

UPPER DOUGLAS

BALLAQUAYLE ROAD CONSERVATION AREA

Character Appraisal

*To be read in conjunction with the
Ballaquayle Road Conservation Area Order
1st September 2003*



Department of Local Government and the Environment
Rheynn Reiltys Ynyddagh as y Chymmyltaght

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In order to justify the selection of an area for Conservation Area status, it is necessary to undertake an appraisal of such an area's character and appearance. The intention of this procedure is to clearly set out the justification for Conservation Area designation, with the added aim of summarising a practical, distinct and factual assessment of the area in a working document. The character appraisal has been the subject of consultation with The Advisory Council on Planning and the Environment, The Douglas Corporation and many other interested parties. The Town and Country Planning Acts place a duty upon the Department of Local Government and the Environment to determine which parts of the Island are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and to designate such areas as Conservation Areas.
- 1.2 The unique and cohesive character which Douglas possesses as a fine seaside town has long been recognized, not only by the Island's local community, but possibly to an even greater extent, by visitors to our shores, who readily compare the variety and quality of the Capital's architecture, to some of the finest townscapes throughout the British Isles.
- 1.3 The Island has always tended to 'wait and see' before adopting patterns of living and approaches to legislation and commerce. The same may be said of the historical development of architectural fashions in the Island. We find architectural styles or 'periods' identified by reigns of various English Monarchs, taken up at a leisurely pace and still remaining in use for years after such styles were abandoned for new approaches, outside of the Island. This

tendency can be a little confusing when trying to date a property, but it has also been instrumental in achieving the unique blend of buildings remaining today.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Douglas occupies a choice location on a wide, east-facing bay, marked by headlands to the north and south, and backed by steeply sloping broughs to the west.

2.2 The town had confirmed its position as the principal trading harbour of the Isle of Man during the eighteenth century. The majority of buildings were sited in a triangle around the harbour which, during the late 1700s and early 1800s, was the fashionable area. However, during the nineteenth century, a number of developments were to occur which encouraged the rapid growth of the town and Douglas was to prove attractive to residents from other parts of the Island, as well as “second home” owners and tourists alike.

2.3 Along with the development of major sections of the town’s infrastructure, the relocation from Castletown to Douglas in 1869, of the House of Keys, was probably one of the most important influences on the subsequent growth of the settlement.

2.4 In response, people increasingly chose Douglas as their main place of dwelling and the town gradually spread along the shore front and uphill onto the broughs behind. Initially, access was very difficult, but major works afforded access to areas behind the promenades and the opening of the former Ballabrooie, Ballakermeen and Ballaquayle estates for development saw further increases in the number of residences constructed during the Victorian period.

3.0 LOCATION AND TOWNSCAPE

- 3.1 Upper Douglas is characterised by a number of small areas and distinctive neighbourhoods, which possess fine examples of terraced properties. It is a common feature that within such areas, a wide variety of house designs can be found and the influence of Georgian, Regency, Victorian, Edwardian, and Arts and Crafts Periods are all recognisable and this unique mix gives vibrance and vitality to the built fabric of the Island's Capital.
- 3.2 The townscape of upper Douglas is distinguished by a number of fine, and often very elegant, civic spaces in the form of squares and gardens, which provide a focus for surrounding terraced properties. Additionally, the avenues and other approach roads to these spaces are lined with carefully designed terraces, whose architectural language, detailing and rhythms provide a foretaste of the overall approach adopted in the enclosing architecture of the squares themselves. These early examples of town planning, although rigorous in their approach to detail, form and layout, succeed in creating a sense of spaciousness, charm and gentility which are now synonymous with the identity of substantial, predominantly residential, areas of Upper Douglas.
- 3.3 From the mid nineteenth century onwards, impressive Victorian terraces gradually developed north of the main town centre and away from the busy, and heavily populated, harbour area. Many were arranged to both create and enhance frontal views, being laid out around green spaces and gardens. The approach to 'period' architectural styles adopted in the Island does not always adopt a text book format in terms of design detail or expected dating: this again adds a Manx flavour to the resulting architecture such as is not found elsewhere.

- 3.4 In considering Conservation Area designation the Department assessed that it was of primary importance to protect and enhance the setting of major routes into the capital. The Conservation Area takes in Ballaquayle Road, Marathon Road, the main junction of Woodbourne Road with Ballaquayle Road, and the roads which relate to Hutchinson Square. Of equal importance is the necessity to recognise, protect and enhance civic spaces based upon formal gardens which were for the most part laid out in the Victorian period. Hutchinson Square is one such case. The Conservation Area also embraces Roslyn Terrace, Crosby Terrace, Laureston Terrace, Stanley View, Drury Terrace, Clifton Terrace and Stanley Place.
- 3.5 Ballaquayle Road takes its name from the largest of the three Douglas quarterlands: Ballaquayle which was extensive; Ballabrooie and Ballakermeen. The road was the principal way up from the sea frontage to the Ballaquayle farmhouse, located at the lower end of Dukes' Road.
- 3.6 It was the fourth Duke of Atholl who having acquired much of the Ballaquayle Estate, realised the potential of Douglas in its seaside location and carried out a number of developments, mostly along the sea frontage. Following his death in 1830, his executors put the Castle Mona Estate, which included much of Ballaquayle, on the market for sale. In 1831, it was purchased by a local consortium comprising Thomas and John Hutchinson of Bemahague, John Wulff of Ballaughton, and Cesar Bacon of Douglas. Eventually Thomas gained full control over the land and he and his son, Rev W Hutchinson, gradually sold land off as prime development land.
- 3.7 It was on an area known as Kayll's Field that Hutchinson Square was laid out in 1888 and it still bears the name of one of the town's most influential developers to this day.

3.8 The majority of the terraces fronting on to Ballaquayle Road were built during the late nineteenth century and the progression down hill towards the sea is marked by the regular rhythm of splayed bay windows, gable peaks, decorative iron railings and other good quality Victorian detailing. The common use of materials and detailing serves to unify the group of terraces which makes a strong contribution to this main entrance to town. The upper stretches of Roslyn, Crosby and Laureston Terraces are modest in scale and built as residences. John Kelly, builder, was responsible for building Laureston Terrace in 1892; however the properties were slow to sell, apparently because of the remoteness of the terrace from the town! Once Mr Kelly and his family had taken up residence themselves the other properties sold very quickly.

3.9 Drury Terrace and Stanley View were developed in parallel in 1887 and larger in massing and scale, probably having been developed in response to the expanding tourist industry. Again the rhythm of bay windows stepping down the hill, combined with decorative stucco and ironwork gives a high quality border to this arterial roadway. Clifton Terrace was also laid out in the 1880s and faces the earlier Stanley Terrace, which being built in 1836, was the first terrace to be laid out on the upper part of the Castle Mona Estate. Stuart Slack tells us that the double-fronted house at the top of the terrace was one of a number of private schools in the town and was known as Stanley Academy. A later addition extended it to the boundary with Hutchinson Square, at which time it also gained its timbered, mock-Tudor frontage. Some properties in Stanley Terrace still retain original iron gateposts into which is cast the house number. Although some unfortunate alterations have been carried out along the terrace, including inappropriate dormer windows, or awkward window formats, the long front gardens give a sense of the gracious era when the properties were built.

3.10 Hutchinson Square named after Thomas Hutchinson, was laid out in 1888 and strict covenants were established at the time to prevent the removal of the wall separating the streets off Victoria Road and so preventing access from that lower section. The gardens are in stepped tiers and from the top section fine views can be had across the lower rooftops to Douglas Bay. The square having a very sunny aspect, has always been a popular area for tourist accommodation, however there is now more emphasis on converting properties to apartments.

3.11 The architecture is both bold and 'playful' with its highly decorative red and yellow brickwork embellished by terracotta mouldings and decorative ironwork. The northern end of the square was never entirely enclosed and the original building plots are presently taken up by lock-up garages. Final completion of this end of the square with a sympathetic development might be worthy of consideration for the future and would enhance this important section of the towns built environment.

4.0 CONCLUSION

4.1 The area contains a high quality mix of properties, which are predominantly residential and are principally of the Victorian style of architecture. A good number of properties in the area appear to be well cared for and retain many qualities which together are worthy of protection and enhancement.

4.2 The relatively few negative elements identified, are largely judged to be reversible, given time, appropriate guidance and support. As such, they are not considered to be of sufficient weight so as to deflect from the overall special quality and character of the Ballaquayle Road Conservation Area. The support of appropriate planning policies and improved levels of grant assistance, now

in place, is of great importance to this initiative. Conservation Area designation aims to maintain and improve the unique qualities of a particular area, whilst also allowing it to prosper and consolidate.