

# CASTLE COTTAGES Architectural Conservation Area

## Character Appraisal and Recommendations



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# Castle Cottages Architectural Conservation Area

## 1.0 Introduction to Site

Many of the towns and villages of Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown contain areas that exhibit a distinct character and intrinsic qualities, based on their historic built form and layout. This character is often derived from the cumulative impact of the area's buildings, their setting, landscape and other locally important features. These areas are an expression of our culture and our identity and contribute significantly to the quality of our lives. The Planning and Development Act, 2000 provides the legislative basis for the protection of such areas, known as Architectural Conservation Areas, or ACAs.

Under Part IV of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, an ACA is defined as 'a place, area, group of structures or townscape, taking account of building lines and heights, that:

- is of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest or value, or
- contributes to the appreciation of protected structures.

A wide variety of areas can be considered for designation as an ACA. For example, an ACA could be centred on an individual building, or a terrace of houses; they may be rural or urban. ACA designation forms the basis for policies to preserve or enhance an area, and provides a basic control over the external appearance of buildings, which make a positive contribution to the character of the area. Planning controls are more extensive with exempted development limited. Any works that would have a material effect on the character of an ACA require planning permission.

Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council recognises that by making provision for the protection of these areas, in order to retain the special character of an area, in many cases, this protection is best achieved by controlling and guiding change on a wider scale than the individual structure. The objective of the designation is to guide the processes of change within an area and ensure that all future developments are carried out in a manner sympathetic to the special character of the area.

This document aims to identify the special character of Castle Cottages and formulate specific conservation objectives and policies to protect this character and to give guidance to owners/occupiers and developers on the type of work that would require planning permission. It is one of a series of documents set out to identify the special character of each individual ACA.

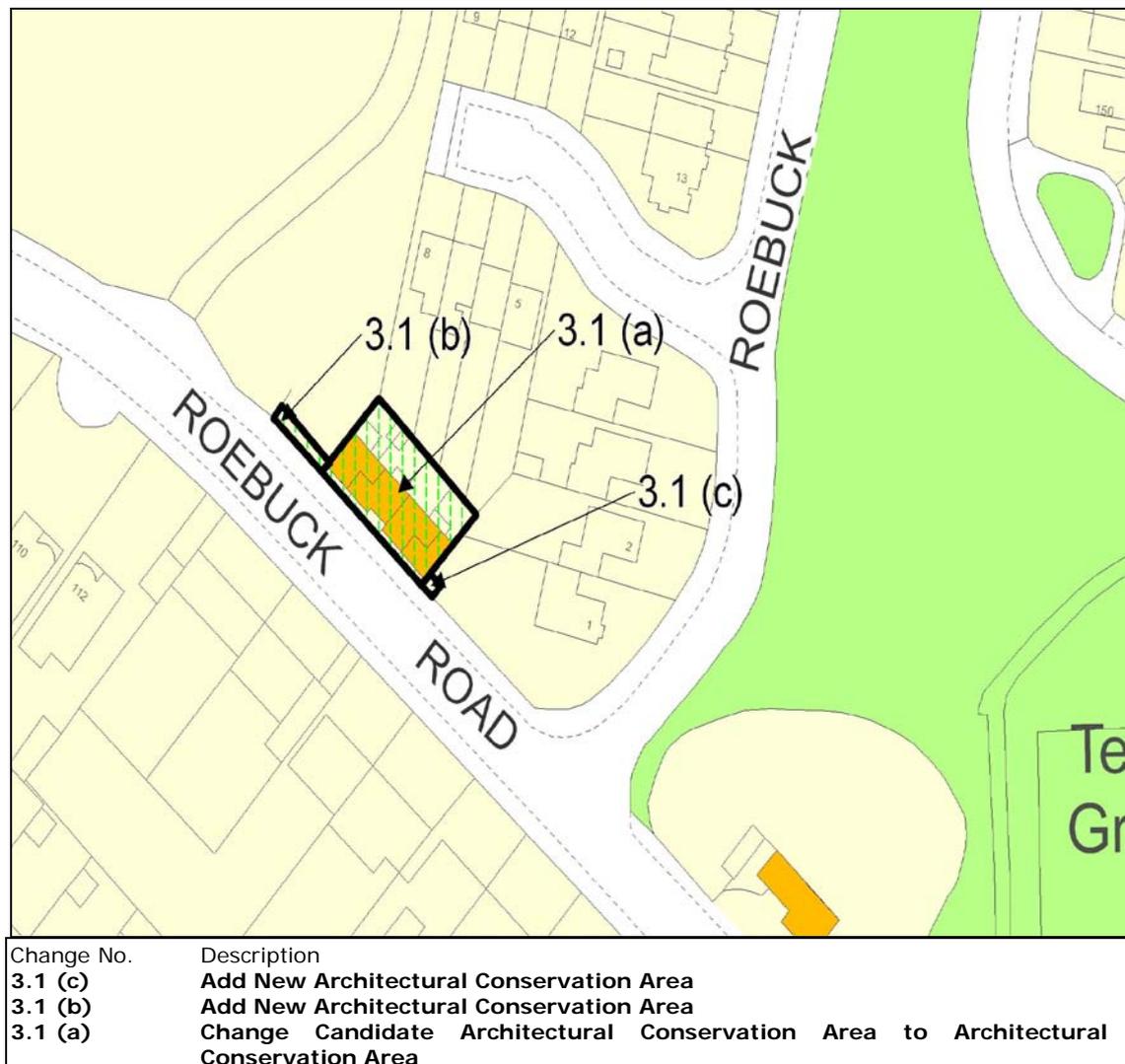
## 2.0 Location & Boundary of Architectural Conservation Area

Castle Cottages are located on the north side of Roebuck Road west of the junction with Fosters Avenue. The cottages originally comprised two pairs of semi-detached single-storey stone cottages but in more recent times an extension was built into the central divide joining No. 95 to No.97. The loss of this break transforms the semi-detached pairs into a terrace. All four cottages have a small front site bounded by cast-iron railings surmounted on a granite plinth wall

and a rear site enclosed by a boundary wall. The cottages are numbered 93, 95, 97 and 99 from east to west.

While considering Castle Cottages as an Architectural Conservation Area, Paul Arnold Architects (Grade 1 Conservation Architects) in collaboration with Mitchell Associates, Landscape Architects were appointed to evaluate and advise on the current conservation area boundary. This was carried out in accordance with the DOEHLG Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities (Chapter 3: The Development Plan, Architectural Conservation Areas). The Guidelines state that the boundaries of an ACA should make physical, visual and planning-control sense.

The proposal is to create an Architectural Conservation Area to include the four structures as well as elements that directly contributes to the appreciation of the structures. After studying the site as well as the character and special interest of the locality it is felt that the boundary line of the Architectural Conservation Area should incorporate the facades of the four structures, front sites and the area directly east and west of the cottages which incorporate stone entrance piers to the east and the stone castellated wall to the west.



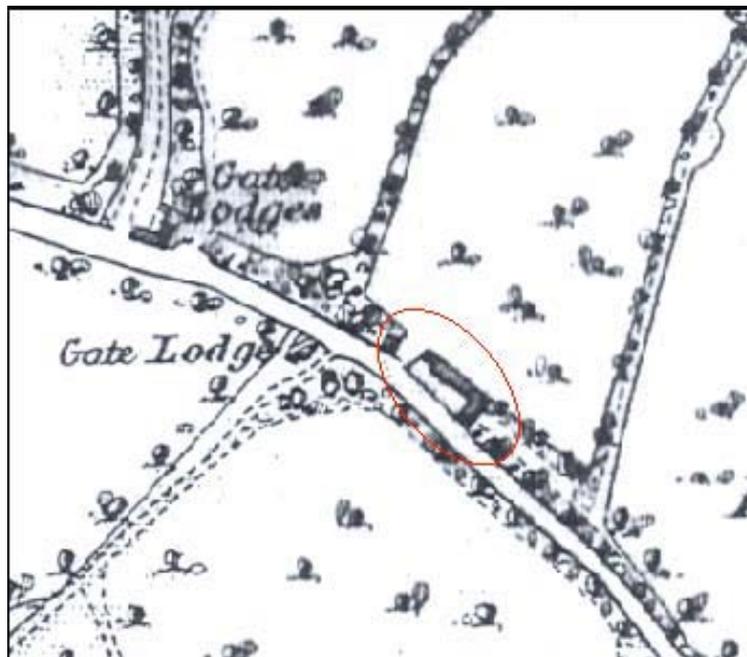
**Map 1:** Proposed Architectural Conservation Area Boundary and Protected Structures.

### 3.0 Historical Development

This area is known for the sighting of Roebuck Castle, close by to the north. The remains of this original 16th century castle were since incorporated into a house built in 1878 for the Westby family. This later house was built in a neo-Gothic/Romanesque style with elaborate internal and external features. Presently it is in use as residents in University College Dublin (UCD) campus Roebuck Road located to the west end of Clonskeagh is primarily a residential area, developed in the early decades of the 20th century. It has a small village green with a few local shops, but without a main centre. The district has changed in character as population growth in greater Dublin has imposed increasingly intensive use of land and the nearby Luas light railway has improved commuter access to central Dublin.

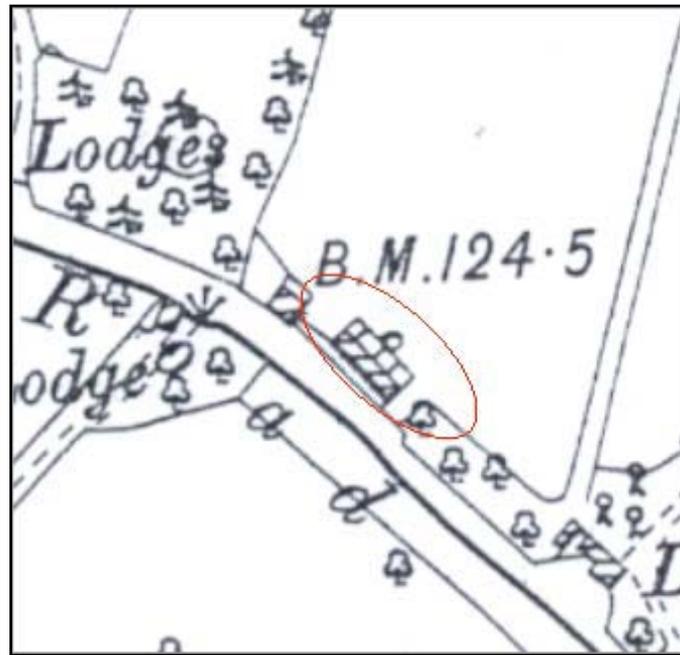
#### 3.1 Cartographic History

A structure is indicated at the present location of Castle Cottages on the 1843 Ordnance Survey map. It is an L-shaped structure with the projecting part of the L fronting onto the road edge and the rest of the building set back slightly with a space between it and the road. The footprint is not that dissimilar to the present cottages however this map predates the period associated with the architectural style and treatment of the present cottages, suggesting that this former structure was replaced with the existing Castle Cottages some time after this date. Across the road from this structure is an entrance and gate lodge giving access into an estate and house called 'Moorefield'. Further east along Roebuck Road another gate lodge leads off the south side of the road into 'Roebuck Hall'. A little further along, on the north side of the road, is the entrance to Roebuck Castle. Roebuck Castle appears as quite a large development with two projecting arms protruding to the south and gardens laid out around a structure. A dotted line, denoting a path, leads from Roebuck Castle around the perimeter of the site back to the structure that occupies the site of the Castle Cottages. This may indicate that this structure was used as an ancillary building of the Castle.



**Map 2:** 1843 Ordnance Survey Map depicting former structure occupying footprint of present terrace

The next Ordnance Survey map, which dates to 1907, shows a structure in a similar location as before but with a different footprint. Instead of the structure sitting back from the road it has a much narrower space between itself and the road. The building is indicated as one structure, not two semi-detached structures, but the rear plot is divided into four separate sites. To the east of the structure an entrance into the adjacent field remains the same, as has the structure to the west side.



**Map 3:** 1907 Ordnance Survey map showing former structure occupying footprint of present terrace.

The 1937 Ordnance Survey map labels the structures as Castle Cottages for the first time and shows a very distinct difference in the layout of the site. Two very distinct semi-detached properties with a central divide are depicted. The rear site is divided into four plots although the 1968 OS map shows the two semi-detached



**Map 4:** 1937 Ordnance Survey map showing two semi-detached Castle Cottages

houses to be joined now and shown as one terrace. The houses are numbered 1 to 4 from west to east. The plot of Number 2 appears slightly larger than the other three plots as it has been extended into the divide. A boundary line extends west from Number 1 to meet up with a structure fronting onto the roadside that appears on the earlier maps as well. A row of houses has been developed to the far side of the road with front and rear gardens. Little has changed today in regard to the actual four cottages; however the structure depicted on the west of the site has since been demolished.



**Map 5:** 1968 Ordnance Survey map

#### **4.0 Schedule of Protected Structures & Recorded Monuments**

A protected structure is a structure or part of a structure that a planning authority considers to be of special interest from an architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical point of view. The Record of Protected Structures (RPS) is contained in Schedule 1 of the Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Development Plan 2010-2016.

Protected Structures within the ACA are indicated in solid orange on the County Development Plan Maps; however, this does not define the full extent of the protected site. By definition, a protected structure includes the land lying within the curtilage of the protected structure and other structures within that curtilage and their interiors. The notion of curtilage is not defined by legislation, but is understood to be the parcel of land immediately associated with that structure and which is (or was) in use for the purposes of the structure.

Within the boundary of the Castle Cottages ACA all four cottages are listed in Schedule 1 The Record of Protected Structures and shown on Map 1 in Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council's Development Plan 2010-2016. This affords all nine houses protection under Part IV of the Planning and Development Act 2000.

In addition to that above, Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council have zoned the area where Castle Cottages lies as Zone Objective A: To protect and improve residential amenity.

## 5.0 Character Appraisal

### 5.1 Architectural Character Appraisal

#### a) Building Type

The four Castle Cottages are typical of rural cottages built throughout south County Dublin under the remit of South Dublin Rural Council at the turn of the 19th Century. T.J. Byrne (1876-1939) was appointed architect for the council at this time after working with Anthony Scott in 1895 and London County Council. He was responsible for a large number of cottages built in south county Dublin. There were two primary versions of these cottages, two-storey and single-storey and mainly semi detached units. Local granite was used in most along with brick and the character of the designs accorded with the Arts and Crafts ideal.

The semi-detached granite and brick Castle Cottages having Arts and Crafts style hipped dormer windows and projecting timber porches sit into this description. Each house has a rear plot which was also typical. These were provided so that



**Photo 1:** Castle Cottages with additional bay joining semi-detached structures together to form a terrace.

the industrious rural tenant could grow produce for his family. All the cottages have been altered in some way since the date of construction. Mainly these changes have been incremental and comprise replaced doors and windows. No 97 has built an enclosed porch up to the existing timber canopy changing the intended character somewhat. The extension of No 95 into the divide between the two formerly semi-detached cottages together with the new chimneystack and dormer window has impacted on the original architectural composition.

The condition of the cottages varies from good to fair. There does not appear to be major structural damage on initial inspection however general repair and maintenance is required on all four properties. Timber windows and porches require painting to arrest timber decay and cast-iron rainwater goods have become corroded and blocked in places with the build up of detritus. The build up of detritus restricts water run off and increased the likelihood of damp problems.

Most front wrought-iron railings have become corroded due to exposure to moisture through loss of paintwork. If corrosion is not treated and rust is allowed to build up, warping of iron elements can occur which will displace hinges and connections which in turn will weaken the railings.

### b) Prominent Materials & Architectural

**Stone:** Granite is used in the main construction of the cottages. It can also be seen in plinth walls and boundary walls in the locality and in the gate piers to the east of the cottages.

**Brick:** red brick was used in the dressing to the windows, doors and the construction of chimneystacks.

**Timber:** Timber elements can be seen used in windows and doors. In addition to this the porch canopies are constructed out of timber. Timber should be painted to protect it from the elements or decay due to water ingress will occur. Many of the timber elements seen here require maintenance to arrest further deterioration.



**Photo 2:** The contrast of red brick dressings next to the granite walls



**Photo 3:** Roof detail

**Slate:** Slate is seen used on the pitched roofs. The retention of all four original slate roofs compliments the character of the terrace

**Terracotta:** This natural fired earth can be seen featuring in the chimney pots.

**Wrought iron:** This material is used in the railings of the cottages as well as the gates to the east of the site, which are hidden behind corrugated metal.

### c) Key Buildings

Each individual structure in the terrace is protected on Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council's Record of Protected Structures, which is contained in the Development Plan 2010-2016. It is recommended that once Castle Cottages is designated as an ACA, the inclusion of each structure separately on the RPS be reconsidered.

The ACA designation is considered to be an adequate means of protecting the architectural integrity of the terrace, as their interest lies solely on their external character and form. Internally the buildings have been heavily modified and retain little features of architectural merit. In this instance, the adoption of an ACA and their exclusion from the Record of Protected Structures is deemed to be an appropriate and justified planning measure. The ACA designation will continue to protect their external features such as roof, walls, windows, boundary treatment etc.

## 5.2 Townscape Character Appraisal

### a) Visual Character

Roebuck Road is a wide two-lane road with cycle lane to either side. It has a feel of a suburban residential road with detached two-storey mid-twentieth century houses to the south side of the road having front and back gardens. These houses are bounded to the footpath edge by medium height rubble stone or concrete rendered walls with mature foliage and timber or metal gates allowing access to the driveways. The north side of the road is substantially different in appearance, it is more enclosed with long lengths of walls interspersed by wide entrances into housing estates or institutions. Mature trees rise above the walls lending a leafy rural feel to the road. The former Hermitage to the west of the cottages has a wide entrance with concrete walls, concrete piers and metal gates.

The road undulates slightly but the topography of the area is relatively flat. The built environment comprises low-rise structures and the height of the trees is all fairly low therefore giving an open feel to the road. The wide concrete footpath is dotted intermittently with sapling trees which being so young and spaced out are not yet enough to make a substantial impact on the character of the street



**Photo 4:** View north west along Roebuck Road.



**Photo 5:** further along Roebuck Road to the south east. View south east along Roebuck Road

#### **b) Plots and Boundaries**

The cottages all have a small front garden bounded by a low granite plinth wall surmounted by wrought iron railings. Beyond the railings a wide footpath site to the road edge. The boundary of the cottages extends further on the west side than on the east where it is terminated by two granite gate piers. The west side extends out to the adjoining wall some ten meters away and comprises a narrow garden bounded to the front by a low granite plinth wall and railings and to the rear by a granite castellated wall. Each house has a rear plot, which extends to the north-east of the property. All four houses have built returns to the rear plot and have ancillary structures located within the site.

#### **c) Density/Building Use**

Castle Cottages is a low-density residential development. In the mid-1970s, Clonskeagh consisted of low-density housing with significant areas of private open land, largely owned by the Catholic Church. Since then, the closure of the Masonic Boys' School has led to commercial redevelopment north of Clonskeagh Road and former church land adjacent to Bird Avenue and Roebuck Road now has housing. Since 2000, housing development has intensified land use further by building in larger gardens, replacing houses by apartments and adding stories to properties.

#### **d) Street Furniture/Surfacing**

A number of timber electrical poles with modern metal street lighting attached to the head punctuate the streetscape. Electrical and telegraph wires run from these poles to the cottages interrupting the skyline and the symmetry of the terrace. Modern traffic signs dot the footpath, one to the east side of the terrace is attached to a tree and is unnecessary as it presents no information. The road is constructed from tarmac and the footpaths from concrete. Patch repairs to the road, cycle lane and concrete footpath interrupt the fluidity of the black, red grey road layout. The changes in surface pattern and colour, together with the busy skyline and streetscape are distracting to the eye. An overall tidying up of street surfacing and signage should be carried out to harmonise elements that are at present in conflict with one another.

#### **e) Vistas**

The view west comprises residential houses stretching out along the south side of the road having similar building heights as well as styles. The houses are mainly detached mid-twentieth century rendered two-storey houses set back from the

road with gardens to the front. The road gently rises up and then turns to the south to terminate the view from the cottages. The view east is similar on the south side. It is one of mid-twentieth century detached houses with front gardens bounded by rubble stone walls and gates of timber or metal. The view of the north side of the road incorporates the delightful presence of the cut stone gate lodge to Roebuck Castle, which has a spire in cut stone and slate. The view to the east is terminated when the road turns slowly north and the boundary walls of the residential houses with trees behind go out of view.

### 5.3 Landscape Character Appraisal

- a) **Private/Public Open Space** There is little public open space within the immediate vicinity of the cottages. The housing estate to the east, also called Roebuck Castle, has a large open green for recreation, which is maintained by the management company.
- b) **Natural Features** Natural features in the area comprise trees that have been planted in private gardens and the public footpath. Little natural landscape or early morphology is visible in the present streetscape.

## 6.0 Threats & Opportunities

### Negative Elements

- Piecemeal replacement of doors and windows, in varying styles and materials different from the original design, reduces the architectural merit of the cottages in terms of diminished primary material. It can also have a negative impact on the intended visual composition and symmetry of the row of cottages. A front entrance porch has been built up and added to the existing timber canopy of No 97. The porch interrupts the intended architectural composition of the cottage and alters the symmetry of the terrace.
- The extension of No.95 into the original divide between the two semi-detached houses, was carried out in an unsympathetic manner in terms of architectural style. The window and chimney orientation and design are ill-fitting with the existing style and the infill interrupts the intended composition of the two semi-detached cottages
- Painted-over brickwork diminishes the grain and natural colour of the brick while also reducing the harmony between the terrace. In addition it reduces the breathability of the brick surface, which increased the likelihood of damp in walls.
- Piecemeal repairs to the concrete pavement and tarmac road directly in front of Castle Cottages are unsightly and negatively interrupt the view up Roebuck Road.
- Electrical wires and cables leading from telegraph poles to the roofs and gable ends of the cottages are numerous and appear haphazard and messy. All wires and cables should be made neater and any unnecessary wiring removed.
- The granite entrance gates to the immediate south-east of the cottages are in disrepair and have corrugated metal sheeting covering the entrance gates. This entrance should be considered for inclusion in the

ACA boundary as it directly impacts on the cottages and the immediate streetscape.

### **Positive Elements**

- The condition of the row of cottages appears good. No structural damage is obvious.
- The majority of the cottages have managed to retain a substantial amount of original fabric including granite, brick dressing, wrought iron railings, terracotta pots and timber porches. Although many piecemeal changes have been made to the houses, such as replacement of original windows and doors and painting over of brick and stone detailing, most of the changes are incidental and reversible. This offers the Council the opportunity to develop objectives and give design guidance in relation to restoration of character. For example future replacement of failed existing windows and doors may be done with replicas of the original style and material.
- No cottages are derelict. All cottages appear lived in and maintained, at least, to a minimum level.

## **7.0 Assessment of ACA in terms of Categories of Special Interest**

### **Architectural Interest**

Castle Cottages are of architectural merit, as they are an exemplar of a building type typical of rural cottages built throughout south county Dublin under the remit of South Dublin Rural Council at the turn of the 19th Century. Architectural interest is also gained through the positive contribution that the row of cottages has on its setting and streetscape. The symmetry of the four cottages lends a harmonious and pleasing aspect to the character of this suburban locality.

Historical Interest Historical interest is afforded due to the connection that the cottages have with Roebuck Castle that may have provided work for the occupants when first built.

This statement of character has been prepared by a multidisciplinary team from the Conservation Division of the Architect's Department, Economic Planning & Development, and Culture, Community Development & Amenities. It is based on an appraisal and architectural inventory carried out by Paul Arnold Architects, (Grade I Conservation Architects) in collaboration with Mitchell Associates, Landscape Architects.

## **8.0 Implications for Planning and Development**

The aim of designating Castle Cottages an Architectural Conservation Area is to protect the special external expression of the buildings by managing change in a positive manner.

In general terms, there is a requirement under the Planning and Development Act 2000 that planning permission be sought for all development works except those considered exempted development. The regulations governing exempted development are set out in the Planning and Development Regulations 2001.

Section 4 (1)(h) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 also lists developments which constitute exempted development, it states:

*“Development consisting of the carrying out of works for the maintenance improvement or other alteration of any structure, being works which affect only the interior of the structure or which do not materially affect the external appearance of the structure so as to render the appearance inconsistent with the character of the structure or of neighbouring structures”.*

Where uncertainty arises as to what, in a particular case, is or is not exempted development, any person may under Section 5(1) of the Planning and Development Act, on payment of the prescribed fee, request in writing from the Planning Authority, a Declaration in relation to the query.

### **Implications of ACA Designation**

Section 82(1) and (2) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 states: -

- (1) Notwithstanding Section 4 (1)(h) the carrying out of works to the exterior of a structure located in an architectural conservation area shall be exempted development only if those works would not materially affect the character of the area.*
- (2) In considering an application for permission for development in relation to land situated in an ACA, a planning authority, or the Board on appeal, shall take into account the material effect (if any) that the proposed development would be likely to have on the character of the architectural conservation area.*

In effect, ACA designation assigns significant restrictions on works to the exteriors of structures within the boundary of the ACA.

Presently all buildings comprising Castle Cottages No's 93-97 are Protected Structures. However, it is the intention of the Conservation Division to delist the buildings while simultaneously designating an Architectural Conservation Area. The obligations of owners and occupiers of Castle Cottages will vary according to the status of the buildings, they are as follows:

### **Protected Structures**

If the buildings remain designated Protected Structures, owners and occupiers are advised that planning permission is required for all works, which would materially affect the character of a protected structure, or any element of the structure, including its curtilage, which contributes to its special interest. Owners and occupiers proposing to carry out any works to a protected structure including essential repair and maintenance works, are advised to request a declaration from the Planning Authority under Section 57 of the Planning and Development Act 2000. A declaration issued under this section sets out the type of works the Planning Authority considers would or would not materially affect the character of the structure or of any element of that structure, which contributes to its special interest.

### **Non-Protected Structures**

If the buildings are removed from the Record of Protected Structures, owners and occupiers should be aware that works which, in the opinion of the Planning Authority, would materially affect the character of the Castle Cottages ACA will require planning permission. Clearly this will depend on details of each proposal, but it is likely to include the following:

## Works likely to affect the character of the ACA.

### Roofs:

- The removal of the original roofing materials and their replacements with modern material such as fibre cement tiles.
- The removal of existing chimneystacks and early terracotta or clay pots.
- The installation of solar panels, roof-lights or changes to the dormer windows on the front elevation.
- The erection of communications antennae or support structures for same to the front elevation.
- The removal of original rainwater goods such as the gutters and downpipes and their replacement with modern material such as uPvc to the front elevation.

### External Walls (Front elevation):

- The rendering of granite walls or the plastering/painting over of exposed brick detailing to the surrounds and quoins.
- The external painting of previously unpainted surfaces.
- Inappropriate pointing of the brick/stone work using a cement-based mortar or the use of strap-pointing.

### Openings(Front elevation):

- The removal, alteration or enlargement of original window openings and the replacement of original lattice-framed casement windows with inappropriate modern insertions. The installation of aluminium and uPvc windows are not be considered appropriate.
- Replacement of entrance doors in an inappropriate style, material or method of opening. Any replacement doors throughout the terrace should be in timber, and of an appropriate style in keeping with the terrace. Other variety of entrance doors is likely to affect the character of the area.

### Porch:

- Any changes to the projecting porch canopy over the entrance door to render it inconsistent with the terrace. The removal of, or the creation of an enclosed wind-break porch is likely to have an impact on the character of the area.

### Boundary Treatment:

- Removal or changes to the wrought-iron railings to the front site, the gate piers to the east-side and the granite crenallated wall to west of the terrace.
- Changes to the soft landscaped garden to the west side of the terrace. Any future proposals for changes to the front site should incorporate soft landscaping as part of any overall design.

### New Extensions:

- All of the cottages already have a rear extension. Further additions or new rear extensions are likely to have an impact on the character of the structure especially as space is limited. The aim should be to always minimise the impact of the extension by considering the following; planning restrictions, sensitivity of the setting, limited area on which to build, highly visible nature of the extension and the distinctive palette of materials. A contemporary high-quality design should be encouraged.

**Amalgamation of properties:**

- Planning permission is required for the amalgamation of properties whether they are located within an ACA or not, under the terms of the Planning and Development Act 2000. If permission were to be granted for such works, the original proportions of the front elevation including the porch should be kept.

**Works not affecting the character of the ACA.****Maintenance & Repairs:**

- All original or early features/materials should be retained and repaired where possible, as these positively contribute to the character of the terrace and enhance the uniformity of the terrace. Where replacement is necessary, it should be on like for like basis

**Internal alterations:**

- It is the intention of the Conservation Division to delist No's 93-97 Castle Cottages from the Record of Protected Structures. As non-protected structures any internal alterations or re-arrangements would not require planning permission providing they do not impact on the external character of the building.

**Restoration of Character:**

- Where original features have been lost or replaced with inappropriate alternatives, the appropriate reinstatement of these features does not require planning permission for example the removal of paint from the brick surrounds and the reinstatement of lattice framed casement windows.

**Openings:**

- The reinstatement of historically accurate windows and doors will not require planning permission. One original window survives to No.97, the reinstatement of this type of window is encouraged in order to strengthen the uniformity and architectural character of the terrace.

**External Walls:**

- The re-pointing of the joints using an appropriate mortar mix matching the existing finish or the use of a lime-based mortar.

**Services:**

- The positioning of security alarm boxes, electrical boxes, wires and cables should be placed in the most discreet locations in an effort to reduce any visual impact. Where there are any unused services such as these, they should be removed to enhance the overall appearance and character of the terrace. Electrical and telecommunication wires should utilise any vertical architectural lines i.e. channelling the wires along rainwater good and vertical mouldings.