



## ENGLISH HERITAGE

### SOUTH EAST REGION

Louise Dandy  
Conservation Appraisal Officer  
Strategic Planning & Conservation  
PO BOX 9  
Cecil Street  
Margate  
KENT CT9 1XZ

TEL: 01483 252075  
FAX: 01483 252001  
E-M: [alan.byrne@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:alan.byrne@english-heritage.org.uk)  
Our Ref: PRP6429  
Your Ref:

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Dear Louise

#### **CLIFTONVILLE, MATGATE, KENT**

Thank you for showing me and colleagues around the Cliftonville area of Margate recently. I found the area to be extremely interesting and I am surprised that it, or at the very least, significant parts of it have not been designated as a conservation area.

The locality has undoubtedly been under considerable economic and social stress for some time, and this is clearly reflected in the condition of much of the building stock. Much of the deterioration in the area's urban fabric is partly a result of the ineffectiveness of planning controls in the face of the tidal wave of changes resulting from unscrupulous owners and landlords who have a lack of concern for the properties (let alone the occupiers). I am pleased to know that the Council and its partners are intending to take concerted action to address the problems of the area, and English Heritage has indicated its broad support for the programme of action through the Development Plan Document and Housing Renewal Strategy.

Despite the foregoing, it is also evident that there are parts of Cliftonville that are settled and cared for; many houses, terraces and streets remain in reasonably good condition. Northdown Road, despite the recession, is a vital and attractive local shopping street with many historic and handsome buildings and a sprinkling of traditional shop fronts. The underlying structure of the area (the street patterns and grain), the strong historic character of the buildings and the place the interesting storey of Cliftonville has on the historical development of Margate makes it a strong candidate for designation as a conservation area. It is not just my view; you will recall that the joint EH/CABE Urban Panel visited Thanet last year, an expert group that visits many towns and cities across England. It had a strong view of the merits of Cliftonville. In its report of the visit it said of the area:



EASTGATE COURT 195-205 HIGH STREET GUILDFORD SURREY GU1 3EH

Telephone 01483 252000 Facsimile 01483 252001  
[www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

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*“Cliftonville could, by a different fluke of social history and demographics, be one of the most desirable parts of the country to live in and, as the Panel was told, in parts it still is. In its prime, the fact that this other place out of town offered not only a whole holiday experience, including good shopping on Northdown Road but also access by stairs and lifts to another bathing world must have offered a most satisfactory experience to those wishing to distance themselves from the more robust entertainments of the Sands. So today, it could offer high quality living by the sea and must come to do so. While admiring the main features of Cliftonville, the Panel members were left in no doubt about the difficulties which have arisen from the large boarding houses being so prone to unprincipled ownership and exploitation and the social difficulties which follow”. (ref. CABE/EH Panel Review: Margate. April 2009).*

And also: *“the Panel noted that the future of Northdown Road was essential to the success of Cliftonville. The survival to date of so many independent stores is a remarkable asset, which it was encouraging to note is widely valued”.* Given the views of this expert group, there is undoubted justification that area’s significance should be marked and valued through the mechanism of conservation area designation. The benefits would be to signal a shift in the image of the area, bring to bear additional planning controls and conservation management tools to dealing with the area’s built environment problems, and open up the potential to draw-in additional financial resources to the area.

In this respect, English Heritage is prepared to provide support on a number of fronts. We will fund the preparation of conservation area appraisals, advise on the preparation of management plans as required, provide guidance on specific actions to protect the special character and appearance of the designated area(s) (such as Article 4 Directions), and (subject to resources) grant aid a programme of repairs and enhancements through a partnership agreement with the Council and other partners.

In conclusion, English Heritage has no doubt that Cliftonville merits designation, as a whole or in part, as a conservation area. We will actively support the Council in achieving this.

Yours sincerely

**Alan Byrne**  
Historic Areas and Planning Advisor



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