

TITLE OF REPORT **Dalby Square Conservation Area Designation**

To: **Council– 15 July 2010**

Main Portfolio Area: **Economic Prosperity and Culture**

By: **Director Regeneration Services, Brian White**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Ward: **Cliftonville West**

Summary: This report explains the context of conservation areas and conservation area appraisal documents. It makes recommendations for the designation of a Dalby Square Conservation Area and asks members to agree this.

For decision

1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 Thanet District enjoys a rich and varied heritage ranging from seaside towns, large areas of open cliff top/coastal waters and villages set in attractive countryside.
- 1.2 Thanet has 20 Conservation Areas. 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” (Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, s.69 (1)).
- 1.3 Margate developed from a minor medieval port to a seaside resort in the mid. C18th. 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 with the opportunity to take ‘holidays’.
- 1.4 The arrival of the railway in 1846, with a further line and station added in 1863, changed the nature of visitors to the town; from a limited number of long stay guests to great numbers of short stay visitors with less per capita disposable income. The town’s established place in the public consciousness as a destination was a good foundation for creating a new resort. A resort that reversed the popular perception that Margate was becoming an attraction just to the working classes. The new resort’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 ones health and peace of mind, all year round if necessary.

- 1.5 The association of the area with a 'better class of person' became a key selling point for this 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"*.
- 1.6 The centrepiece of this 'Margate New Town' was Dalby Square, originally Ethelbert Square, with a massive terrace of seven houses; Warrior Crescent, on the south side. Flanking the northern portion of the square were two terraces forming Ethelbert Crescent and between them the Cliftonville Hotel completed in 1868. The opening of the hotel, the largest and grandest in Thanet when it was built, was a crucial event in the history of Cliftonville since its success was the foundation of the area becoming a resort in its own right.
- 1.7 In 1879 the Cliftonville Hotel, which had 300 bedrooms, a ballroom, a palm court and facilities for croquet, tennis and archery amidst formal gardens along the cliff-top, provided accommodation for 51% of all hotel guests in Cliftonville. By 1890 this figure had fallen to 15%. This was not due to the lack of popularity of the hotel itself, but because many new establishments imitating its success had been built. The late C19th directories list eight in Dalby Square alone, including 'The Severn House Hotel ('Separate Tables')', "The Granville Boarding House ('a Most Comfortable, Cheerful and Refined Home') and 'The Caledonia Boarding House ('Pleasantly Situated in the Healthiest Part of Town')' amongst others.
- 1.8 Another major staple of Cliftonville's economy was private schools. A resort guide of 1893 described Cliftonville *"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"*.
- 1.9 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 (sixty-one acres in total) for planned public walks and pleasure grounds. This action was a continuation of the nineteenth century concept, by promoting Cliftonville as a health-giving place where the benefits of sea water and sea air were unparalleled.
- 1.10 In the Inter-war period there were signs that the Cliftonville Hotel was already failing; Margate Borough Council considered buying it for municipal offices in 1929. The Hotel closed in 1939 and it is not clear whether it ever re-opened after the Second World War. It was demolished

in the early 1960s to be replaced by a bowling alley, a pub (the 'Bowlers Arms) and flats.

2.0 The Current Situation

- 2.1** As part of the ongoing management of Thanet's conservation areas, appraisal documents are regularly produced for each of Thanet's conservation areas. The regular dialogue between the council and conservation area advisory groups, civic societies and others is promoting awareness of the value of our historic towns and how they can contribute to economic regeneration.
- 2.2** Discussions with local community groups have shown some significant support for Dalby Square and its environs to be designated as a conservation area. Set out in Annex 1 is a map showing proposed boundaries for designation and an appraisal document of the area has been produced (See Annex 2).
- 2.3** Designation is not intended to prevent change or adaptation but simply to ensure any proposals for change are properly considered. For example a site has been assembled at the south of the square; Warrior Crescent (former Warren Court Hotel site), for a housing development. Pre-application discussion with the registered social landlord (RSL) housing, planning and conservation officers is bringing forward a proposed new structure that will complement its historic setting and represent a step change improvement in the quality of housing
- 2.4** Should members agree to the recommendations of this report to designate the Dalby Square Conservation Area, a detailed conservation area management plan will be prepared by officers and subjected to a period of public consultation prior to preparing a report to support the management plans adoption by Full council at a later date.
- 2.5** Cliftonville is unique within the historic built environment of Thanet and rates highly in these terms nationally. Dalby Square and its environs, has been identified by officers, English Heritage, CABI and the community as part of this important heritage.
- 2.6** Margate Central and Cliftonville West wards are amongst the most deprived in the south east- as defined by the Indices of Deprivation (2007). However most of the nineteenth century buildings in the Square survive. Built to high standards of construction they provide a fine example of good historic seaside architecture on a national scale. The Commission for Architecture and Built Environment (CABI) Urban Panel, in their report of their recent visit to Margate, 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".
- 2.7** Designation may also allow access to monies from English Heritage for a programme of repairs and enhancements through a Partnership Agreement grant scheme (See letter of support from English Heritage Annex 3) and the

Heritage Lottery Fund through the Townscape Heritage Initiative schemes, which at present, Cliftonville is excluded from.

- 2.8** Public consultation was carried out in advance of the submission of this report. This consultation included a house-to-house “leafleting” of properties in the proposed area, contacting local ward councillors and stakeholders regarding the initiative and a series of “drop in “ sessions held at St Pauls Community Centre . Responses from this consultation are summarised in Annex 4
- 2.9** Designation of Dalby Square will not impede its regeneration. Indeed designation will enable the Council as the planning authority to protect what is best from the past; the external appearance of the large buildings, whilst allowing innovative new internal conversions; for example much larger residential flats to encourage owner occupation.
- 3.0 Options**
Members may accept the recommendations set out in this report in whole or in part.
- 4.0 Corporate Implications**
- 4.1 Financial**
- 4.1.1 The designation of a conservation area will increase the workload on Regeneration Services without, necessarily increasing the fee income, but there are no direct costs.
- 4.2 Legal**
- 4.2.1 The Council is empowered to designate a conservation area pursuant to the provisions of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Designation (and therefore conservation area control) takes effect from the date of an appropriate resolution passed by the Council. Thereafter, notice of the designation and information explaining its effect must be published in the London Gazette and in at least one local newspaper. Notice of the designation and details of the area affected must also be given to the Secretary of State and to English Heritage.
- 4.3 Corporate**
- 4.3.1 The designation of conservation areas embraces regeneration and social objectives as identified in themes 1, 3, 4 and 5 of the Corporate Plan.
- 5.0 Decision Making**
- 5.1 This is a decision for Council as the designation of a conservation area is part of the policy framework.

6.0 Recommendation(s)

That the area identified on the map at Annex 1 as the proposed Dalby Square Conservation Area be so designated in accordance with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

6.1.2 That the appraisal document be adopted for Development Management purposes

Contact Officer:	<i>Louise Dandy Conservation Appraisal Officer 577126</i>
Reporting to:	<i>Brian White Regeneration</i>

Annex List

<i>Annex 1</i>	<i>Map of proposed Dalby Square conservation area designation</i>
<i>Annex 2</i>	<i>Draft appraisal document for proposed Dalby Square Conservation Area available in the Members lounge or by contacting Louise Dandy</i>
<i>Annex 3</i>	<i>Letter of support from English Heritage</i>
<i>Annex 4</i>	<i>Consultees and summary of responses to public consultation</i>

Background Papers

Draft appraisal document for proposed Dalby Square Conservation Area	Available in the Members' Room or by contacting Louise Dandy, 577126
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Corporate Consultation Undertaken

Legal	Peter Reilly, Litigation Solicitor
Financial	Sue McGonigal, Director of Finance & Corporate Services
Housing	Madeline Homer, Acting Director of Community Services