drawn to its many hotels and guest houses, all located in close proximity to the beach. Large private houses and several schools were also built in the area. Accommodation was needed for the many workers who serviced these facilities and from the 1860s onwards new artisan houses were built on the south side of Northdown Road in a compact area overlooking the Dane valley. These houses are terraced in form and generally just two storeys high with small back gardens. Together, they form an area of distinct character which is enlivened by the inclusion within the Conservation Area of a large former Ice Factory and Cold Store, which is located on the corner of Grotto Hill and Bath Place. Of note is the falling topography, with a steep drop down Grotto Hill providing long views across the Dane Valley.



*View down Grotto Hill*

Before the 1860s, the area was used for agriculture although the map of 1821 shows a sizeable property (Dane House) next to Dane Road, with a formal garden to the east. It is possible that the only listed structure in the Conservation Area, a subterranean shell grotto, was built in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century or early 19<sup>th</sup> century as part of Dane House, which had been demolished by 1845 and replaced with a row of houses facing the street. The grotto was rediscovered by a school teacher and his sons who were digging in their garden – they must have lived at what is now No. 69 Dane Road. The grotto is now listed grade I.

Issues facing the Conservation Area include the control of new development; the protection of views across the Conservation Area; possible improvements to the public realm, including pavements, street lighting, street name plates; the enhancement of the existing build-outs including the possible addition of new street trees; the control of car parking and traffic to try and reduce the



dominance of on-street car parking particularly; the control of unlisted buildings and the possible serving on an Article 4 Direction to bring additional planning controls over alterations to the family houses in the Conservation Area; the poor condition of some of the buildings and the possible use of grant aid; proposed additions to the emerging Local List for Margate; the provision of further information and advice to the community; and the future monitoring and management of the Conservation Area.

## **1.2 The control of conservation areas**

Conservation areas are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990*. A conservation area is defined as “an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”.

Section 71 of the same Act requires local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these conservation areas. Section 72 also specifies that, in making a decision on an application for development within a conservation area, special attention must be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area. In response to these statutory requirements, this document defines and records the special architectural and historic interest of the proposed Grotto Hill Conservation Area and identifies opportunities for enhancement. It is in conformity with recently published Historic England guidance as set out in *Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management*. Additional government guidance regarding the management of historic buildings and conservation areas can be found in ‘*Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning and the Historic Environment*’ (PPS5), published in March 2010.

This document therefore seeks to:

- Define the special interest of the proposed Grotto Hill Conservation Area and identify the issues which threaten its special qualities (in the form of the ‘Character Appraisal’);
- Provide guidelines to prevent harm and also achieve the enhancement of the Conservation Area (in the form of the ‘Management Plan’).

## **1.3 Community involvement**

Informal consultations were carried out with the local community on the proposals for the new Cliftonville conservation area designations in October 2010, after which a Character Appraisal and Management Plan for each of the new conservation areas was prepared. Following this eight week public consultation on the Council’s website between 11 January 2016 to 7 March 2016 a Public Consultations Report will be prepared (copies may be obtained from the District Council) and amendments to the text and mapping will be made as appropriate. Finally, each Character Appraisal and Management Plan will be approved by the Council as a material document for development management purposes.

## 2 LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE SETTING

### 2.1 Location and context

The proposed Grotto Hill Conservation Area is located within the western part of Cliftonville, a 19<sup>th</sup> century expansion of the medieval port of Margate, which lies immediately to the west. Margate is located on the Isle of Thanet, a coastal district at the eastern extremity of the county of Kent in south east England. Margate, Ramsgate and Broadstairs are the principal settlements in Thanet District, and each is famous for its seaside setting and attractive historic town centres. Margate is approximately 76 miles south east of London by road and is accessed via the M2 and the A299, the Thanet Way. Railway routes lead to Canterbury, Dover and along the north coast via Herne Bay and Whitstable to London. The proposed Grotto Hill Conservation Area abuts the proposed Northdown Road Conservation Area to the north. It lies within the Cliftonville West Ward of Thanet District Council. The area of Cliftonville West is in the region of 120 hectares and the population (in the 2011 census) was 7601. Demographically, the population is predominantly white European.

### 2.2 Landscape setting, topography and geology

Margate is located over solid chalk, with high chalk cliffs rising to either side of the beach and harbour in the centre of the town. The Dane Valley rises gently southwards through the town from this beach. Cliftonville, to the north of Northdown Road, lies on roughly level ground on the eastern cliff tops above the town about 20 metres above sea level, although cuts have been made through the cliffs in previous centuries to allow access to the sandy beaches below. Two of these, Newgate Gap and Hodges Gap, lie within the proposed Cliftonville Cliff Top Conservation Area. A slight south to north drop in level reinforces the opportunities for long views over the seascape to the north of these cliffs.



*View up Grotto Hill past the entrance to the listed grotto*

The land falls steeply to the south of Northdown Road, and this is most evident in the proposed Grotto Hill Conservation Area along Clifton Gardens and Grotto Hill, which dips down the hill towards Dane Road, providing long views over the town.

### **3 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT**

#### **3.1 Archaeology**

Archaeological remains are frequently found in the Cliftonville and Margate areas. The remains of all periods from the Neolithic to Modern are recorded within the area and consist of both burial and settlement archaeology. Archaeological remains of Roman date have been recorded within the Dalby Square Conservation Area and there is a high potential for further remains of this and other periods to be present there.

Romano-British activity seems to cluster around both sides of the Dane Valley leading up to the present harbour with most of the activity concentrated at the seaward end of the valley on both high ground and further down the valley sides. Activity is similarly recorded further inland, also along the valley sides. A Romano-British cremation burial dating to between 75 and 125 AD was found by workmen excavating a trench in Arthur Road, Cliftonville. The pit contained a carinated urn in Upchurch Ware filled with ashes and burnt human bone, and was accompanied by a stamped Samian platter. The burial is recorded by the workmen as having been truncated by former Victorian ground works and sealed by a floor. Other Roman burials are known from the Britannia Public House, Fort Hill site, located to the west of Cliftonville.

#### **3.2 The development of Margate**

Margate developed from a minor medieval port to a seaside resort from the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century onwards. By 1800 the town had assembly rooms, residential squares, bathing establishments, libraries and theatres, all designed to cater to the needs of aristocratic visitors – the only class of society to take ‘holidays’. In 1828 increased numbers resulted in Holy Trinity Church being built on what was then the eastern edge of the town, close to what was to become Ethelbert Road, as a chapel-of-ease to St John’s – it was soon extended to provide 800 rented pews and 1,200 free seats. In 1845 the land which was to later develop as Cliftonville was still fields with a Coastguard Station on the cut through the high cliffs which dropped down to the beach (now Hodges Gap). The arrival of the railway in 1846, and the addition of a further line and station in 1863, changed the type of visitor to the town from a limited number of wealthy long stay guests to a greater number of short stay visitors with less per capita income.

The town’s established place in public consciousness was a good foundation for creating a new resort in Cliftonville, a resort that reversed the popular perception that Margate was increasingly becoming an attraction to the pleasure-seeking working classes. Cliftonville’s distance from the town centre, and its open cliff-top walks, were promoted as part of its exclusivity – Cliftonville was a place where one stayed to improve one’s health and peace of mind, all year around if necessary. In 1824 Clifton Baths were built to provide an opportunity to bath in heated seawater ‘for the nobility and gentry’, and in 1855 Thomas Pettman leased the cliff-top from the Marquis of Conyngham so he could access his Bathing Platform down one of the old gaps on the cliff face (Newgate Gap) which had been created by farmers collecting seaweed from the beach. At this time other major land-owners in Cliftonville included the Church Commissioners and charities such as the Bethlehem Hospital and the Ragged School Union.

The exclusivity of Cliftonville was bolstered by the area’s relative isolation. Until the building of a tramway in 1901 the only method of transport from Margate’s stations was by horse brake. Access was improved in the late 1880s by the building of Marine Drive which completed the seafront thoroughfare from Buenos Ayres to Eastern Esplanade. Between 1880 and 1899 the station of the London, Chatham and Dover Railway Company was known as ‘Margate and Cliftonville’ (it was later to be known as ‘Margate West’). Plans for a branch line from Margate to Cliftonville, with a terminus at the rear of Dalby Square, were first proposed in 1893 but were never implemented.

The association of the area with a 'better class of person' became the key selling point for the new resort. The entry for Cliftonville in the *Ward Locke Guide* of 1903 stated:

*It is the most exclusive and aristocratic part of Margate. It cannot be said too often that there are two Margate's and that Cliftonville has scarcely anything in common with the area frequented by the vulgar tripper. Cliftonville has magnificent hotels with their private orchestras and admirable cuisine catering for all types of continental clientele. It has been often said that on a Sunday morning between Newgate Gapway and Hodges Flagstaff one may see the prettiest and best dressed women in Europe'.*

The centrepiece of this 'Margate New Town' was Dalby Square, with a massive terrace of seven houses, Warrior Crescent, on the south side. This space had been laid out by the 1850s, and was originally called Ethelbert Square, the name being changed to Dalby Square in the 1870s after the then mayor (and local builder), Thomas Dalby Reeve, who also owned both the Clifton Baths and the Hall by the Sea. The Reeve family was one of the early developers of the Cliftonville estate, and Dalby Reeve's son Arthur, after whom Arthur Road is named, married George Sanger's daughter Harriet. George Sanger and his brother John Sanger, who are both buried in Margate Cemetery, were circus proprietors who were famous for their equestrian spectacles. They leased the Agricultural Hall at Islington and their show was eventually purchased in 1874 by the American showman P T Barnum.

In 1868 the Cliftonville Hotel, located at the eastward end of Dalby Square, was opened. It is noted that at that time it sat '*on an island site in the middle of corn fields*'. The hotel had 250 bedrooms, a dining room which could hold over 300 people, a ballroom, a palm court and facilities for croquet, tennis and archery amidst formal gardens along the cliff top. In all, the hotel provided the accommodation for about 50% of all hotel guests in Cliftonville, but by 1890 this figure had dropped to around 15% as so many other hotels had been built.

Another important contribution to the locality was provided by the large number of private schools. A resort guide of 1893 described Cliftonville as:

*'The end of the town affected by visitors who like a good address, and also by ladies' schools, if one may judge by the endless chain of them travelling churchwards on Sundays.'*

Northdown Road was developed from the 1870s onwards— it is shown as nearly completely built-up as far as Harold Road on the 1899 Map, although in 1900 less than 12 shops are recorded. However, by 1912 many of these new houses had been converted into commercial premises, no doubt assisted by the provision of the new tramway from Margate town centre in 1899. St Paul's Church was consecrated in 1873 and St Stephen's Wesleyan Methodist Church (now St Michael and St Bishoy's Church) was opened in 1876. They are both in Northdown Road. St Anne's Roman Catholic Church was built on the Eastern Esplanade in 1926.

In 1900 the Cliftonville Hydro Hotel with 110 bedrooms was opened, later being renamed the Grand Hotel (from 1956 this formed part of Butlins). By 1900 a grid pattern of streets off Northdown Road had also been completed (Edgar, Sweyn, Godwin, Harold, Norfolk and Surrey Roads), all with a mixture of houses and guest houses along them. In 1913 'Bobby's' was opened as a department store in Northdown Road, although it closed in 1973.

Along the seafront, the Oval, a former school cricket field, was excavated in 1897 and an amphitheatre created with a new bandstand being added in 1903. This area became the centre of Cliftonville's entertainments for the next 50 years with many concerts and other events taking place. In 1906 mixed sea bathing was finally allowed in Margate, and by 1913 donkey (or 'Jerusalem pony') rides were being provided by local gypsies along the sea shore.

After World War 1 the Borough of Margate was increasingly seeing Cliftonville as the prime attraction of the town and in 1920 the Council acquired the cliff top land from Sacketts Gap to the Borough's eastern boundary – 61 acres in all. This land was used to provide new public walks and pleasure grounds, continuing the 19<sup>th</sup> century concept of promoting Cliftonville as a health-giving place where the benefits of sea water and sea air were unparalleled.

The Clifton Baths site was acquired by John Henry Iles, the promoter of Dreamland and Ramsgate Dog Track, in the early 1920s, and the buildings were built over and redeveloped by 1926 as the complex which later became known as the Lido. The attractions included a café, cinema, and concert hall as well as an open air seawater bathing pool on foreshore land which was leased from the Council – this could accommodate up to 1,000 bathers. The growth of Cliftonville during this period between the late 19<sup>th</sup> and the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is demonstrated by the number of Cliftonville school children – around 2,000 in 1885 and about 5,000 in 1922.

Cliftonville continued to thrive until World War 2, and Dalby Square particularly was noted for the prestigious hotels, guest houses and convalescent homes which fronted it. However, the War saw the evacuation of schools to other parts of the country and most never returned. Warriar Crescent suffered bomb damage and was only partially reconstructed after the War – it was finally demolished in its entirety in 1988. Holy Trinity Church, in Margate, was also bombed in 1943, leaving a tower which has also been demolished – the site is now a car park.

From the 1960s onwards the provision of cheap holidays to Spain and other exotic locations completed a process which had begun some 30 years earlier. Many of the bigger hotels closed or were converted into flats, the demolition of the Cliftonville Hotel in 1961 being particularly noticeable as it was replaced with a complex of buildings which are currently used as a café, public house, bowling alley and other leisure-related facilities.

### **3.3 The development of the proposed Grotto Hill Conservation Area**

The buildings in the proposed Grotto Hill Conservation Area nearly all date to the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with some very minor infilling in more recent times. The area appears to have been developed to provide accommodation for the people who were needed to service the large houses and hotels which began to be built in Cliftonville from the 1860s onwards. The map of 1821 confirms that at this time, the area was open land, the only building being Dane House which lay immediately to the north of Dane Road, then called The Dane. A formal garden is shown on the east side of the building, and on the west side are two large L-shaped buildings, one of which directly fronts the street. These may have been farm buildings as a 'Farm Yard' is shown on the opposite (southern) side of the road. Opposite what is now Grotto Hill is a chalk quarry and small plots, as yet undeveloped.

There is no indication of any structure close to the site of the shell grotto, which appears to lie within a small parcel of open land to the immediate west of these L-shaped buildings. It is possible that the shell grotto was built at the late 18<sup>th</sup> or the early 19<sup>th</sup> century within the garden of Dane House, following the example set by Alexander Pope (and others) in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century – Pope built a similar shell grotto in Twickenham in the early 1740s. As Margate expanded outwards from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the location of Dane House would have become less salubrious, and it is possible that the function of the house may have changed, hence the addition of farm buildings between the grotto and the house. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that by 1845 Dane House had been demolished and a row of houses had been built facing the north side of Dane Road (now Nos. 69-101 odd), which led to Dane Farm at the eastern end of the road. These must date to between 1821 and 1845. The shell grotto was subsequently rediscovered by a schoolmaster and his sons who were digging in their back garden. They must have been living at what is now Rose Lodge, No. 69 Dane Road, which is located on what was once part of the plot of land to the west of Dane House.



*Rose Lodge, Dane Road*

The map of 1872 confirms that by this date both sides of Clifton Road (then called Clifton Cottages) had been built, as had the south side of Grotto Gardens. Some of the properties on the east side of Clifton Gardens (probably Nos. 11-31 odd) are also shown. A large area of open space is shown where Brockley Road is now located. By 1899 this had been infilled, and date stones on some of the buildings in Grotto Hill of 1888 and 1892 confirm that this was a period of further expansion and infilling. The map of 1907 shows the area much as it is today, although Grotto Gardens was still a nursery – the terraced houses must have been added soon after. Of interest are the non-residential buildings – the former Ice factory and Cold Store off Grotto Hill, which is not shown on the 1907 map and stylistically dates to the period 1910 -1920, and some single storey workshops, now vacant and in poor condition, between Grotto Gardens and the properties facing Dane Road. These are also early 20<sup>th</sup> century in date. At some stage a single storey hall was built in Brockley Road, possibly as a non-conformist chapel or some sort of community facility – its details suggest a late 19<sup>th</sup> century date.

## 4 SPATIAL ANALYSIS

### 4.1 General character and plan form

The proposed Grotto Hill Conservation Area was built on open fields as part of the development of Cliftonville between the 1850s and late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the streets to either side of Northdown Road were laid out in a grid pattern, those on the north connecting the commercial core of Cliftonville with the seaside activities along the promenades. To the south, the streets which form the proposed Conservation Area adjoined Bath Road, a long straight road which dropped down the hill from what was then called Northumberland Road (now Northdown Road), containing an area of very mixed development. The streets within the Conservation Area therefore follow the orientation of Bath Road and Northdown Road, creating a tightly planned series of short streets lying parallel to each other which are linked in the west by Clifton Gardens and its continuation, Grotto Hill. Whilst Brockley Road and Grotto Road are connected by a car-accessible street, the continuation of Grotto Road up the hill on the east side of the Conservation Area has been blocked up and a pedestrian-only route provided. Of note is the steepness of the south-facing slope, most obviously appreciated along Grotto Hill and this second section of Grotto Road, with the three main streets between them being roughly level as they follow the contours along this hill.



*Terraced houses in Brockley Road*

The Conservation Area is notable for its neat terraces of simple two storey residential houses of very similar designs and details which can be seen in the four main streets – Clifton Road, Brockley Road, Grotto Road and Grotto Gardens. Clifton Gardens/Grotto Hill is more varied in the size and uses of its buildings, with some more recent development along its west side which is not included within the Conservation Area. The earlier buildings in Dane Road are also mainly terraced but are set back from the road and have been far more altered than the houses in the four streets which lie above it.

### 4.2 Focal points, focal buildings, views and vistas

#### Focal points and focal buildings:

The simple grid pattern of streets, and the cohesive mainly residential development on either side of each road, means that there are no focal points although three buildings particularly stand out:

- The Ice factory and Cold Store in Bath Place and its adjoining building in Grotto Hill – the largest and most dominant building in the proposed Conservation Area

- The modern white building which encompasses the grade 1 listed shell grotto, also in Grotto Hill (No. 31)
- Rose Lodge, No. 69 Dane Road – another corner building.

### Views and vistas

Views along Clifton Road, Brockley Road, and Grotto Road are enclosed by the terraced houses on either side of each street with no special focal points. Brockley Road does contain a small former chapel or hall, and Grotto Road similarly contains the slightly taller Davenport House, both of which add some liveliness to the otherwise very simple front facades. A gable on the brick part of the Ice Factory and Cold Store forms an end-stop to the view westwards along Grotto Road.



*View along Grotto Road*

The best views can be seen from Grotto Hill, looking down the steeply sloping road towards its junction with Dane Road and beyond over the Dane valley. There are also some good views around the old workshop buildings from outside the terrace of houses in Grotto Gardens, which sit up above street level with small front gardens.

The most important views are marked on the Townscape Appraisal Map but the omission of any particular view does not mean that it is not significant.

### **4.3 Open spaces and trees**

There are no open spaces in the Conservation Area apart from the roads and pavements, and the adjoining (private) front or back gardens. There are no trees of any note, and the provision of more trees on both private and public land would be welcome.

### **4.4 Boundaries**

The most common boundaries in the Conservation Area are formed of brick walls of varying heights, the brick being a London stock which starts as a yellow colour but which weathers to a dark brown. There are several examples of the use of beach flints to build walls of up to two metres in height, such as in Clifton Place (but just outside the proposed Conservation Area boundary), in Grotto Gardens, and in the upper part of Grotto Road.





*Beach flint wall in Clifton Place*

Most of the buildings in the three main streets – Clifton Road, Brockley Road and Grotto Road – sit close to the back of the pavement with a very narrow strip of land about one metre wide separating the building from the public areas. In Clifton Road, these are largely paved over with a varied assortment of paving materials and there are also recent boundary treatments such as low concrete block or brick walls. Occasionally, low hedging or a little planting has been grown which softens the views along the road. Similar arrangements can be seen in front of the properties in Brockley Road and on the north side only of Grotto Road. The houses in Grotto Gardens sit up from the street with raised front gardens about three metres wide. These are defined by brick walls, many of them painted, with stone triangular copings. In places, the original cast iron railings, which were fixed on top of these walls, remain. The railings consist of a lower and bottom rail, with decorative details including the supporting posts.



*Gardens in Grotto Gardens with original cast iron railings*

There are more front gardens along the east side of Grotto Hill, where towards the top of the hill the houses have raised ground floors with basements accessed via a small paved forecourt and steps.

Some of these properties retain their original cast iron railings which are usually very simple – just a top and bottom rail with moulded supporting posts.

Gardens can also be seen outside Nos. 5-17 and 19-31 Clifton Gardens, where the houses also have raised ground floors with half basements below. These spaces were once contained by more cast iron railings but in many locations these have been replaced with less appropriate modern materials, including more concrete blockwork.

The properties along the north side of Dane Road all have front gardens about eight metres deep, but most have been converted into parking areas so the original boundaries have gone. Some planting between the plots helps to soften the effect of these changes.

#### **4.5 Public realm**

The public realm covers the spaces between the buildings including pavements, roads, street lighting, street furniture, and any other features of local significance. Most of them will be the responsibility of the Highways Department of Kent County Council.

There is hardly any original floorscape in the Conservation Area and the pavements and roads are largely covered in black tarmac. The only original features are thin stone kerbs in Grotto Hill and late 19<sup>th</sup> century cast iron coal holes, set in small squares of York stone. Examples can be seen throughout the Conservation Area.

Clifton Road, Brockley Road and Grotto Road have been the subject of a previous enhancement scheme which provided build-outs created by low brick planters at intervals along each street. Some of these are planted with low shrubs but others are empty, and most are in need of some form of repair or improvement. Parking over the pavements is common on both sides of all three streets.

Street lighting is modern and functional, with medium height steel standards. Overhead wires and telegraph poles are dominant in several locations. Street nameplates are usually modern, with white lettering on black background (or vice versa), and are often fixed to the buildings. Brockley Road retains an example of one of the 'Cliftonville' type nameplates made of cast iron with rounded edges, which can be seen at the western end of the road close to the junction with Grotto Hill. This matches other examples which can be found throughout Cliftonville and presumably date to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.



*Cast iron coal hole in Grotto Road*



*Historic nameplate in Brockley Road*

## 5 THE BUILDINGS OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

### 5.1 Building types and dates

Most of the buildings are terraced residential properties which date to between 1860 and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, although Grotto Gardens appears to be a little later – only Nos. 12-15 are shown on the 1907 map. The earliest houses can be found in Dane Road (Nos. 69-103 odd) and are shown on the 1845 map. The predominant building type is the small terraced house, two storeys high and two windows wide, with a pitched roof facing the street. Some, such as the houses in the northern end of Grotto Hill, Clifton Gardens, and Dane Road, have half basements and raised ground floors, and some have canted bay windows.



*Well detailed houses in Brockley Road*

The non-residential buildings are very few. The former Ice Factory and Cold Store appears to date to between 1910 and the 1920s, with an older section around the corner facing Grotto Hill (c1880s). The building which houses the Visitor Centre to the listed grotto is about thirty or forty years old. The former warehouses/workshops between Grotto Gardens and Dane Road are also early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### 5.2 Listed buildings

There is currently only one listed structure in the proposed Conservation Area, the grade I Shell Grotto in Grotto Hill. Many theories have been advanced about the origin of the grotto, including the possibility that it may be Phoenician or Roman.

The grotto consists of two semi-circular passages leading to a central dome and then a passageway leading off to a rectangular chamber. The grotto contains about 2,000 square yards of shell mosaic consisting of 28 different types of shells, many of which are foreign. The cement which adheres to the shells is very similar to Roman cement and is said to contain fish oil and crushed shells. The decoration includes common Egyptian, Greek and Indian motifs, and in the rectangular chamber are further motifs of the rising sun, the moon and the stars. The grotto has similarities to Pope's Grotto in Twickenham, which dates from the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century.

### 5.3 Locally listed buildings

There are currently no locally listed buildings in the proposed Conservation Area, but the Management Plan includes a recommendation to add the following buildings to the emerging Local List:

- The former Ice Factory and Cold Store in Bath Place and the adjoining second-hand furniture shop in Grotto Hill
- Rose Lodge, No. 69 Dane Road
- No. 87 Dane Road
- The former non-conformist chapel or hall, Brockley Road



*No. 87 Dane Road*

#### **5.4 Positive buildings**

Most of the buildings in the proposed Conservation Area have been identified on the Townscape Appraisal Map as being *positive* buildings of townscape merit. Buildings identified as being *positive* will vary, but commonly they will be good examples of relatively unaltered historic buildings where their style, detailing and building materials provides the streetscape with interest and variety. Most importantly, they make a *positive* contribution to the special interest of the conservation area. In the Grotto Hill Conservation Area, most of these buildings date to between 1860 and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, where they form cohesive terraces with well preserved elevations.

The identification of these 'positive' buildings follows advice provided within Historic England's *Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management*, which provides a helpful list of criteria for their selection. The guidance advises that a general presumption exists in

favour of retaining those buildings which make a 'positive' contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area.



*'Positive' terraced houses in Clifton Road*

Proposals to demolish such buildings will therefore be assessed against the same broad criteria as proposals to demolish listed buildings. This implies therefore that all buildings marked as 'positive' on the Townscape Appraisal Map will be retained in the future, unless a special case can be made for demolition.

## **5.5 Building styles, materials and colours**

Modestly sized terraced artisan houses dating to between the 1860s and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century provide the predominant building type in the Conservation Area. The buildings form groups with similar details, presumably reflecting slightly different dates of development as well as different builders. Usually, they follow the fashion of the times with typical details of the late Victorian period, but they were always simple buildings with little external ornamentation. The terraces sit close to, or on the back of the adjacent pavements, with two storey elevations and a common eaves line. Shallow pitched slated roofs face the street with brick chimney stacks and tall clay pots providing some articulation, although it is regrettable that many of these roofs have been recovered using concrete tiles.

In Clifton Road, the houses are a mixture of brick and more modern pebble-dashing. The original style was brown brick with red brick dressings including string courses – these remain in several locations. All of the windows and most of the front doors have been replaced in uPVC or similar. No. 7 has a four panelled timber front door, which may be original. A few original front paths remain, covered in red and black terracotta tiles. The properties in Brockley Road are similar, again originally built in brown brick with red brick decoration. A small single storey building, which may once have been a non-conformist chapel or a community hall, lies at the eastern end of the street but is boarded up and appears to be 'at risk'. Around the corner, between Brockley Road and Grotto Road, a former stable building (now used as a garage or store but in very poor condition) can also be seen.



*Houses in Grotto Road*

Grotto Road contains more mixed building types with smaller cottages (just one window wide) along the south side and one much larger mansarded house (Davenport House, No. 44) which lies at the eastern end of this group. On the opposite side of the road, the buildings are again built using brown brick with red brick dressings but are double-fronted, so they are three windows wide. Apart from Davenport House, they are all two storeys high.

The terrace of houses in Grotto Gardens sit back and slightly up from the road with pebble dashed elevations (left a natural mid brown or painted white to cream) and ground floor bay windows with roofs which continue over the front door to provide an open porch. Upstairs, each house has two windows with a pitched slated or tiled roof above. No. 4 Grotto Gardens retains its original two over two sash windows and what appears to be the original front door with glazed up panels and two heavily moulded panels beneath. Otherwise, most of the windows, and many of the front doors, are uPVC. The terrace looks over the back elevations and slate roofs of a group of three linked early 20<sup>th</sup> century brick buildings which were probably built for industrial or some other commercial purpose – one at least is used by the adjoining builders as a store, although the others appear derelict.



*Houses in Dane Road*

Dane Road provides the earliest buildings in the Conservation Area but they are also the most altered, although two examples remain (No. 69 and No. 87) which indicate how they were originally detailed. No. 69, which is currently called Rose Lodge, is an unusual (in this Conservation Area) example of a symmetrical, two storey villa with no basement which is built from brown brick which would once have been more of a yellow colour. It has a three bay projecting front with a first floor balcony edged by the original cast iron railings, although unfortunately all of the windows and the front door have been replaced using modern materials. The double pile roof is concealed from the front by a parapet. Once detached, it is now joined to the terrace of houses on the east side by a modern building of no special merit.

No. 87 Dane Road has a raised ground floor with a half basement (like the remaining properties on this side of the road), but its principal feature is the curved ground floor oriel window with its original sashes, and further original sashes in the rest of the building. The front door, under an arched head, is modern. These two buildings would greatly benefit from a thorough restoration scheme. Otherwise, the houses in Dane Road are arranged in two groups, and all two windows wide, and two storeys high. They are usually rendered and painted. Further examples of oriel windows remain, but they have been altered. No. 87 retains what appears to be the original cast iron railings on either side of the steps which lead up to the front door, but elsewhere, these too have all been replaced. The office of G and W Gardner Builders, which divides the two terraces, is located in an older two storey building with a modern refronting.

Grotto Hill retains some good examples of far more varied late 19<sup>th</sup> century houses, two or three storeys high, as well as, at the top of the hill and opposite the junction with Brockley Road and Bath Place, the former Ice Factory and Cold Store. This is a very large corner building of two builds – facing Grotto Hill, the brown brick and gabled section has carved barge boards indicating a late 19<sup>th</sup> century date (the adjoining houses are dated 1888), but facing Bath Place, the building is rendered with a string course and pilasters which are lined out to replicate stone. The effect is a kind of stripped-down classical which could well be the result of a refacing between 1910 and the 1920s.



*Unusual red brick houses in Grotto Hill*

The adjoining houses, which step down the west side of Grotto Hill, are built from red brick with two storey canted bays and simple open porches. Each house has its original dormer set in a slate or concrete tiled roof. On the eastern side of the street, the properties are more mixed in terms of their details, and some have raised ground floors. They are generally two or three storeys high with brown brick elevations, sometimes painted. They all appear to date to the last few years of the 19<sup>th</sup>

century apart from 19a, which is a 1950s or 1960s infill. Yeoman House, which sits on the corner with Grotto Road, is dated 1888. The building which houses the Visitor Centre for the shell grotto is faced in white-painted concrete with large areas of glazing to the front – it probably dates to the 1970s or 1980s.

The last two groups of houses in the Conservation Area can be found on the east side of Clifton Gardens. They are three storeys high, with half basements and raised ground floors accessed by rows of steps. Canted ground floor oriel bays add some interest. Originally built from brown brick with red brick dressings, many have been rendered and painted white or cream. The roofs face the street and were originally slated but the majority have been recovered using concrete tiles.

## 5.6 Activities and Uses

The proposed Conservation Area is principally in residential uses, with most of the properties being modestly sized terraced houses which line all of the six streets which make up the Conservation Area. Whilst a detailed survey has not been carried out, the majority of the properties appear to be in use as family houses rather than as flats or HMOs (Houses in Multiple Occupation).



*The former Ice factory and Cold Store, now used as an antiques and furniture shop*

There are also a number of commercial premises – the former Ice Factory and Cold Store, which is a large building in use as an antiques centre and a second hand furniture shop; a builder's offices in Dane Road (which may use some of the former workshops below Grotto Gardens for storage); and the Shell Grotto Visitor Centre in Grotto Hill. The Grotto is run on a commercial basis but is open in the summer months or at weekends. A wholesale greengrocer's premises can be seen in Clifton Place.



## 6 THE EXTENT OF INTRUSION OR DAMAGE

### 6.1 Key negative features

This Character Appraisal concludes that the most significant *negative* features of the proposed Grotto Hill Conservation Area are:

#### *Spatial:*

- A general lack of any green space or trees
- Poor quality pavements, some of which have been poorly resurfaced after work by the utility companies
- Overhead wires and telegraph poles
- The poorly maintained pavement build-outs in Clifton Road, Brockley Road and Grotto Road
- Modern street lighting
- Modern street nameplates with only example of an historic nameplate in Brockley Road
- The loss of front boundaries, original front pathways, and garden space, and the creation of off-street car parking spaces (particularly in Dane Road)
- Poor quality front boundaries generally, with a wide range of different materials and details
- The variety of paving materials and boundary treatments in the privately-owned front areas in Clifton Road, Brockley Road, and Grotto Road
- The dominance of car parking throughout the Conservation Area
- The modern garages and poor quality boundaries in Clifton Place

#### *Buildings:*

- The loss of original features, such as:
  - The replacement of the original slate or clay tiled roofs with modern materials such as concrete tiles or artificial slate
  - The demolition of chimney stacks or the removal of the original clay pots
  - Alterations to the original window openings
  - The addition of porches
  - The replacement of wooden sash windows or front doors using uPVC
  - The rendering over or painting of the original brick elevations
- Satellite dishes on front elevations
- Some buildings in a poor state of repair, particularly:
  - The former non-conformist chapel or hall in Brockley Road
  - The industrial warehouses between Grotto Gardens and Dane Road

### 6.2 Summary of issues

Taking the 'negative features' identified above into account, the following issues are considered to be the most pressing matters which need to be addressed by the Management Plan for the proposed Grotto Hill Conservation Area:

#### **The control of new development**

- Ensuring that all new development is of the highest possible standards

#### **The protection of views**

- Protecting and enhancing the important views into, out of, and around the Conservation Area

#### **The public realm**

- Upgrading the space between the buildings – the pavements, street surfaces, street lighting and signage

#### **The control of car parking and traffic**

- Providing actions to reduce traffic and control car parking

#### **Buildings at risk**

- The need for repairs and restoration works, including the need for grant aid

#### **The Local list**

- Suggestions for Local Listing

#### **Education and guidance**

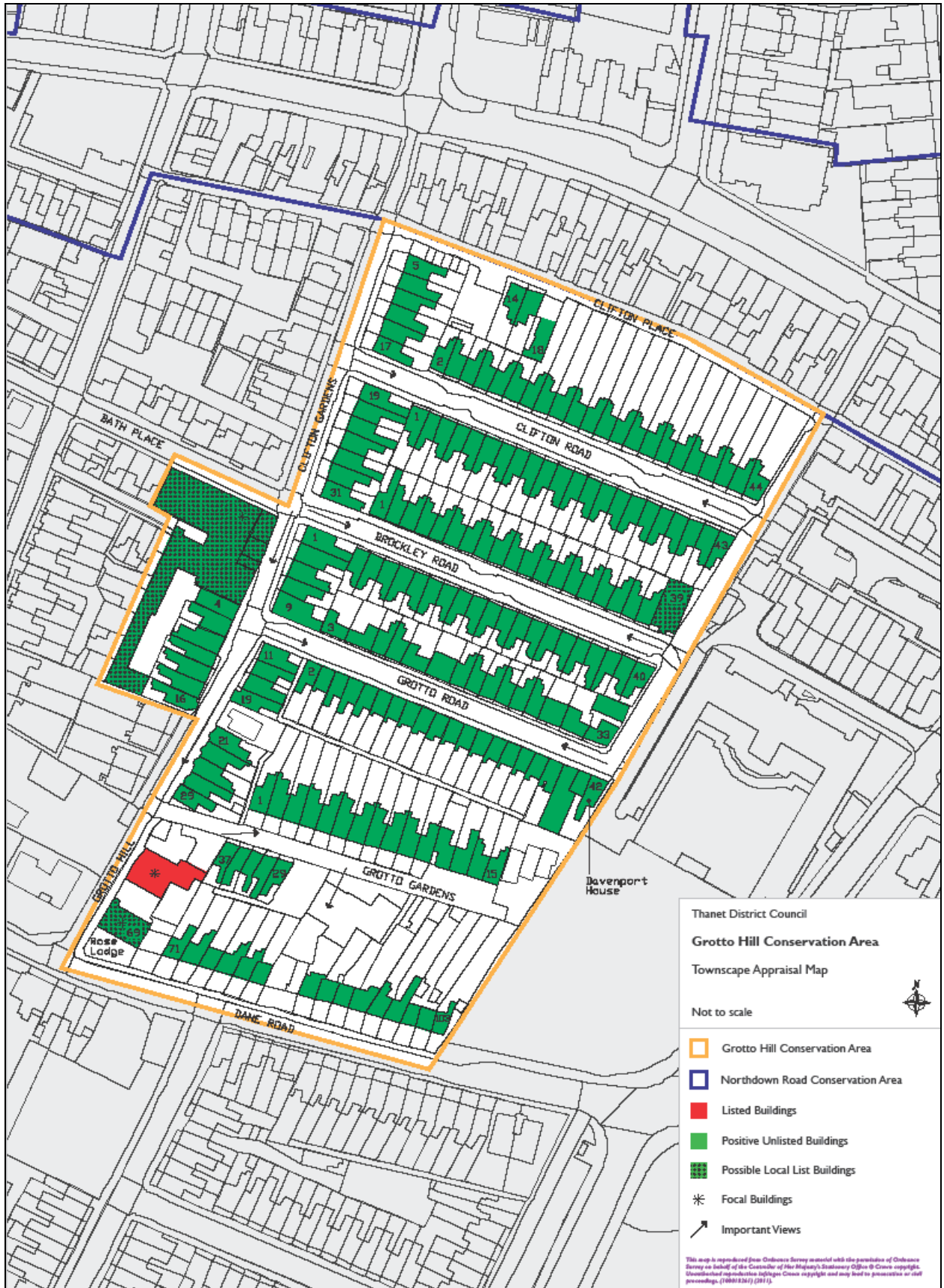
- Education and publicity, including encouraging civic pride and a sense of place

#### **Monitoring and enforcement**

- Providing a strategy to carry forward the recommendations in the Management Plan
- Continuing to monitor the condition of the proposed Conservation Area, including regular updates of the Management Plan
- Taking record photographs on a four year cycle to assist with monitoring and to use in any future enforcement proceedings



Appendix 1 Map 1 Development Phases



Appendix 2 Map 2 Townscape Appraisal Map

## **PART 2**

# **THE PROPOSED GROTTO HILL CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN**

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 The purpose of the Management Plan**

Part 1 of this document, the *Character Appraisal*, has identified the special positive qualities of the proposed Grotto Hill Conservation Area which make the conservation area unique. Part 2 of this document, the *Management Plan*, builds upon the positive features and addresses the negative features which have been identified to provide a series of recommendations for improvement and change.

The involvement and approval of the local community in the formulation and delivery of these documents helps to strengthen their status and will hopefully mean that the various actions identified in the Management Plan will have greater impact and longevity. For Grotto Hill, this will be achieved through the current eight week public consultation exercise. A Public Consultations Report will then be prepared (copies will be made available on request from the District Council), Any necessary amendments will be made before the final version of the document is completed. The document will be adopted by the Council as a 'material' document for development control purposes.

### **1.2 Relevant documents**

The structure and scope of this document is based on the suggested framework published by Historic England in *Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management* (2011). Both the Conservation Area Character Appraisal and the Management Plan should be subject to regular monitoring and reviews, as set out in section 3.

*Other relevant documents include:*

- The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
  - This Act sets out the legislative background for the control of conservation areas and listed buildings.
- National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)
  - This provides government policy guidance which relates to the historic built environment in particular section 12.
- The Kent Design Guide
  - This advocates high quality design for all new development and provides detailed guidance.
- The Thanet District Local Plan (which will be replacing the Thanet Local Plan 2006)
- The Margate Renewal Study (undated but post-2006)
  - This document was commissioned by the Margate Renewal Partnership to carry out a study of the drivers of deprivation in Margate Central and Cliftonville West Wards and make recommendations on future regeneration activity to tackle deprivation.
- Conservation Areas in Thanet – Conservation Areas Management Plan (March 2008)
  - This document sets out the Council's approach to the management of the conservation areas within Thanet – it draws on both national and local planning policies

*Documents produced by Thanet District Council which relate specifically to Cliftonville:*

- West Cliftonville Neighbourhood Renewal Area (2006)
  - This report produced by Thanet District Council and consultants identifies the need to improve the housing stock in four parts of Thanet including Cliftonville West, and provides some policy guidance.
- The Cliftonville DPD (February 2010)
  - This document provides planning policies for the Cliftonville West Renewal Area (in advance of the Core Strategy) to be used to inform development control decisions on the large number of planning applications which are submitted in the area – its main thrust is to enhance the existing building stock in terms of physical condition and use (particularly the reduction in number of poor quality flats and their replacement with family houses), encourage community pride in the area, and support the growth of high quality tourism-related facilities. One of the outcomes of this DPD is the imposition of a surcharge on local landlords which is aimed at encouraging a reduction in the number of small residential units, and an increase in the number of family dwellings within the Cliftonville area.

### **1.3 The scope of this Management Plan**

This Management Plan has been drawn up following detailed survey work of the proposed Esplanade Conservation Area by The Conservation Studio in collaboration with Thanet District Council's conservation staff. Its recommendations relate specifically to the Conservation Area, and it is not intended to include general advice about the control of conservation areas, which is set out in the Council's document *Conservation Areas in Thanet – Conservation Areas Management Plan* (March 2008 – under revision). This document also includes advice about the quality of new development which will be needed in all of Thanet's conservation areas.

## 2 RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

The following recommendations are based on the key negative features and issues identified as part of the Character Appraisal. Some of them may have to remain aspirational for the time being, but it is considered 'good practice' to identify possible actions which could be implemented in the future if the funding becomes available. Other recommendations rely are dependent on sufficient resources being available to the District Council to bring forward. . All of the recommendations particularly rely upon a successful partnership between the District Council and the local community, assisted by Kent County Council when appropriate.

### 2.1 The control of new development

The closely packed nature of the buildings within the proposed Conservation Area means that there are few, if any, sites where new development might be possible although the replacement (in time) of the poorer quality 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings would be welcome. The only truly vacant site, at the end of Grotto Gardens, has recently been redeveloped with three terraced houses. The redevelopment of the industrial buildings between Grotto Gardens and Dane Road may come forward at some stage although at least one of the three buildings appears to be in use. Otherwise, there are no vacant sites so it is likely that new development will be limited to extensions to existing buildings or the replacement of these modern buildings. In a number of locations, flank walls, flat roofed garages, and poorly maintained back access alleys make a particularly negative contribution to the street scene.



*Former industrial buildings between Grotto Gardens and Dane Road*

The immediate threat from poor quality new development therefore relates principally to alterations to the existing historic buildings, most of which are considered to be 'positive' and therefore of sufficient architectural and historic interest to merit special treatment. In the past, some of these buildings have suffered from the following:

- The loss of original roof materials and chimneys
- The loss of the original wall brickwork by rendering or painting
- The insertion of unsympathetic modern windows or front doors, usually in uPVC
- The loss or unsympathetic alteration of front boundaries, including the creation of car parking areas

It is important that any new development in the conservation area is in keeping with its special character and appearance. New development which pays minimal respect to local building traditions and which detracts from the special character and appearance of the conservation area, results in the loss of the special qualities that the designation is intended to protect. It is therefore critical that any development which occurs within the conservation area complements the qualities of its context defined within the Conservation Area Character Appraisal.

New development within the conservation area and its setting should aspire to the quality of design and execution related to its context. This neither implies nor precludes working in traditional or new ways, but will involve respecting values established through the assessment of the form and significance of the area. Developers and/or their designers will be required to demonstrate a thorough understanding of the urban context of the area and the way it has evolved.

The main consideration must be on the built and natural environment, key strategic views and approaches, the conservation area and setting of key historic buildings. Development proposals should be accompanied by a comprehensive urban design analysis of surrounding areas that details the positive and negative contributions that the proposed development makes to the visual quality of the area.

The scale, massing, architectural detailing and pattern of development of any new development within the conservation area or affecting the setting of the conservation area will be expected to respect that of the existing built environment of the conservation area.

Appropriate external materials and finishes will be expected on all new development. Traditional materials typical of the conservation area, identified within the appraisal, will be encouraged to complement the local built heritage. Where modern materials are proposed these should be in harmony with traditional materials.

Extensions and alterations to buildings will be expected to follow scale, proportions, features, detailing and materials of existing buildings.

Surviving elements of historic landscape interest, such as historic street patterns, pedestrian routes, plot outlines and the fabric of surviving early boundaries, make an important contribution to historic distinctiveness and so should be retained.

In general, all new development in the proposed Conservation Area must be of the highest possible standard and should adhere to guidance provided within the following documents:

- The Kent Design Guide
- Thanet District Council's Conservation Areas in Thanet – Conservation Areas Management Plan (March 2008)

***Recommendation 1:***

- *The District Council will ensure that all new development in the proposed Grotto Hill Conservation Area preserves or enhances the special character or appearance of the area and adheres to national policies and to guidance provided in the Kent Design Guide and within Thanet District Council's own policy framework, through engagement in pre-application discussions and consideration and determination of planning applications within the area.*

## **2.2 The protection of views**



There are important views along all of the roads in the Conservation Area, but the most outstanding views can be seen from Grotto Hill looking south west across the Dane valley. Other views along the principal streets are of merit.

### **Recommendation 2:**

- *The District Council will ensure that all new development will help to protect and enhance views within the Conservation Area through engagement in pre-application discussions and consideration and determination of planning applications within the area.*

## **2.3 The public realm**

The public realm includes all of the space between the buildings in the Conservation Area which is not privately owned, such as the roads, pavements, street lighting, street name plates, and street furniture (litter bins, seats, and other features). It is assumed that the back access alley between Grotto Road and Grotto Gardens is in private ownership. There appear to be three main areas of concern where improvements would be welcome:

- Street lighting – this is currently provided by plain steel standard light fittings, of no special interest;
- Street name plates – much of the signage in the Conservation Area is modern and consists of metal nameplates, with black letters on a white background, supported on short grey aluminium posts – there is one example of an original ‘Cliftonville’ street nameplate in Brockley Road;
- Pavement surfaces – these are mainly concrete slab or tarmacadam, with concrete kerbs and the very occasional historic stone kerbing – some of the pavements have been disfigured with trenching by utility providers;
- The build-outs in Clifton Road, Brockley Road and Grotto Road are in urgent need of replacement or enhancement.



*'Build-out' in Clifton Road*



*Grotto Road*

Improvements could include:

- Replacing the existing street lights with lights which are more in keeping with the character of the area;
- The use of a common palette of colours for street lights, street nameplates and other street furniture would provide a recognisable ‘branding’ of the area, although this would need to be very carefully controlled in the future with regular maintenance and repainting;
- Copying the wall-mounted historic street nameplate which can be seen in Brockley Road and indeed throughout the whole of Cliftonville – these are rectangular with curved corner details

and white lettering on black (it might be necessary to adjust the design so the new plates can be positioned on poles rather than fixed to individual buildings, due to problems with their future maintenance);

- The replacement of the tarmacadam pavements with a more sympathetic material;
- The total removal of the build-outs, or possibly an enhancement scheme which whilst retaining their footprint, repaved them in a more sympathetic material and planted them with new street trees.

### **Recommendation 3:**

- *As and when funding permits, the District Council and Kent County Council will consider carrying out improvements to the public realm in the Conservation Area;*
- *The District Council will seek to ensure the retention of any surviving historic streetscape features. Any highway and landscaping works should bring a positive improvement to the character and appearance of the conservation area in accordance the Historic England Streets for All campaign guidance*
- *The District Council will seek to engage a co-ordinated approach to public realm works via consultations between all relevant Council Departments/stakeholders etc. including Highways, Cliftonville groups and Utility companies.*
- *Liaison between Planning, Conservation/Regeneration and Highways should be further developed with an agreed approach to new surfacing within public areas or those likely to be adopted.*

## **2.4 The control of car parking and traffic**

On-street car parking is predominant throughout the Conservation Area, with clearly not enough spaces for the number of residents' vehicles. It may be possible to reduce the impact of on-street car parking by the creation of carefully designed parking bays, which could incorporate planting and new street trees (as suggested in para 3 above). However, any such scheme would need to be allied to improvements in Cliftonville in general, including (possibly) the introduction of a Residents' Parking Scheme. The existing road system should be retained. Over-dominant road markings, barriers, and safety rails must all be avoided as these are alien intrusions in any conservation area.



*Parking on the pavements in Clifton Road*

### **Recommendation 4:**

- *As and when funding permits, the District Council and Kent County Council could consider ways of reducing the impact of on-street car parking and traffic;*
- *Traffic signage will be reduced as far as possible and redundant signs removed;*
- *All proposals will have to be undertaken in line with other initiatives in the Cliftonville area as a whole.*

## **2.5 The control of unlisted buildings (Article 4 Directions)**

The District Council is required to both ‘preserve and enhance’ the character of the Conservation Area. Some inappropriate alterations are visible throughout the conservation area. At the moment, however, the changes that have been made are in fairly localised locations and that on the whole the area has been fairly maintained. Whilst alterations have so far been relatively localised there is also evidence of more and more inappropriate alterations and additions within the area. In order to restrict the rights of landowners from carrying out inappropriate development an Article 4 Direction can be placed on specific buildings or areas. This enables the local planning authority to require permission for what is otherwise allowed without consent. This does not mean that permission would be refused but allows the authority to assess any potential impact to the buildings, the street scene and the conservation area.

Most of the houses in the Conservation Area are in use as family dwellings (i.e. as a single unit) but the occasional property has been divided into flats or HMOs. For these buildings, permitted development rights are already much lower, so, for instance, planning permission would normally be needed to insert new plastic windows or to change the roof material. For these buildings, an Article 4 Direction could still be used to control front boundaries, the creation of car parking spaces, and external redecoration. It can also be used to control colour, so it would be possible to limit external painting to a certain palette of colours, to provide greater cohesiveness to the front elevations – for instance, by insisting upon shades of cream or an off-white colour for stucco and brickwork.

Any proposal to consider removal of Permitted Development rights and carry forward a decision to proceed with an Article 4 Direction will result in further public consultation and assessment. The Council may take these forward in due course if a strong justification and public support following further monitoring and recording change of the conservation area show to be necessary.



*No. 19 Brockley Road (on left) is one of the few houses to retain its original windows*

### **Recommendation 5:**

- *The Council may consider making an Article 4 Direction in due course if a strong justification and public support of erosion of the character of the area show to be necessary.*

## **2.6 Buildings at risk**

A consistent problem within the proposed Conservation Area is the poor standard of maintenance in many properties. This has resulted in:

- The loss of architectural features such as decorative timber details and boundary walls;
- The replacement of original features with inappropriate modern fittings such as front doors, windows, and boundary treatments;
- Inappropriate and unsympathetic additions to existing properties, such as roof dormers and extensions;
- The use of inappropriate modern materials for repairs, such as artificial slate and concrete roof tiles, which can be seen on many of the properties.

There are two specific 'Buildings at Risk' in the Conservation Area: the former non-conformist chapel or hall in Brockley Road (marked as 'Mission Room' on the 1907 Ordnance Survey), which is currently boarded up, and the industrial warehouses between Grotto Gardens and Dane Road (only one out of the three buildings appears to be in use and reasonably well maintained).

The District Council has a Heritage Lottery Fund funded Townscape Heritage Initiative grant scheme in the Dalby Square Conservation Area. It is possible that this scheme could be extended, or a new scheme applied for the Grotto Hill Conservation Area at some stage in the future. Other funding agencies, apart from the HLF, include Historic England, Thanet District Council, Kent County Council and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA).



*Hall in Brockley Road*

### **Recommendation 6:**

- *The District Council will consider providing guidance on the use of traditional materials and details, which will be circulated to all property owners in the Conservation Area;*

- *The District Council will consider applying for a grant scheme to assist property owners in the Grotto Hill Conservation Area*

## 2.7 The Local list

There is currently no Local List for Cliftonville. Following the publication of PPS5 in March 2010, locally listed buildings have become an important 'heritage asset' of particular significance where they also lie within a designated conservation area. The preparation of a Local List for the whole of Cliftonville may therefore be seen as a priority, but meanwhile, this document includes recommendations for new locally listed buildings as follows:

- The former Ice Factory and Cold Store in Bath Place and the adjoining second-hand furniture shop in Grotto Hill — the section facing Bath Place is rendered with details suggesting a date between 1910 and 1920 – it is particularly notable for the lettering along the elevation *Ice Factory and Cold Store* – the section facing Grotto Hill is built from brown brick with dominant gables facing the road which are decorated with carved bargeboards;
- Rose Lodge, No. 69 Dane Road – dating to between 1821 and 1845 this is built from brown brick with a first floor balcony with its original railings – an unusual example of a higher status detached villa (although it is now attached to its neighbour by a modern infill);
- No. 87 Dane Road – a well preserved terraced house built from brown brick with a raised ground floor and curved oriel window – it also dates to between 1821 and 1845;
- The former non-conformist chapel or hall, Brockley Road – this late 19<sup>th</sup> century building is constructed using the same brown brick with red brick dressings as its neighbouring residential properties – it has a porch in the gable which faces Brockley Road and pointed arched windows to either side – it may be in use as some sort of community facility.



*Rose Lodge is in urgent need of improvements*

### **Recommendation 7:**

- *The District Council will consider working with the local community to produce a Local List for Cliftonville.*

## 2.8 Education and guidance

There are several active residents' groups which each relate particularly to one small area. Some of these have already been involved in the public consultation exercise which was undertaken in October 2010 to gauge public reaction to the designation of conservation areas in Cliftonville. There is a local group in the Grotto Hill Conservation Area, and it is hoped that the group will be involved with the consultations on this document.

The possible 'branding' of the area, using new street name plates, new street lighting, new street trees and other enhancements will provide some focus to the local community and give the area a greater 'sense of place'.

***Recommendation 8:***

- *The District Council, working in partnership with Kent County Council and other stakeholders, will continue to encourage greater civic pride in the Cliftonville area through the use of its statutory powers and possible grant aid;*
- *The production of material about the Conservation Area should be made available to all local residents through the Council's website.*

**2.9 Monitoring and review**

Local authorities are required by law to periodically review their conservation areas and the preparation of Character Appraisals and Management Plans is part of this obligation. Indeed, in the past keeping Character Appraisals and Management Plans up to date has been a Key Performance Indicator in the Best Value assessment of local authorities, and as a result, a five year review cycle is now considered to be best practice.

Over the next five years the District Council should therefore be expected to regularly review the content of this document, to carefully monitor change within the Grotto Hill Conservation Area, and to involve the community in any proposals for enhancement (subject of course to the funding being available).

***Recommendation 9:***

*The District Council should therefore:*

- *Carry out periodic reviews of the effectiveness with which the service addresses pressures for change.*

### **3 ACTION PLAN**

This Action Plan sets out a list of priorities for future possible actions if sufficient resources are available, most of which will be the responsibility of Thanet District Council or Kent County Council.

#### **Immediate Actions**

- Designate the Grotto Hill Conservation Area
- Adopt the Grotto Hill Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan as a material document for development management purposes

#### **Medium term actions**

- Approve additions to the new Local List for Cliftonville

#### **Longer term actions**

- Review and update the Grotto Hill Conservation Area Management Plan
- Update the baseline photographic survey of the Grotto Hill Conservation Area
- Consider a grant scheme for the Conservation Area
- Consider public realm improvements and car parking/traffic management schemes for the Conservation Area (in association with other initiatives in Cliftonville)

#### **Far future actions**

- Review the Grotto Hill Conservation Area Character Appraisal
- Continue to protect important views across, into and out of the Conservation Area.

#### **4 CONTACT DETAILS**

**For all enquiries relating to conservation areas and historic buildings, please contact:**

Planning Services  
Thanet District Council  
P O Box 9  
Cecil Street  
Margate  
Kent CT9 1XZ

Tel: 01843 577150

Email [planning.services@thanet.gov.uk](mailto:planning.services@thanet.gov.uk)

**For information about archaeology in Thanet, contact:**

The Trust for Thanet Archaeology  
The Antoinette Centre  
Quex Park  
Birchington  
Kent CT7 0BH

Tel: 01843 843088

[www.thanetarch.co.uk](http://www.thanetarch.co.uk)

**For information about the history of Thanet, contact:**

The Centre for Kentish Studies  
County Hall  
Maidstone  
Kent ME14 1XX

Tel: 01622 694379

Email: [archives@kent.gov.uk](mailto:archives@kent.gov.uk)