



SYDENHAM ROAD
Architectural Conservation Area

**Character Appraisal & Policy
Framework**

2014

SYDENHAM ROAD ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION AREA
CHARACTER APPRAISAL & POLICY FRAMEWORK

Preface

The assessment of the special character of the Sydenham Road Architectural Conservation Area was commissioned by Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council and was carried out *Rob Goodbody BA(mod), Dip Environmental Planning, DipABRC, MA, MUBC, MIPI, MRTPI, of Historic Building Consultants, Old Bawn, Old Connaught, Bray.*

The Character Appraisal, which includes an edited version of the special character report, was prepared by the Conservation Division and Planning Department of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council.



1.0 Introduction

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown contains a number of areas which exhibit a distinct character and unique qualities based on their historic built form and layout. This character is often derived from the cumulative impact of an area's buildings, their setting, landscape and other locally important features developed gradually over time. These areas are an expression of our heritage and our identity and contribute significantly to the quality of our lives. These areas will continue to develop and change but their special character is of great value and worthy of protection.

The Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, provides the legislative basis for the protection of such areas by facilitating their designation as Architectural Conservation Areas, or ACAs.

Under Part IV of this Act, 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, 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 centered on an individual building, or a terrace of houses and it may be rural or urban. ACA designation forms the basis for policies to preserve or enhance an area and provides an element of 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 in the opinion of the Planning Authority would have a material effect on the character of an ACA require planning permission.

Retaining the special character of an area is best achieved by managing and guiding change on a wider scale than the individual structure. Hence, the objective of the ACA designation is to guide change within an area and ensure future development is carried out in a manner sympathetic to its special character.

It should be noted that ACA designation is distinct from designation as a protected structure, although Protected Structures may be located within an ACA area. Protected Structures are subject to separate procedures and requirements under the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

1.1 Aim of study

A number of Conservation Areas were identified in the previous Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan. These have now been assigned 'Candidate Architectural Conservation Areas' status under the 2010 - 2016 Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan. Section 11.3.13. Policy AR10: Candidate Architectural Conservation Areas states that:

A number of Conservation Areas were identified in the previous County Development Plan. The Council is committed to assessing these areas to determine if they meet the requirements and criteria for re-designation as Architectural Conservation Areas as set out in the Planning and Development Act, 2000 and the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government's "Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities".

The primary aim of this study is to:

- *identify the special character of the proposed Sydenham Road ACA.*
- *to set out conservation and planning policies which protect its special character and which will guide future development,*
- *to inform owners/occupiers and developers of the type of work that would require planning permission.*

2.0 Location

Sydenham Road lies about three hundred metres to the east of the village of Dundrum, and is approximately parallel to the Main Street. It runs almost in a straight line from its beginning at the north-west end of Taney Road to its end at the south-east close to Overend Way. The road is approximately 450 metres in length and near to its mid-point it crosses Upper Kilmacud Road at a slight angle.

Dundrum Main Street runs parallel to the Slang River and the ground rises steadily from the river towards the east, but with a significant slope to the south also. As a result, there is a steep climb up along Sydenham Road from the Taney Road junction, levelling off about mid-way towards the junction with Upper Kilmacud Road. The eastward rise in the ground is seen in the substantial rise from the road level into the sites of the houses on the eastern side of the road, and a less prominent drop down to the houses on the western side.

2.1 Boundary of Candidate Architectural Conservation Area

The boundary of the candidate ACA is shown on Map 1 of the Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan 2010-2016. This shows that the candidate ACA would include all of the houses on Sydenham Road with the exception of St. Anne's and includes the site of Sydenham House, which is at the corner of Upper Kilmacud Road and Sydenham Villas.

The boundaries are defined to take in the eastern side of the road from Taney Road to the first property on the southern side of the road, beyond Upper Kilmacud Road. On the western side the candidate ACA includes a little more than half of the northern section of the street southwards from Taney Road, and does not extend as far as Upper Kilmacud Road. On both sides of the road the defined area generally runs to the centre line of the houses so as to exclude the rear half of each house and the rear

gardens. In that part of the street where only one side is within the candidate ACA the boundary runs along the kerb line to the front of the houses and excludes the carriageway.

2.2 Proposed Architectural Conservation Area

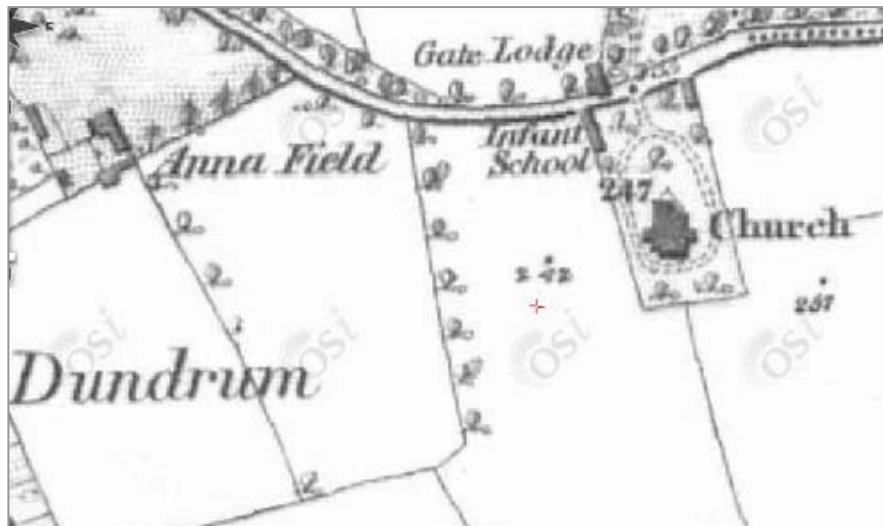
In light of the assessment of the candidate ACA it is proposed to revise the boundary to omit five houses on the east-side of Sydenham Road at the southern end of the ACA that joins with Kilmacud Road Upper. These houses are known as Brentwood, Mopoon Villa, The Boulders, Little Rock, and Kilronan. It is also proposed to omit a house known as Garryhoe on the west-side of the road. All are twentieth century and their character and style differ to those contained within. The site of Sydenham House has also been removed from the boundary.

The revisions will strengthen the ACA boundary in terms of its architectural quality and cohesiveness. The proposed amendments were made where it was felt that the structures did not warrant inclusion due to lack of architectural merit. The boundary will also be extended to include the rear plots where necessary to make greater physical sense and to rationalise the boundary. The boundary walls to the side on No.1 Sydenham Terrace and Tudor House are also included in recognition of their character and contribution to the ACA.

While Brentwood dates to 1861 its external expression and composition has arguably been affected by the tower-like side extension.

The exact boundaries of the proposed ACA are delineated on the

map no. PL-13-364 contained in Appendix 1.



3.0 Historical development

The village of Dundrum appears to be of medieval origin, and

derives its existence from the ancient church site of St. Naithi or the 12th century castle of Dundrum – or perhaps some degree of each. By the eighteenth century Dundrum was a very small village, and was shown on John Rocque's map of County Dublin in 1760 as a small scatter of buildings on the western side of what is now the main street. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Dundrum had grown, and early maps of the county such as John Taylors *Environs of Dublin* of 1816 and William Duncan's map of County Dublin of 1821 both show a significant village, with development all along the eastern side as well as the west. During this time Upper Kilmacud Road was laid out, improving the accessibility of Dundrum. At this time the village had achieved a population of about five hundred.

Fig 1: Extract from first edition of Ordnance Survey map of 1843

The increase in size of Dundrum would have been influenced to some extent by improvements in transportation – both the quality of the roads and the sophistication of the coaches and wagons that used them. A big boost for Dundrum came in 1854, not from the roads, but the opening of the Dublin and Wicklow Railway, initially from Harcourt Road to Bray, and later from Harcourt Street to Wicklow and beyond. This accessibility meant that the new station at Dundrum could facilitate commuting to the city, while the commuter's family lived in the clearer, fresher air beyond the city's influence. It was also a cheaper area to live, particularly through the lower rates that were levied on properties outside the city.

The first edition Ordnance Survey map shows Dundrum and the future site of Sydenham Road in 1843, before the advent of the railway. Between Taney Church and Anna Field the land was laid out as fields.

One developer that saw the potential for capitalising on the arrival of the railway was the auctioneering firm of Messrs Bentley, run by William Bentley and his son John. In 1857 and 1858 they took out leases on a substantial amount of land, including part of the grounds of a house called Anna Field, which had already lost part of its site to the railway. Acquisition of a field to the south of Anna Field and

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another to the east gave Bentleys a sufficient tract of land on which to lay out a street and houses.

The first construction project undertaken by the Bentleys at Sydenham Road was a group of six houses on the eastern side of the road, backing on to Taney Church. These were in three pairs of semi-detached houses and were known as Sydenham Terrace. The term "terrace" at that time referred to a levelled platform, and only later became used exclusively to mean more than two houses attached together. Soon after beginning on these houses the Bentleys built two pairs of semi-detached houses on the opposite side of the road, completing them in 1860 and 1861, together with a substantial detached house at the corner of Taney Road, also finished in 1860. On an area of land between Sydenham Road and the railway they built a detached house, known as Anne Field, with a driveway leading towards Taney Road.

The choice of the northern end of the new road as the starting point for new houses would have been driven by the accessibility to the railway station, down the hill on Taney Road. The Bentleys' land holdings ran further to the south, however, and across to the other side of Upper Kilmacud Road, then known as Drummartin Road. At the corners of the two roads they built Rich View – known at first as Sunnyfield – and Sydenham House. In 1863 they laid out the southern section of Sydenham Road, with a view to continuing the building further. The stage of construction that was reached by 1864 was shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map, which appeared in that year.

At the same time as they were developing Sydenham Road, the Bentleys had also acquired extensive lands at Foxrock with a view to developing them. There they laid out roads, provided a hotel and a mart, and assisted development with the provision of

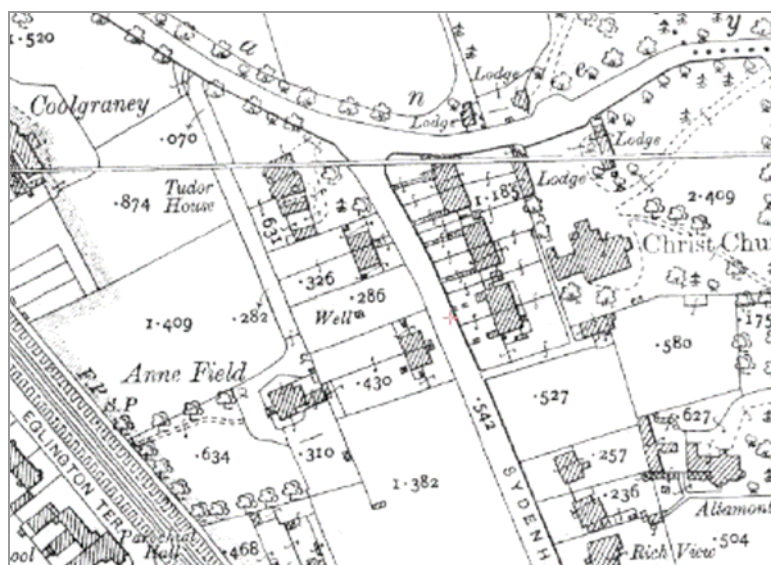


Fig 2: Extract from 1907 OS Map

brick fields and a nursery for the landscaping. The scale of the Foxrock development was unrealistic and only attracted a small number of purchasers, scattered widely over the developed area. The Bentleys had over-extended their enterprises and in the later 1860s the business collapsed. Their properties at Sydenham Road were sold at auction on 12th February 1869 in seven lots and this included two houses that were let to tenants and all of the remaining tracts of building land. Each of the seven lots was sold at the auction and there may have been no reserve, as the two houses, which cost about £700 each to build and were said to bring in annual rents of £45 and £50 respectively, were sold for £5 each. This was not as much a bargain as it seems, as tenants had proved difficult to find, there was a very rapid turnover of occupiers and the houses were often vacant. When built they had been offered at rents of £70 to £75, but in the light of the poor record of letting the rents had gone down significantly over the first ten years. To reflect this poor performance the Valuation Office had reduced the rateable valuation of the houses in 1868.

The four houses at the southern end of the road were developed separately. Only one additional house was built within the Bentley land-holdings in almost forty years to the end of the century. In 1882 a house called Mopoon Villa was built on the eastern side of the road.

It was not until the early twentieth century that further development took place along Sydenham Road. In 1904 a house named Lisnivis was built on the land between number 6 Sydenham Road and Mopoon Villa. In 1927 a bungalow was built to the north of it, and in the early 1930s two houses were built on sites opposite, on the western side of the road.

To the south of the junction with Kilmacud Road Upper a pair of houses was built on the western side of the road in 1940, and two pairs of semi-detached houses in the early 1950s. Also in the early 1950s the Vocational School was erected on the substantial site at the north-western corner of Sydenham Road and Upper Kilmacud Road.

4.0 Schedule of Protected Structures & Record Monuments

- Record of Protected Structures

There are no protected structures within the defined boundaries of the Architectural Conservation Area. Two protected structures lie in the vicinity, Anne Field, which is to the rear of gardens on the western side of Sydenham Road, and Christ Church, Taney, which lies to the rear of gardens on the eastern side, and which has two cottages and the front boundary walls, railings and gates which are also included in the protection.

- Record of Monuments and Places

No structures or sites within the Architectural Conservation Area are included in the Record of Monuments and Places. The nearest such sites are St. Naithi's

Church, approximately 500 metres to the north west, and Dundrum Castle, about 400 metres to the west.

- National Inventory of Architectural Heritage

The NIAH Survey of Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes includes a number of sites within the general area, the closest of which is Taney Hill, on the northern side of Taney Road, opposite the junction with Sydenham Road. This house is now gone and the site built over.

5.0 Character appraisal

Public realm

There are no remaining early features within the public areas in Sydenham Road. The road itself dates from the period when the street was laid out and the first houses built, but all of the original features are now missing, along with any features that might have been introduced later in the nineteenth century or in the first half of the twentieth century. Hence there are no elements of historic paving and the granite kerb stones that are frequently found remaining in nineteenth century streets are absent here. There are no traditional lighting columns or street names or other street furniture. There are no open spaces or common areas other than the street itself.

Arising from this, all features of architectural heritage significance at Sydenham Road are within the private spaces associated with the private houses.

Private spaces

All of the buildings within the ACA are private houses and their associated structures such as garages. All of the houses have front and rear gardens, though the front gardens on the western side of the road are shorter than those to the east. The garden sizes vary significantly, from about 700m² to about 2400m², with the detached houses generally having more garden space than the semi-detached houses. The rear gardens are not visible from public areas – to the east the houses back on to Taney Parish Church and an apartment scheme, and to the west the boundary is with the grounds of a private house. At the northern end there are substantial walls screening the rear gardens from Taney Road.

Elements that enhance or detract from the character

Sydenham Road ACA derives a considerable amount of character from the contours.



The land to the east of Dundrum village rises up sharply, but not evenly, such that

there is a ridge between Taney Road and Upper Kilmacud Road. As a result, Sydenham Road rises up sharply from Taney Road, reaches a crest and then slightly towards Upper Kilmacud Road. At the same time, the houses on the western side of Sydenham Road are significantly below the road level, while those to the east rise high above.

Plate 1: Sydenham Road

While these slopes add to the overall character of the street, they also serve to distance the houses from the public realm, rather than facing on to it at the same level. This is exacerbated, particularly on the eastern side, by a wall of trees and hedges along much of the street. The effect is made more severe by the uneasy mix of varieties, most particularly the inappropriately large and dark yew and *Macrocarpa*, the varieties of *Cupressus* and *Chamaecyparis* and the high, overgrown hedges, some choked with ivy.

Building typologies and materials

There is a wide variety of house styles in Sydenham Road, the common thread being that they are all substantial suburban houses of the business and professional classes. The houses at the northern end are for the most part the earliest, built by Bentley & Son, but they aimed at a varied market, producing six similar houses on the eastern side of the road and four smaller and one larger one on the western side, in different styles. The

one remaining Bentley house at the southern end of Sydenham Road and the former Sydenham House are in different styles again. The three pairs of semi-detached Bentley houses are built in red brick. The houses on the western side are rendered and built in very different styles. One being a Victorian rendition of the Georgian tradition with Italianate elements, another being more austere and formal, but with finesse in the detail. A pair of smaller brick houses stands opposite the Bentley houses.

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The individual elements of the houses are examined below to indicate the styles of the houses and character of the street.

Facades and types: The six substantial semi-detached houses at the northern end of Sydenham Road were originally known as Sydenham Terrace, as they were built on a levelled terrace at a height above the street. These houses are two-storey over basement and double pile with single-storey over basement to the side containing the entrance. These houses are faced with red brick to the front and rendered on the other three sides. The basements were rendered originally.

Opposite Sydenham Terrace a pair of smaller semi-detached houses was built in a style that derived more from the Georgian period, without the side extensions and with the doors in the front facade, approached by a flight of granite steps. To the south of these another pair of semi-detached houses of the same period opted for the rendered form that was common in contemporary suburbs in Blackrock and Dun Laoghaire. These have front doors set in glazed screens and with projecting canopies above as a form of open porch.

Plate 3:
Numbers 9 and 10

