Seafort Parade

Architectural Conservation Area

Character Appraisal and Recommendations

Comhairle Contae County Council

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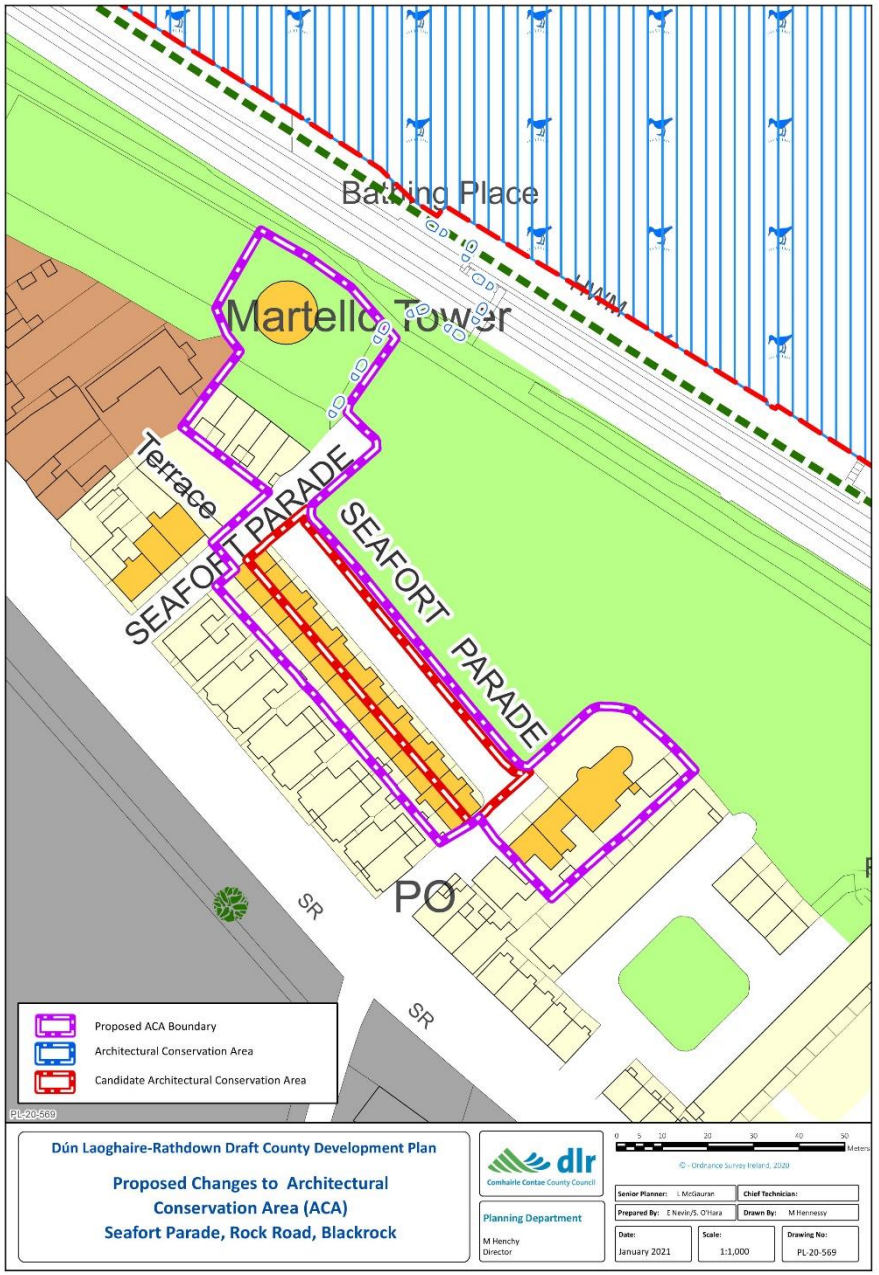
1. Location and Description of Boundary of ACA

Seafort Parade overlooks the sea and the DART railway line, facing north- east across Dublin Bay. The *candidate* ACA boundary is limited to the front part of the properties forming the terrace Nos. 4 to 17 Seafort Parade, and includes the public road to the front thereof. However, the boundary excludes other houses on Seafort Parade and Martello Terrace, as well as the Martello Tower to the front of the latter.

In assessing the character of the proposed ACA, it has been concluded that the boundaries should be extended, to encompass other properties of architectural heritage significance or of importance in relation to the setting of the whole, including of the Williamstown Martello Tower. The boundary is also extended to include the entire property of the individual houses forming the terrace, Nos. 4 to 17 Seafort Parade. This makes physical planning control sense, as recommended in the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities, published by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in 2004, 2011.



2. CHARACTER APPRAISAL

2.1 Building Typology

Seafort Parade is a heterogeneous development, carried out over more than a century, with its roots in the eighteenth century. The main group of buildings is the terrace containing Nos. 4 to 17 Seafort Parade. In its current form, this dates from the first years of the twentieth century, when Thom's Directory records Nos. 1 to 11 as *re-building* in 1905. Nos. 4 to 17 Seafort Parade are all to the same basic design, being two- storey over basement, gable fronted, with three bays. The roofs are simple 'A' type, running from front to rear, clad in flat terracotta tiles with lightly decorated barges. There is a roof valley running between each pair of houses. The chimney stacks are centrally placed, finished in a yellow 'Dolphin's Barn' brick, with glazed red brick stringcourse. The upper front facades are finished predominantly in a dashed render, with brick dressings to the window openings and brick quoins separating the individual houses. A moulded red brick string course separates the upper floor from the ground floor. The latter is finished in a red brick, laid in English bond. Basements are finished in a plain render, painted.

Main terrace Nos. 4-17 Seafort Parade(rhs) and Nos. 18-20 (lhs)

Central part of terrace

Central part of terrace

The rear facades are mostly finished in a yellow ‘Dolphin’s Barn’ brick, with red brick dressings to the window openings, or plain rendered. Windows are vertical, sliding sash types, with horns to the sashes. The windows to the front ground and first floors are four-over-one type, the upper sash being smaller than the lower sash. Similar windows are at first floor level of the rear, with simpler, one-over-one windows to the ground floor rear. Window cills are granite. The houses are handed in plan, so that the front doors are paired. A flight of granite steps, typically with six risers, leads to the doorway. A tiled canopy spans between the two properties, with a timber roof structure supported on timber brackets bearing on a low brick plinth wall providing shelter for the two front doors. The doors are half-glazed and panelled, with flanking lights. The majority of the original windows remain in place, although replacements are evident in three houses. Most of the original metal railings to the basement area have been replaced.

Nos. 1 to 3 Seafort Parade also underwent some modification (Thom’s Directory records rebuilding in progress to Nos. 2 and 3 in 1903, as also to Nos. 1 to 11 in 1905). The houses are all two-storey over basement, of modified Georgian style. Roofs are covered in clay tile of relatively modern origin, possibly replacing an original slated finish. No. 3 has a double A roof with a central valley and Nos. 1 and 2 have a single span roof. Chimney stacks have a plain render finish. All three houses have a wet bast finish to the upper floor, with a smooth cementitious render to the lower levels, incised to resemble ashlar stonework.

Rear No.17 Seafort Parade

Nos. 1-3 Seafort Parade

e

Entrance No.3 Seafort Parade

The upper level is divided from the ground floor with a plain rendered string course. There are run mouldings to the window openings, with a key stone formed in the same material. Windows have four-over-four sashes, but those of No. 1 have been replaced with uPVC.

No. 3retains an original early nineteenth century doorway, with a round-headed moulding over a classical door, complete with fanlight.
Nos. 1 and 2 have relatively modern doorways, but with classical decorative elements, including pediments, also formed in render.

At the south east end of the main terrace of Seafort Parade, stand three houses of architectural heritage value, Nos. 18 to 20 Seafort Parade, all Protected Structures. No. 18, '*Montereau Lodge',* is of late eighteenth - or early nineteenth century origin. In their current form, Nos. 19 and 20 are of more recent appearance.

The Martello Tower is the most significant structure of architectural heritage value on Seafort Parade. It dates from 1805, and originally stood on the foreshore. Located between the Tower and Nos. 1 to 3 Seafort Parade, stands Martello Terrace, dating from the first years of the twentieth century. Nos. 1 to 3 Seafort Parade are five modest two storey houses, with clay tile roofs.

Nos. 18-20 Seafort Parade

Williamstown Martello Tower

Martello Tower and Martello Terrace

2.2 Building Materials and Finishes

Roofs and Chimneys

The roofs of all the houses on Seafort Parade and on nearby Martello Terrace are finished in red clay tiles. This is a strongly unifying element in most views into the area.

The chimney stacks on the central terrace, Nos. 4 to 17 Seafort Parade, are constructed in yellow Dolphin's Barn brick, with red brick string courses and clay chimney pots. Some of these have been rendered subsequently. The chimney stacks on Martello Terrace are also formed in a brick, whilst those elsewhere in the ACA are rendered.

Finishes to Walls

The most prominent wall finish in the ACA, on the main terrace of houses (Nos. 4 to 17) is glazed red brick, laid in English bond. Brick is also employed around window openings, as a string course and as a form of quoin. A brick corbel is part of the support system for the canopy roof over the front doors. The use of a dash finish on the upper levels of Nos. 4 to 17 Seafort Parade contrasts strongly with the brick finish. The plaster finish to Nos. 18 to 20 Seafort Parade provides a visual counterpoint to the brick.

Nos. 4-17 Seafort Parade

Chimney stack No. 4 Seafort Parade

Brick corbe

The use of yellow brick on the rear elevations was a feature of houses in Dublin in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this cheaper brick being deemed inferior. However, on Seafort Parade, many houses have a rendered, possibly later, finish on the rear elevation.

Wall finishes on other houses in the ACA are generally rendered. The dressed granite stone of the Martello Tower is of a high quality.

Rear No.17 Seafort Parade

Windows and Doorways

The sash windows in Nos. 4 to 17 Seafield Parade are divided into four smaller panes in the upper sashes on the front elevation. The lower sashes have a larger, single pane of glass. The use of this glazing pattern in 1905, was a deliberate design feature, possibly indicating some Arts and Crafts movement influence. From the first half of the nineteenth century, much larger sheets of glass had become available, leading to the use of bigger window panes and dispensing with the small panes more typical of the Georgian era. The robust detailing around the doorways of Nos. 4 to 17 Seafort Parade also shows a strong influence from the Arts and Crafts movement.

Windows to front Nos. 4-17 Seafort Parade

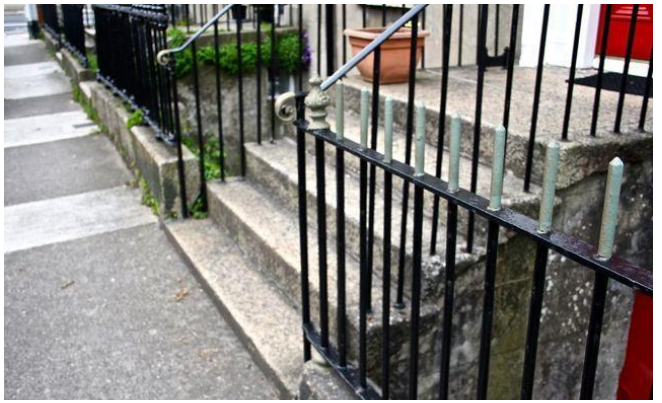
Entrance doorway

Granite Steps and Cills

The traditional use of granite for window cills, entrance steps and copings to walls is evident at Seafort Parade. The central terrace, Nos. 4 to 17 Seafort Parade, is laid out with shared access steps, emphasised by the canopy over the entrance doors.

Other, older houses in the ACA also have granite steps, such as No. 3 pictured here.

Entrance steps at Nos. 14 and 15



Entrance steps at No. 3 Seafort Parade

Railings and Other Walls

The railings separating the front basement areas from the public realm on the terrace of Nos. 4 to 17 Seafort Parade have been almost all replaced and are not of intrinsic heritage value. Notwithstanding this, the replacement railings are a significant element in the streetscape. But railings to Nos. 1 to 3 Seafort Parade are of greater heritage significance.

A strong visual element in the area of Seafort Parade is the use of granite in walls to open spaces and end of terrace garden boundaries. This creates a strong sense of local distinctiveness, in the widespread use of this locally sourced building material.

Granite walls to park boundary Martello

2.3 Key Buildings – Recorded Protected Structures (RPS)

In terms of historical significance, the Williamstown Martello Tower is of particular note. It is one of twenty-six such towers constructed along the coast between Bray and Balbriggan in the years 1804 to 1806, to defend the Dublin area from a French invasion. The tower originally stood on the shoreline and was subject to tidal flooding. However, after 1834 the Dublin to Kingstown Railway cut it off from the sea. It became a private residence later in the nineteenth century, when the surrounding ground levels were raised. The tower was subsequently acquired by the local authority. Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council restored the tower for civic use.

With the exception of No. 21 Seafort Parade and Nos. 1 to 5 Martello Terrace, all buildings in the ACA are on the Record of Protected Structures. The central terrace, consisting of Nos. 4 to 17 Seafort Parade, forms the core of the ACA. The Martello Terrace houses, although modest, constitute a significant element in the setting of the Martello Tower. In terms of scale and finishes, these houses form a strong element in the overall Seafort Parade ACA.

Illustration from 1834, showing Williamstown Martello Tower in middle distance, with railway under construction by J. Harris

3. Townscape Character and Appraisal

3.1 Visual Character

Seafort Parade, Nos. 4 to 17, constitutes a unified architectural composition, presenting a strong, gable-fronted façade to the public realm. It is a significant design statement facing out over the public park, the railway, and Dublin Bay. The terrace forms the main element in the compact urbanisation of Seafort Parade and Martello Terrace, which sit within a wider, more expansive landscape, framed by the sea and the sky. The Martello Tower constitutes a secondary focal point in the area.

3.2 Plots and Boundaries

The plot sizes are relatively small along Nos. 4 to 17 Seafort Parade, which have a generally consistent depth of 14.3 metres overall. All plots have a width of approximately 5.2 metres. Other houses in the ACA also have relatively modest plots.

3.3 Street Furniture and Surfacing

There is no good quality street furniture and traffic control signs proliferate along Seafort Parade. Pavements are concrete. Overhead wires proliferate to the front of the main terrace.

View to Martello Tower from Seafort Parade Nos 4-17

Wire-scape to front of terrace

View to Rock Road

3.4 Density and Building Use

Building uses in the ACA are almost entirely residential, the chief exception being the currently disused Martello Tower.
Seafort Parade (Nos. 4 to 17), and Martello Terrace, were constructed at a relatively high density.

3.5 Vistas

Most of the houses in the ACA, including Nos. 4 to17 Seafort Parade and Martello Terrace overlook the linear park, which stretches from Blackrock to Booterstown, and outwards to Dublin Bay. The railway line, with its footbridge, intrudes into this view, but the impact is minimised due to its distance from the houses and the relative ground levels. A row of small trees, in front of Seafort Parade, marks the former shore line, before the filling in and landscaping of the area.

There are only limited vistas into and out of the area of the ACA from Rock Road.

View of Seafort Parade from seashore

View from Rock Road

View to Rock Road

4. Landscape Character and Appraisal

4.1 Open Spaces

The public realm to the front of Seafort Parade is part of a linear parkland running from Blackrock to Booterstown. The Martello Tower sits within this park. Beyond the railway line, along the foreshore, there is a paved walk, with steps leading onto the strand, which is accessible at low tide.

The private spaces to the fronts of the houses in the main terrace, Nos. 4 to 17 Seafort Parade, are modest, consisting essentially of the basement area with access stairs. At the ends of the terrace the rear gardens are screened from public view by granite walls, incorporating a brick string course.

4.2 Natural Features

There is one large maple tree opposite No. 4 Seafort Parade, which is a prominent feature of the area. On the linear parkland, there are other trees. The shoreline and sea, which lie outside the ACA, constitute the other main natural feature of the general area.

Martello Tower and park

Coastal Walk

Maple Tree

5. THREATS AND POSITIVE FACTORS

5.1 Negative Elements

Buildings along Seafort Parade are generally well maintained. There are isolated signs of poor maintenance of some elements, such as barge boards. Replacement of original windows and the construction of storm porches has, to a limited degree, compromised the visual unity of the terrace Nos. 4 to 17 Seafort Parade. The replacement of original railings has also somewhat detracted from the overall coherence of the terrace.

The extent of on-street parking along Seafort Parade is a negative visual factor. The unattractive wire-scape also detracts from the appearance.

5.2 Positive Elements

The location of the ACA, overlooking the park and Dublin Bay, is a positive factor, and it is considered to be a desirable place to live. The general affluence of the area also provides a financial underpinning to the preservation of its architectural heritage. The overall design character of the central terrace, running between Nos. 4 to 17 Seafort Parade, remains strongly intact.

Windows replaced

Parking and wirescape

Park and No.18 Seafort Parade with Emmet Square to left side.

6.1 Architectural Interest

Seafort Parade has its roots in the eighteenth century, but its current character is marked particularly by the early twentieth century. The terrace, Nos. 4 to 17 Seafort Parade, forming the core of the ACA, is an early twentieth-century architectural composition of some quality, which merits its designation as an Architectural Conservation Area. Its architectural interest lies primarily in its strong external expression, including roofscape and façade treatment. It is considered that the terrace is of local interest in architectural heritage terms. Nos. 1 to 3, and Nos. 18 to 20 Seafort Parade, are also of some architectural heritage value. Martello Terrace is of value as part of the setting of the Martello Tower.

6.2 Historical Interest

The road layout of Seafort Parade and some elements of its built fabric, date from the late Georgian era. But the main built heritage of the Williamstown area is related to the coastal suburbanisation of south County Dublin following the building of the railway in 1834. Many of the buildings in the vicinity were built in the late eighteenth and early twentieth century. The ACA is of some historical significance in this context.