

Skerries

Architectural Conservation Area

Statement of Character



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Preface

This assessment of the special character of the Skerries Architectural Conservation Area was prepared between August and November 2007 by Lotts Architecture and Urbanism with the assistance of Michael O'Neill, architectural historian.

The study was commissioned by Fingal County Council and its progress was guided by Helena Bergin, Conservation Officer and Fionnuala May, Senior Architect. The statement of character follows the format devised by the Conservation Office of Fingal County Council for other ACAs in the county.

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November 2007

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1.0 Introduction

Many of the towns and villages of Fingal contain areas of architectural, historical, and/or cultural interest, which have a particular distinctive character considered worthy of retention and enhancement. Planning legislation allows a planning authority to include objectives in the County Development Plan to preserve the character of places, areas, group of structures or townscapes that:

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

Such areas or places are known as Architectural Conservation Areas, or for short, ACAs. Currently, there are 28 ACAs designated in Fingal.

An ACA could be a terrace of houses, a streetscape, a town centre, or a cluster of structures associated with a specific building such as an historic mill or country house. Most structures in an ACA are important in how they positively contribute to the character of the area. Historic building materials and features, heights and building lines, and the scale and arrangement of streets and open spaces all make a contribution to the character of an ACA. Therefore, it is the external appearance of structures and the appearance of the open space which are protected in an ACA. Planning permission is required for any works that would have a material effect, or impact, on the character of an ACA. Even works which in other locations would meet the criteria for Exempted Development as outlined in the Planning Regulations will require planning permission if they are within an ACA. This does not prevent alterations, extensions or new build within ACAs but the designation seeks to ensure that any new development respects or enhances the special character of the area and is carried out in consultation with the Planning Department and Conservation Officer, usually through a planning application.

This document is one in a series that set out to identify the special character of each individual ACA and give guidance to homeowners, developers and planning professionals on the type of works that would require planning permission in that specific area.

2.0 Location and Boundary of the Conservation Area

Skerries is located on the coast of Fingal on a slight promontory 15 km northeast of Swords, 27.5 km from Dublin city centre and is well served by both road and rail networks. Balbriggan lies 6 km to the north. The name of the town derives from its Viking past, reputedly from the Norse or Old Danish words for reef and islet possibly referring to the group of small islands of Shenick, Colt, St. Patricks and Rockabill just off the coast of Skerries and the area of the town to the North East known as Red Island, which at one point in time was separated from the mainland. Skerries is a medium-sized coastal town with seafront to the east and north, and a harbour with a small fishing fleet and leisure sailing facilities. The sheltered harbour is an important factor in the original settlement and subsequent development of Skerries over the centuries as a fishing port. In the later nineteenth and into the twentieth century Skerries was a well-known holiday resort. More recently housing estates have developed outside the town core. The main settlement of Skerries reflects its development as a fishing port. Cottages on informal plots around Hoar Rock, Quay Street and the irregular shape of The Square reflect this early use.

The ACA of Skerries stretches from the east end of The Hoar Rock to the west end of Harbour Road along the North Strand seafront behind the south-facing streetscape. The ACA continues to the south along a line to include the plots behind the houses facing west onto Strand Street to just beyond the junction of Strand Street and Church Street. The western extent of the ACA includes Church Street, New Street, Thomas Hand Street, part of Balbriggan Street and returns back to The Hoar Rock including the west of the area leading into The Square.

The streets included within the ACA Boundary are:

Harbour Road (part of)	Sandy Banks
Quay Street	McLoughlin's Lane
Hoar Rock (part of)	Strand Street
The Square	Convent Lane
Balbriggan Street (part of)	Little Strand Street
Thomas Hand Street	Chapel Lane
New Street	Manning's Opening (part of)
Beau Piers Lane (part of)	Callaghan's Lane (part of)
Church Street	Fair's Lane (part of)
The Cross	Heeney's Lane (part of)
College Court	

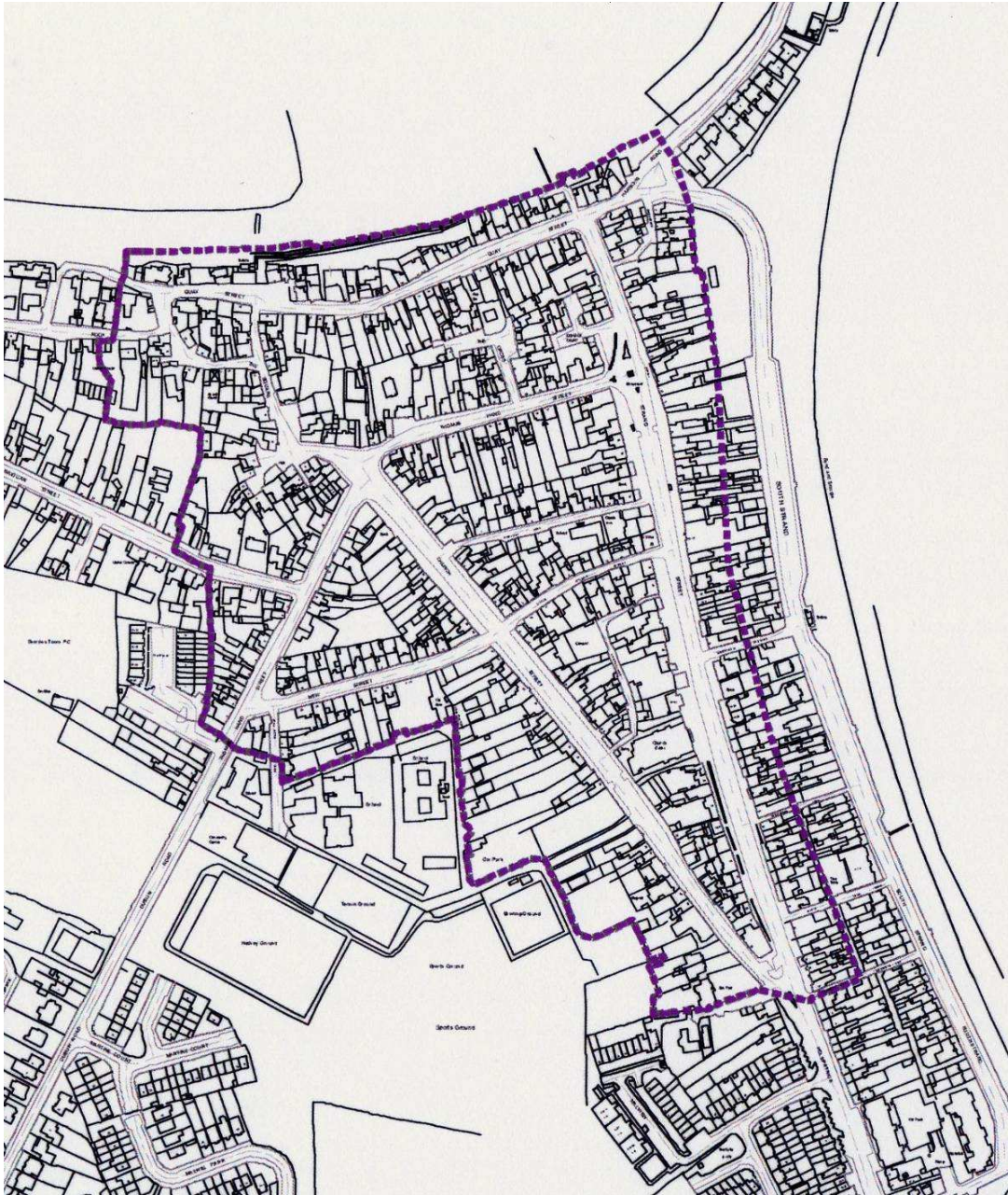


Fig 1. Boundary of Skerries ACA

3.0 Historical Development of the Area

3.1 Ecclesiastical Origins

The available historical and archaeological evidence point to a purely ecclesiastical origin for Skerries, as a possession of the nearby Augustinian Priory of Holmpatrick. *Holm* is an Old Norse word for islet, and so Holmpatrick would translate as the islet of Patrick. St. Patrick's Island a short distance off the coast was the site of an early Christian settlement, associated with St. Patrick's fifth century mission. It was attacked by the Vikings in 798 and was important enough in the early twelfth-century to host the 1148 Synod of *Inis Patraic*, summoned by St. Malachy, then Papal legate in Ireland. Perhaps Skerries was the mainland port for St. Patrick's Island in the same way that Portraine was the port for Lambay, called Reichru in Irish. In the thirteenth century the ecclesiastical settlement of St. Patrick's Island was moved to the mainland at Holmpatrick, in c.1220 or perhaps somewhat later in 1253, as a Papal confirmation of that date might suggest. In a similar fashion an earlier church on Ireland's Eye was relocated to the mainland at Howth. In that instance, however, there was probably secular influence on the part of the St. Lawrence incumbent, at Skerries/Holmpatrick it appears purely ecclesiastical. The few medieval references to the Priory at Holmpatrick suggest it was impoverished, nevertheless at the Dissolution of the monastery in c. 1538 the Priory was in possession of c.1,000 acres in the immediate hinterland.

Holmpatrick Priory had provided pastoral care in the area since time immemorial, not entirely unusual in an Augustinian context. The findings of the Dissolution jurors, the Fiants of the Tudor and Stuart monarchs and the Civil Survey report of the mid-seventeenth century provide a consistent pen-picture of Holmpatrick and Skerries. The importance of Skerries in these documents was related to Holmpatrick's ownership of the 'tithes (of fish), profits, customs of all merchandise on the Quays of Skerries, wrecks of the sea, flotsam and jetsam, waifs and strays, goods left and forsaken' as stated in a 1575 grant. A condition of this lease was the upkeep of 'the decayed pier and haven of Skirres'. The Earl of Thomond acquired a lease of the Holmpatrick estate in 1605 which proved a remarkably long and stable period, if perhaps uneventful, in Skerries history. Holmpatrick/Skerries remained in their possession throughout the turbulence of the seventeenth century and only transferred out of their ownership when purchased by the Hamiltons of Hackettown in 1720.

3.2 Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Development

The burgeoning development of Skerries dates to the period following the transfer of ownership to the Hamiltons. The church at Holmpatrick was rebuilt in 1722, a sure enough indication of more local influence being brought to bear. In 1739 the Dorn, that is, the road leading from Skerries to

Haven Island (now Red Island), was mentioned in the Vestry Book of Holmpatrick church for the first time. By 1742 the Dorn was important enough to merit the appointment of separate overseers for its maintenance. John Rocque's map of the County of Dublin in 1760 shows quite definite street development – Church Street, the Square and Thomas Hand Street with less formal plot development along North Strand towards Hoar Rock. The Roman Catholic 'chapple' was located north of Holmpatrick church and west of the windmill.

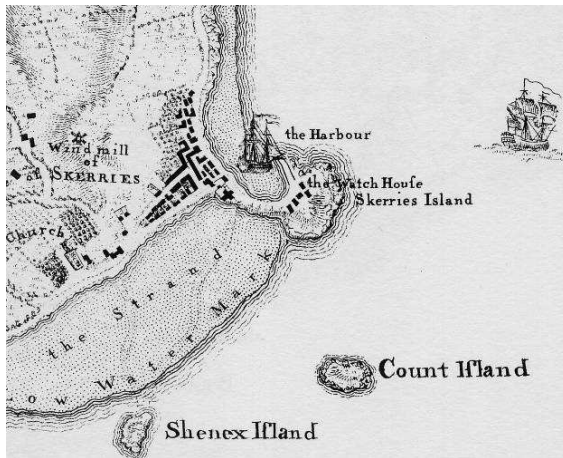


Fig. 2: John Rocque's Map of 1760

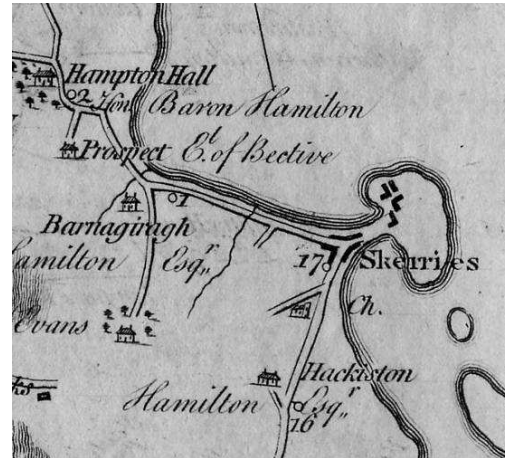


Fig. 3: Taylor & Skinner's Map 1778

The 1830's First Edition Ordnance Survey maps (see Fig. 4) record the development of Strand Street, Balbriggan Street, but before the development of New Street and before the completion of Convent Lane and Little Strand Street. Substantial buildings included the earlier Catholic T-plan church built in 1823 some six years before Catholic Emancipation, and a hotel at the junction of Strand Street and Quay Street (later the De La Salle school, now demolished). Many of the houses were in the vernacular style, as is attested by early photographs (see Figs. 20, 23, 27 & 30), their small size is indicated by the number of householders in Skerries in 1845, when 629 were enumerated on fifteen streets and lanes.

The sea-fishing industry, important in the later eighteenth century, declined throughout the nineteenth century and Skerries built up a fleet of ships, mainly schooners, for commercial trade around the coast. Limestone from the Milverton quarries close to Skerries was widely used as building stone in the nineteenth century, the last recorded shipment of limestone from Skerries was to Arklow as late as 1945. Seed potatoes from Fingal were shipped to Wales and the south of England. By the 1920s motor vessels requiring a berth deeper than Skerries could provide were taking over from sailboats, leading to a decline in maritime activity in Skerries.

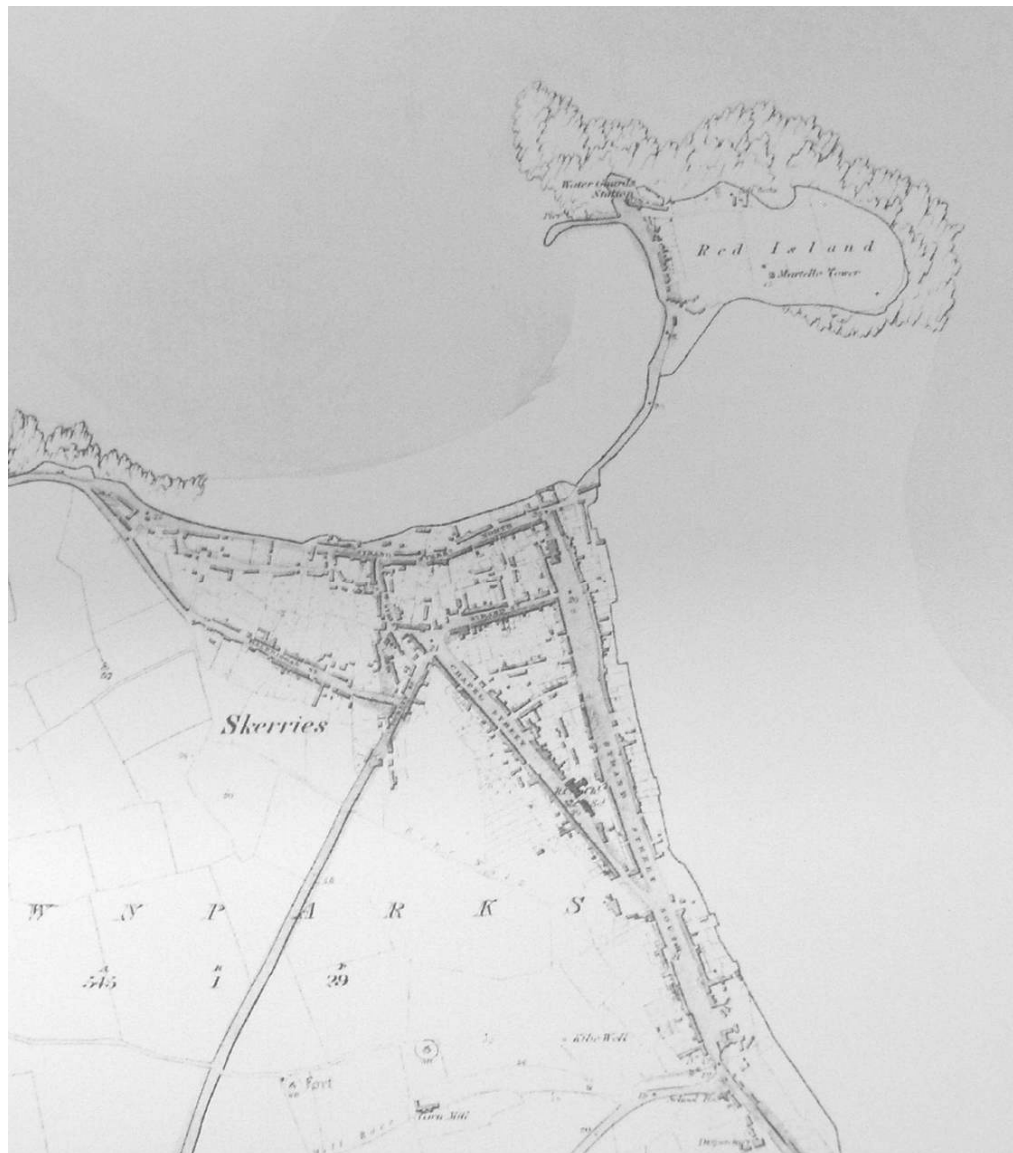


Fig. 4: Extract from 1st edition Ordnance Survey of 1838

One indication of the importance of tourism for Skerries in the late nineteenth and into the twentieth century is the number and variety of surviving historical postcards. In the period after the Second World War, a large holiday camp was developed on Red Island, which thrived up to the late 1960s. The rather utilitarian buildings were later swept away. Since the 1970s the population of Skerries has trebled as the town developed a role as a dormitory town for the capital. Housing estates were developed outside the town core with more recent off-street developments within the town.



Fig. 5: North Strand and Harbour

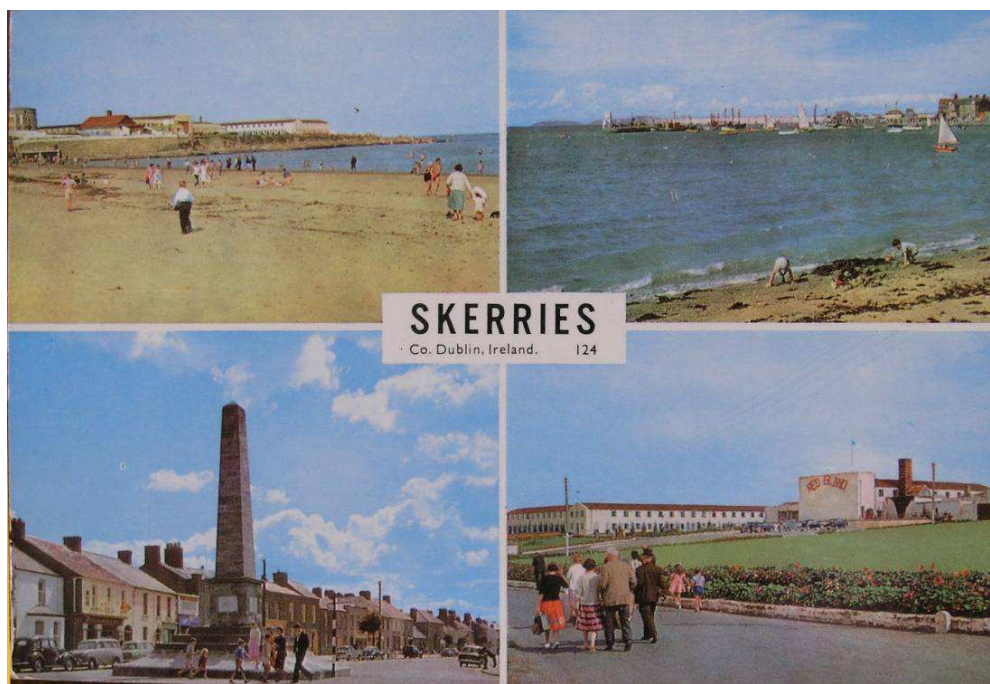


Fig. 6: Skerries Postcard from the 1960s

4.0 Schedule of Protected Structures & Recorded Monuments

A number of Protected Structures lie within the boundary of the Architectural Conservation Area. These are listed in the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) in the Fingal Development Plan 2005-2011 and are protected in their own right under Part IV of the Planning and Development Act 2000. They are as follows:

RPS No. 193	The Gladstone Inn, No. 16 The Cross
RPS No. 194	No. 19 Thomas Hand Street
RPS No. 195	No. 5 Convent Lane
RPS No. 196	The Post Office, No. 11 Strand Street
RPS No. 197	Hamilton Monument, Strand Street
RPS No. 198	No. 34 Strand Street
RPS No. 199	Wesleyan Methodist Church, Strand Street
RPS No. 200	Garda Station , No. 90 Strand Street
RPS No. 201	Carnegie Library, No. 80 Strand Street
RPS No. 202	St. Patrick's Church (RC), Strand Street
RPS No. 203	The Red Bank Restaurant, No. 7 Church Street
RPS No. 204	Nealon's Public House, No. 12 Church Street
RPS No. 205	No. 17 Church Street
RPS No. 206	No. 21 Church Street
RPS No. 207	No. 39 Church Street
RPS No. 208	No. 65 Church Street
RPS No. 209	The Coast Inn, No. 66-67 Church Street
RPS No. 210	No. 78 Church Street
RPS No. 211	No. 5 New Street
RPS No. 212	No. 17 Little Strand Street

Further protected structures lie outside the boundary of the ACA but have a positive impact on the character on the area. These are as follows.

RPS No. 183	Skerries Harbour, Red Island
RPS No. 184	Skerries Lifeboat Station
RPS No. 189	Martello Tower, Red Island
RPS No. 190	No. 12 Harbour Road

There are no known archaeological sites or features listed in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) within the boundaries of the Skerries ACA.

5.0 Development Plan Zoning & Objectives

The Fingal Development Plan 2005 – 2011 zones all the sites within the Skerries Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) with Objective SC: *To protect and enhance the special physical and social character of major suburban centres and provide and/or improve urban facilities.*

Part X of the Development Plan sets down the development strategy for Skerries as the consolidation of the town, the preservation and enhancement of its distinct character and existing urban form, the development of its commercial/retail service function, the retention and enhancement of existing amenities and the promotion of its role as a local tourist centre.

Nine planning objectives adopted for Skerries include aims to promote the town as a local service, social and cultural centre, and as a holiday resort, to promote the growth of suitable commercial activity in the town, to facilitate the fishing harbour, to encourage mixed-use development with a residential component in the town centre, to improve public transport services, to implement the Skerries Traffic Management Plan and to promote the development of marine sports and recreational facilities. Also included is the intention to prepare an Urban Centre Strategy and a study to improve the amenity of the harbour and peninsula area.

6.0 Description of Existing Built Environment

6.1 Street Pattern and Public Open Space

The street pattern within Skerries reflects the pattern of growth since the eighteenth century, if not earlier. The town developed from north to south, from Hoar Rock and Quay Street southwards on Church Street and later on Strand Street to the east. Formerly separate areas, the priory at Holmpatrick and the port or quay of Skerries, are now linked by the town centre.

Apart from the streets themselves, there are few open spaces within the ACA boundaries, the main public open spaces in the town being the seafronts of the north and south strands, the area of Red Rock, and Skerries Mills on the outskirts, all of which all of which lie outside the ACA. Strand Street has very wide footpaths for sections of its length lending a boulevard feel with the Hamilton Monument as an eye-catcher at one end. Church Street is narrower but has wide footpaths, the traffic is funnelled into small streets and lanes at the north end around The Square. In this area building lines have frontages directly onto the street and have narrow footpaths if any at all. Strand Street, Church Street and a part of Balbriggan Street are tree lined, but not the narrower streets and laneways.

A distinctive area of particular character is The Square which dates from the earlier development of the town. This small urban space bounded in part by vernacular buildings is of informal scattered layout and has an intimate village-like character. This distinctive character makes The Square one of the strong identifying features of the town of Skerries.



Fig. 7: Strand Street looking north towards the Hamilton Monument

6.2 Typical Materials and Street Furniture



Figs. 8, 9, 10: Pillar-box on Strand Street; Limestone kerb and cobbled drain on Church Street; Water pump on Balbriggan Street

A distinctive feature of the street surfaces in Skerries is the cobbled gutter which survives in a section of Church Street, north of the church stretching to the top of the street. This detail is a feature which would have been widespread in the town, and which enhances the special appeal of the Skerries ACA [marked on Annotated Maps Figs. 38, 39 & 40]. There are significant runs of limestone kerbing along stretches of Strand Street, Church Street, Harbour Road, Quay Street and Balbriggan Street. New Street retains limestone kerbing for its full length on both sides of the road. On Strand Street, near the Hamilton Monument the very wide footpath is dissected by a cut limestone channel/drain. Street furniture has survived less well. A water pump survives on Balbriggan Street and Church Street and there is a freestanding pillar box close to the Hamilton monument. More generally there are concrete footpaths and tarmacadamed road surfaces.

6.3 Socio-economic Functions

Despite its proximity to Dublin (27km) with by a good rail connection, Skerries is essentially a country town, traditionally serving an agricultural hinterland largely devoted to market-gardening. Although this agricultural activity has declined and the town has grown to become a dormitory town within the orbit of the capital, the town centre still retains its functional autonomy. The ACA still contains the mix of shops and uses characteristic of a traditional country town with specialist retailers such as grocers, butchers, hardware stores, newsagents, pharmacies, hairdressers, etc. alongside a supermarket of medium size, bank, cafés, restaurants, post office, churches, public library and Garda station, all contributing to make a vibrant, living-and-breathing town. A significant number of properties retain their original residential use, many of these being vernacular single-storey houses. This broad mix of

commercial and residential uses is an essential feature of the special character of Skerries. Although the town centre turns its back to the sea, the seaside location of Skerries plays a defining role in the character of the town, with a number of fishing vessels operating out of the harbour and the town also functions as a major seaside leisure centre. Consequently much of the economic activity of the town is related to service industries. Many traditional pubs within the ACA have therefore been considerably enlarged and extended into neighbouring properties. In addition new bars, restaurants and shops have emerged in recent decades, to serve both the increased indigenous population and the tourist industry. Although they contribute to the economic buoyancy of the town, some of these functions can generate an increase in anti-social behaviour and can alter the traditional balance and special character of the town.

6.4 Built Fabric

Due to the large area and the variety of scales of streets within the Skerries ACA there is a considerable diversity of building types and materials. Up to the fairly recent past Skerries was noted for the large number of vernacular buildings, notably thatched single-storey houses. While the thatch has mostly disappeared, many of the vernacular houses survive with replacement roofing materials, a projecting windbreak lobby entrance being a tell-tale sign. The intermingling in the streetscapes of vernacular buildings with taller houses and more formal architecture is a defining element of the special architectural character of Skerries.



Fig. 11. Little Strand Street: Typical intermingling of single-storey vernacular and more formal two-storey houses.

Strand Street is the longest street in the town and for convenience it is discussed here in two separate paragraphs.

6.4.1 Strand Street – from its southern end to the Carnegie Library.

Strand Street is a long and wide tree-lined street parallel to the South Strand. The street converges with Church Street at the southern extremity of the ACA, but continues with the name Holmpatrick outside the boundary. This southern section of the street is less formal than the more commercial northern part and is characterised by a mixture of simple single and two-storey buildings, primarily of render. Three traditional shopfronts survive on the eastern side close to the junction with Church Street (Nos. 61, 62A & 62B). On this eastern side the sea can be glimpsed at the end of several narrow laneways, lending a maritime character to the town and forming a significant aspect the ACA. The west side of the street has a remarkably wide footpath. Here several originally thatched single-storey houses (Nos. 68 to 71) set between taller slate-roofed houses exemplify the vernacular character of Skerries, despite their modern renders, tiled roofs and altered window openings. The Romanesque Catholic Church of 1936 by J.J. Robinson in rock-faced Wicklow granite and the grey limestone Arts-and-Crafts inspired Carnegie Library of 1911 by A. and W. Scott form a pair of significant free-standing buildings on the western side of Strand Street, their imposing presence further enhanced by the width of the pavement. The church site to either side is bounded by railings, gates and gate piers of unique design which are essential elements of the design ensemble of the church.



Figs. 12& 13. Nos. 62A & 62B Strand Street: Simple traditional shopfronts to eastern side



Fig. 14. Nos. 69 to 71 Strand Street: Vernacular houses compromised by tiled roofs and altered openings



Fig. 15. Nos. 76-77 Strand Street: House with a small shopfront, an example of the understated simplicity of the traditional street architecture in the ACA.



Fig. 16. Strand Street: Catholic Church (1936) and Carnegie Library (1911)

6.4.2 Strand Street - from the Carnegie Library to Harbour Road.

Two storey buildings predominate on the northern part of Strand Street suggesting more conscious planning in the late eighteenth/early nineteenth-century. Several substantially built stucco-fronted town houses have elliptical-headed door arches, the door architraves supported on wooden scrolled brackets. A good shopfront with deeply carved scrolled console brackets survives at no. 11. The Garda Station on the western side is well maintained and has a good limestone doorcase and six-over-six paned sliding sash windows and a well planted front garden. The gable-fronted Methodist Church of 1880 on the same side is in a plain Gothic-Revival style, built in hammer-dressed limestone courses with a pointed-arched doorway and a simple rose window, wrought-iron railings with Gothic detailing enclosing the site. The most prominent feature of the Strand Street is the Hamilton Monument occupying the northern end of the wide thoroughfare before the street narrows in its northernmost section. Built in 1863 at the junction with the narrower Thomas Hand Street, the monument is an obelisk on a rusticated plinth, raised on a stepped sub-plinth, and enclosed by wrought-iron railings. The view at the northern end of the narrow section of the street is closed by a pair of terraced two-storey houses with rock-cut limestone quoins on Harbour Road, at one side North Strand beach can be glimpsed. The lanes off Strand Street leading to South Strand, Heeney's Lane, Fair's Lane, Callaghan's Lane, Manning's Opening, all provide important views of the sea and islands. These views are a key feature of the maritime character of Skerries.



Fig. 17. Strand Street: Garda Station and Methodist Church (1880)

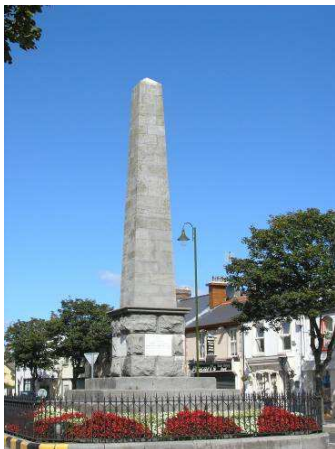


Fig 18. Hamilton Monument



Fig 19. Strand Street, eastern side



Fig 20. Strand Street in an early photograph looking south, showing characteristic mixture of two-storey formal houses, some with shop fronts, and thatched single storey vernacular houses.



Fig. 21. Nos. 1 and 2 Church Street seen from the western part of Thomas Hand Street

6.4.3 Church Street and Chapel Lane

Older than Strand Street, Church Street is of more formal character. Here the more substantial two-storey houses, facing either directly onto the street or behind railings, are again interspersed with previously thatched single-storey cottages. The wide pavements retain sections of cobbled drains in addition to limestone kerbing, adding historic texture to the urban environment. The late 19th century former Munster and Leinster Bank (No. 7 Church St) at the corner to Convent Lane, is a features of particular architectural quality, composed of a rendered ground floor with red brick upper floors and lucarne windows. The plainly rendered convent building (No. 18) on the eastern side set back from the street behind a garden wall topped with quartz, has a steeply gabled brick and cut-limestone porch. In the southern part the freestanding church belfry of hewn limestone, which was built in 1884 as an addition to the earlier 1823 church (since replaced by the 1933 Romanesque-style building) stands prominently at the eastern side of the street and acts as an eye-catcher enhancing the historic character of the street. Several good quality shop and pub fronts add richness to the nineteenth-century character of the town, among them Nealons (No. 12), Jonnie Bananas (No. 65), The Coast Inn (Nos. 66 & 67) and Present Company shop front (No. 21a). The west side of Church Street terminates with the coursed limestone garden wall of the large early nineteenth-century Sea Park house (No. 39). The brick faced corner shop at the junction of Church and Strand Streets is a reminder that this material was sparingly used in Skerries where limestone was readily available, its use was largely confined to chimney stacks and to window and door openings which were rendered when built. Between these more formally designed buildings are several vernacular single and low two-storey buildings, several with windbreak lobbies, and one at the north end of the street is thatched. The low two-storey buildings (Nos. 75 & 76) opposite the former bank, with steeply pitched roofs are likely to be among the earliest buildings on Church Street, possibly dating to the 18th century. Closing off the view on Church Street to the north at the junction of Thomas Hand Street and The Square are two good shopfronts, those of Coco C (38 The Square) and Out of the Blue (36a The Square). Outside the ACA to the south a uniform terrace at 4-7 Holmpatrick consisting of two pairs of houses terminates the view from Church Street making a significant contribution to the character of the ACA, though located outside it. The four houses have small front gardens and unpainted facades with raised quoins, corniced window architraves and dentilled entablatures over recessed entrances, which lend a formality to their appearance, the garden walls crenellated with pyramidal stepped gate pier caps.



Fig. 22. Church Street: Two-storey and single storey houses are typical of the Skerries streetscape.



Fig 23. Church Street in an historic photograph looking north with the 1830s Catholic Church, 1884 belfry, and the former school in foreground.



Fig. 24. Church Street, Convent with porch and boundary wall



Fig. 25. Nos. 73 to 76 Church Street: Low two-storey houses and plain dormer treatment to the north side.



Fig 26. East side of Holmpatrick from Church Street looking outside the ACA.



Fig 27. Church Street. Former Munster & Leinster Bank, now the Red Bank Restaurant

6.4.4 Convent Lane, Little Strand Street.

These streets running between Church and Strand Streets have the typical intermixture of small groups of single-storey houses between larger two-storey ones. Many vernacular houses survive on Little Strand Street, and one of the two remaining on Convent Lane, Nos. 5 and 9, is thatched and has original fenestration (No. 5). The two-storey houses are either cement-rendered or of stucco, raised quoins on the corners lending architectural formality.



Fig 24. Vernacular thatched house at 5 Convent Lane



Fig 25. House at 11 Little Strand Street

6.4.5 Thomas Hand Street and The Cross

Opening off this street to the north is The Cross with the very fine front to the Gladstone Inn displaying high quality stucco work and scrolled and foliated brackets supporting the nameboard. To the east of the junction of Thomas Hand Street and The Square are two single-storey vernacular buildings set at a right angle to each other, Nos. 18 and 19 containing two dwellings and retaining its thatch, and No. 20 having a typical hearth-lobby entrance arrangement. Another modern thatched three-bay house, O'Leary's Guesthouse, faces onto The Square. Across the Square the Thomas Hand Street veers to the south west. A pair of early nineteenth-century two-storey houses have harled fronts, on a limestone plinth course and limestone steps, indicating that they originally opened directly onto the street. Diagonally opposite a lower two-storey house with harled finish has a windbreak door entrance, a feature of vernacular houses. At the junction with New Street is a further pair of vernacular houses, one having a windbreak. Opposite these a pair of two-storey cement-rendered houses have hammer dressed quoins and a row of corbels supporting the gutter. Elements of this building style are also found on Strand Street and Harbour Road.



Fig 26. The Gladstone Inn, The Cross



Fig 27. Thomas Hand Street as seen in an old postcard (c. 1950).



Fig 28. Thomas Hand Street, nos. 18-19 and 20, near junction with Church Street



Fig 28. 14 and 15 Thomas Hand Street, early 19th century houses, one with historic windows

6.4.6 New Street and Beau Piers Lane

New Street is a later nineteenth-century street developed by the Hamilton estate. Here the slate-roofed cottages of the opposing terraces follow the style of vernacular cottages, using a variety of renders. No. 5 stands out with in particular, a single-storey house having door and window surrounds of Roman cement with intricate classical detailing, the work of the plaster craftsman Harry Maloney.



Fig 29. New Street.



Fig 29. No. 5 New Street.

6.4.7 Balbriggan Street

Balbriggan Street begins at a T-junction from Thomas Hand Street and only this eastern part lies within the ACA. The south side of the street has undergone much new development, which has detracted from its essential vernacular quality. Exceptions are Grimes Bros hardware and, adjoining it, a low two-storey house with windbreak lobby and harled finish. The north side of the street is more intact, its character enriched by an almost continuous run of limestone kerbing and the only surviving water pump in the ACA. The houses at the east end of the street are predominately two-storey, suggesting more formal planning here as is also seen at the north end of Strand Street. Beyond the two-storey terraced houses, soon after Dunne's pub, are single storey formerly thatched houses. Early twentieth-century postcards suggest that the south side

of the street was less formally planned with a majority of single storey and low two-storey vernacular houses. An urban farm survived here until recent times. A cobbled drain once ran along this side of the street, underlining the importance of the surviving cobbled drain on Church Street.



Fig 30. Balbriggan Street as seen in a Lawrence Collection photo of c. 1900.

6.4.8 Quay Street, incl. Hoar Rock and Harbour Road

At the east end of Quay Street marking the beginning of Harbour Road, a pair of rendered two-storey houses with hammer dressed limestone quoins occupy a prominent position, terminating the view at the narrow north end of Strand Street. From here Quay Street runs to the west, the houses on the north side backing onto North Strand. There are taller two-storey houses at the eastern end, less regularly aligned houses face towards Hoar Rock where the bi-forked Square intersects with Quay Street creating an island of houses. No. 28 Quay Street, at the junction with one side of The Square, is a two-storey house with immensely thick walls and very steep gable, suggesting a medieval or very early modern date. Limestone kerbing which begins in front of No. 28 is practically continuous along this side of the road to the junction with Strand Street.



Fig 31. Quay Street, closing off Strand Street



Fig 32. No. 15 Quay Street.



Fig 33. No. 7 Quay Street.



Fig 34. Door surround on Quay Street.

6.4.9 The Square

The Square is one of the oldest parts of the Skerries ACA and retains a maritime village character whose informal nature distinguishes it from more formally laid out streets in the ACA. This area extending to Hoar Rock and parts of Quay Street is characterised by narrow lanes and winding streets opening into small intimate urban spaces. The street pattern echos those recorded on Rocque's 1756 map, giving the sense of informal planning typical of the period, recorded in many eighteenth and early nineteenth-century antiquarian sketches. Leading off to the north at the junction of Thomas Hand Street and Church Street are two very fine shop-fronts, that of Coco C at No. 38 and Out of the Blue at 36a. At the junction where the road forks is a substantial two-storey rendered house, windows set well away from the corners, a limestone plinth and door step and substantial rendered stacks on the gables. Vernacular houses in the Square have windbreaks, a low two-storey house on Hoar Rock has early fenestration.



Fig 35. Altered houses at 9 and 10 The Square



Fig 36. Outbuilding on east side of The Square

6.5 Views

The flat nature of the terrain within the ACA precludes any vantage points affording panoramic views over the town or harbour. A view from Harbour Road encompasses the harbour, the pier and the Martello tower on Red Island. At the west end of Quay Street there are open views of North Strand and the coast towards Balbriggan. More generally however there are intriguing glimpses of sand and sea and offshore islands at the ends of laneways leading off Strand Street and Quay Street onto South and North Strands respectively.



Fig 37. Junction of The Square, Thomas Hand Street and Church Street

The other views within the ACA in Skerries are provided by the streetscapes. The impressive width of Stand Street, deliberately planned, provides long vistas both north and south, with the striking Hamilton Monument closing off the north end. This tree-lined avenue with tall lamp standards is further enhanced by the absence of electricity and telephone poles and cables. From the north end the view south is punctuated by the monumentality of Robinson's Catholic Church.

Looking north on Church Street to the junction with Thomas Hand Street and The Square provides an intriguing contrast of formal streetscape and the diaphanous nature of the plot lines leading into the older quarter of Skerries. In The Square and leading off into Hoar Rock and onto Quay Street and in The Cross the areas are characterised by narrow lanes and winding streets opening into small intimate urban spaces.

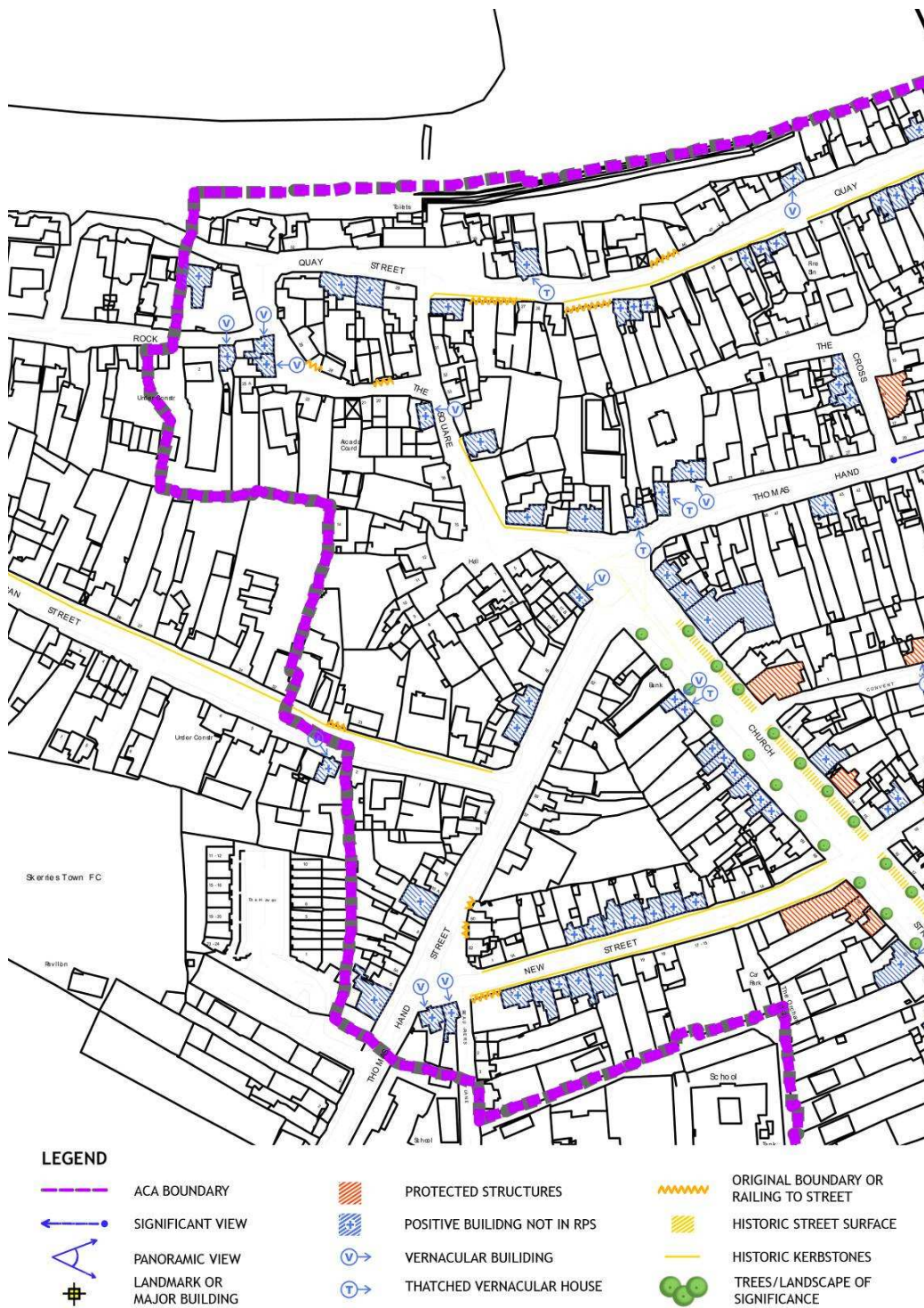


Fig 38. Annotated map showing significant features of Skerries ACA, Western part

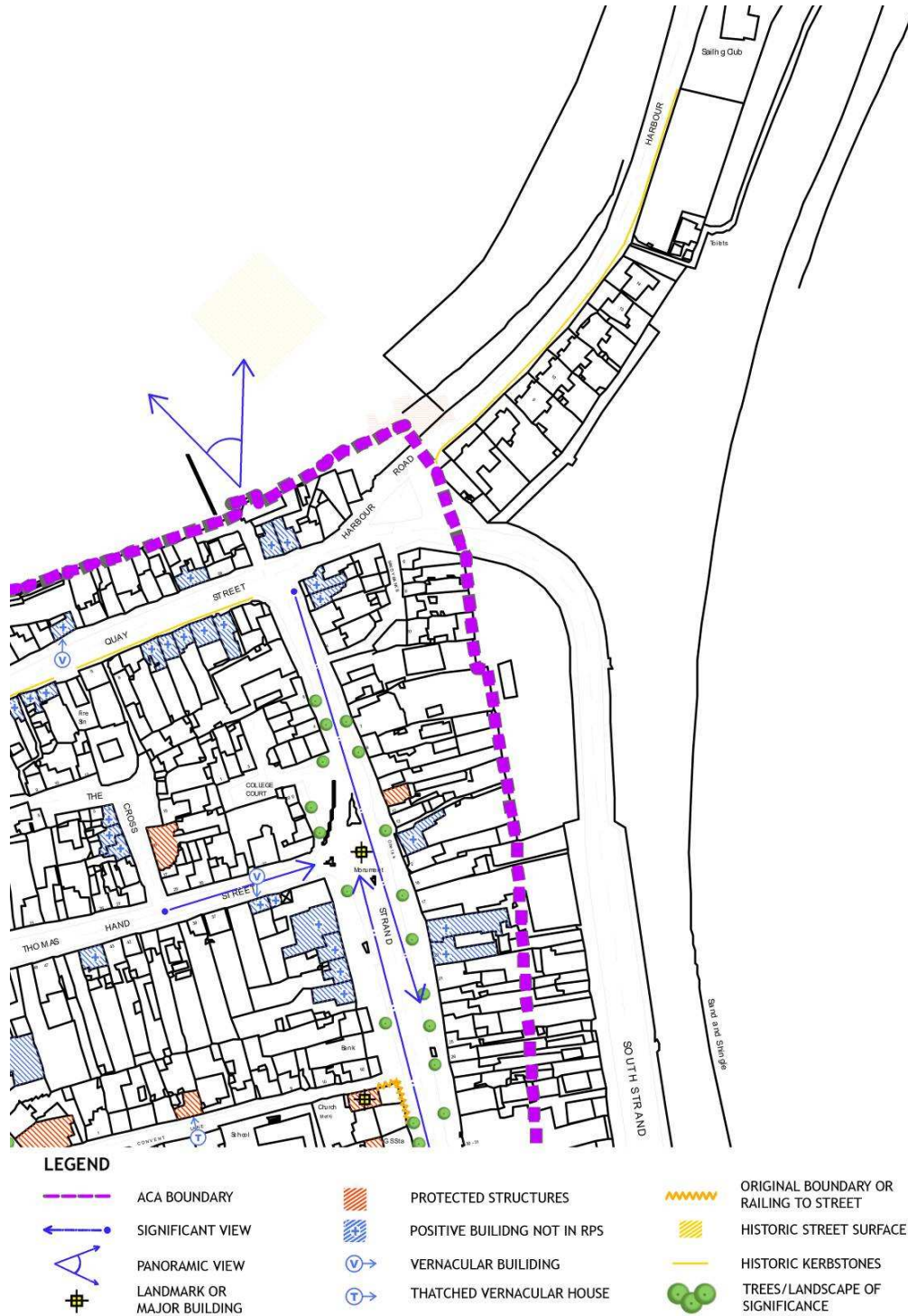


Fig 39. Annotated map showing significant features of Skerries ACA, North-Eastern part



Fig 40. Annotated map showing significant features of Skerries ACA, South-Eastern part

[Note: The above three separate sections of the annotated map are combined into one map at the very end of this document]

7.0 Summary of Special Character

There are a number of interrelated elements which contribute to the special character of Skerries. These include the flat nature of the terrain in the town and the vistas and glimpses of the sea and off-shore islands. In addition the juxtaposition of formal planning on Church Street and Strand Street with more informal plot boundaries and house groupings around The Square and The Cross and the west end of Quay Street are a defining characteristic. Another feature is the numerous winding laneways linking various streets, providing both access to the rear of larger street-fronted plots and having house fronts in their own right.

Even in the more formally planned streets there is an enlivening mixture, peculiar to Skerries, of two-storey houses having formal features such as doorcases, quoins, railings and steps interspersed with formerly thatched vernacular houses, generally single-storey, many of them retaining traditional windbreak porches. This mixture of house types and the formal and informal plot lines constitutes an essential defining feature the special character of the Skerries ACA.

The street pattern in The Square, the west end of Quay Street, Hoar Rock and The Cross, all at the north end of the town, are extremely attractive in their non-linearity and incident.



Fig 41. Hoar Rock and Quay Street junction

The spread of purpose-designed architecture across the town further contributes to its special character, demonstrating the aspiration of Skerries to be more than a single street town. Examples in Church Street are the tower of the Catholic Church and the Munster and Leinster Bank, now the Red Bank Restaurant. Strand Street has the Methodist Church (1880), the Hamilton

Monument (1863), the Carnegie Library (1911) and the Catholic church, by J.J. Robinson, built in 1936 on a monumental scale. The tall nave and aisle of the church stretching the full width of the plot between Church Street and Strand Street and the columnar screen in front of Strand Street entrance all enhance the character of the ACA.

Key elements of the special character of Skerries are the historic shop and pub fronts on Strand Street, Church Street, Thomas Hand Street and at the Cross. Good carpentry skills are also displayed in timber doorcases with scroll brackets supporting the architraves. Character-defining materials include a variety of renders including lime render, Roman cement, and stucco work on door and window architraves with raised quoins and in some cases rock-cut quoins. A particular local skill was the use of classical detailing in Roman Cement work.

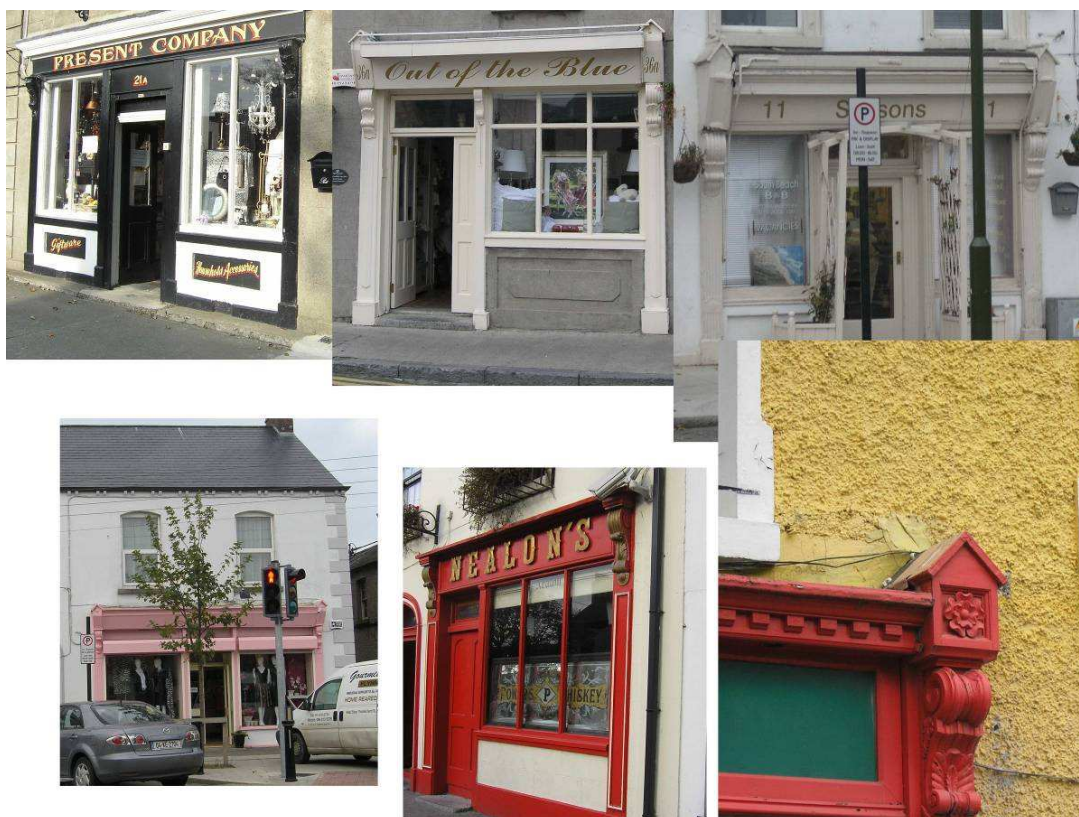


Fig 42. Skerries Shop and Pub fronts

Formerly a strong distinguishing feature, but now extremely rare in Fingal, is the cobbled drain on Church Street, formed of round stones possibly collected from the strand, an important survival of a detail which once extended along Balbriggan Street, Strand Street and Thomas Hand Street. Also important to the historic character and architectural richness of the Skerries, are the surviving runs of limestone kerbing which survive in part throughout the ACA.

8.0 Implications for Planning and Development

The objective of Architectural Conservation Area designation is to protect the special character of an area through the careful control and positive management of change of the built environment. The Planning & Development Act 2000 requires that planning permission be obtained for all development works except for those deemed to be exempted development, which Section 4(1)(h) of the Act defines as follows:

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 the neighbouring structures.

With regard to Architectural Conservation Areas, it is important to note that works, which would not under normal circumstances be inconsistent with the character of an area, may affect the particular character of an ACA and would therefore not be exempt. Section 82(1) and (2) of the Act defines exempted development in the context of an ACA:

(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 architectural conservation area, 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.

Assigning ACA status to a streetscape, cluster of buildings, or a town or village core therefore results in considerable restrictions on works to the exteriors of structures within the boundary of the ACA. Planning permission is required for any new build works to visible sides of buildings or for changes to original materials, such as windows, wall finishes, boundary walls, roof coverings etc. New infill development and alterations to existing structures are subject to planning permission and only proposals which respect or enhance the special character of the area can be granted permission.

More detailed direction is given in the following section on the type of works that will or will not require planning permission.

Protected structures: Planning permission is required for all works that would materially affect the character of a protected structure, or any element of the structure including its curtilage, which contributes to its special character. Works to a protected structure that constitute essential repairs or maintenance require a declaration from Fingal County Council under Section 57 of the Planning & Development Act 2000. A declaration issued under this section sets out the type of works the Planning Authority considers would or would not affect the character of a structure or any elements which contribute to its special interest.

Non-protected structures: Owners and occupiers of non-protected structures located within the Architectural Conservation Area of Skerries should be aware that works, which in the opinion of the Planning Authority would materially affect the character of the Architectural Conservation Area will require specific grant of planning permission under Section 82(1) of the Planning & Development Act 2000.

Public Domain: Agencies and service-providers carrying out works to the public realm e.g. footpaths, planting, street furniture, parking schemes, public lighting, etc., are required to consider the special character of the area as identified in this document, and should consult with the Planning Department and Conservation Officer of Fingal County Council.

8.1 Works Requiring Planning Permission

8.1.1 External Walls

Removal of Render: The majority of structures in Skerries are rendered with only a few stone-faced or brick-finished buildings. These rendered buildings are key contributors to the distinctive architectural character of Skerries. There has been an unfortunate tendency to strip the render in several cases in Skerries, to expose rubble stonework or brickwork, and point the masonry exposed masonry with hard sand-cement mortar. Apart from damaging the authentic character of the town the loss of external render removes a water-resisting surface that protects the building from decay. This type of work would be deemed unacceptable and where render has been removed in the past the restoration of suitable render will be encouraged.

Pointing: Renewal of pointing to facades of exposed brick or stone can substantially alter the appearance of a building. Such work must retain intact historic pointing mortar, and care must be taken to use the correct material and detail. This work will generally require planning permission, unless carried out in consultation with the Conservation Officer.

Painting: Many structures within the ACA have a render finish that was always intended to remain unpainted. Such renders add to the aged patina of the conservation area and should never be painted over. Similarly, structures originally constructed with exposed cut-stone or brick were not intended to be painted and removal of paint can damage the external surface of the material. Painted finishes may be visually acceptable for certain buildings, however the use of modern paints can have a detrimental effect on historic buildings by trapping moisture in the building causing dampness and decay. For this reason any external paints used in historic buildings must be breathable.

Cleaning: Abrasive cleaning methods such as sandblasting damage the external surface of natural building materials. They often remove the hand-tooled surface from stonework or the protective fired surface from bricks, leading to porosity and harmful water ingress. Generally sandblasting of external walls is not advised on historic buildings. Other non-abrasive cleaning methods may be appropriate, but these must be non-destructive and must preserve the aged appearance of historic buildings. Cleaning measures will always require planning permission or consultation with the Conservation Officer.

External Cladding: Historic buildings in Fingal tend to have a rendered finish. The alteration of the original finish by cladding external walls with stone or timber is generally not acceptable on historic buildings within the ACA. Original historic external finishes must always be retained. Any

proposal for the alteration of the existing finishes will require planning permission and changes, which affect the special character of the ACA will not be acceptable. However, the addition of cladding to more modern structures may be considered, but only in consultation with the Conservation Officer and area planner.

8.1.2 Roofs

Roofing Materials: The removal of the original roofing material, ridge tiles, chimneys, bargeboards, eaves details, cast iron gutters and downpipes, and their replacement with modern materials can seriously damage the character of the ACA. Original coverings and elements can generally be repaired and reused and should always be retained as they are essential to the character of the area. Where original roofing materials have been lost, replacement with historically correct materials will be encouraged. Materials used in repairs should also be historically correct to enhance the character of the ACA.

Roof pitch: Many of the streetscapes within the ACA boundary consist of terraces of houses with similar roof pitches, heights, etc. The alteration of the profile of just one structure not only affects the character of that building but can have an impact on a number of adjoining structures. Changes to the angle, ridge height, eaves level or span of roofs in general would not be deemed acceptable within the ACA.

Roof Lights: The installation of roof lights is only acceptable on hidden roof pitches, as they can fundamentally alter the visual character of the streetscape.

Dormer Windows: There is no tradition of dormer windows to front elevations within the Skerries ACA, and their increased proliferation fundamentally changes the special character of the town. Dormers are therefore only acceptable on hidden pitches or in very exceptional circumstances on front elevations. One or two structures have small traditional lucarnes (attic windows flush to the face of the building rather than set on the roof slope) that are more in keeping with the character of the area. These are very simply treated without projecting eaves or verge and without fascias or bargeboards. Such simple forms should be the model for successful dormer design, but are only acceptable where they complement the character of the area and of the building in which they are set.



Fig 43. Lucarne detail on Church Street

Satellite antenna, TV aerials and other communications devices: The addition of such installations to the front elevations or roofs of structures within the ACA would be considered to have a negative impact on the character of the area. Satellite dishes should not be visible on the front elevation of buildings. Planning permission is required for the erection of a satellite dish on the front elevation of any property, whether is in an ACA or not. Less visible methods of TV reception, such as cable, should be used and where the existing aerials have become redundant they should be removed.

8.1.3 Windows & Doors

Alteration of Openings: Enlargement of window or door openings or the removal of stone sills or doorsteps can alter the prevailing proportions of the townscape, and result in incremental loss of historic materials on whose texture and authenticity the special character to the town relies. Any proposed change to openings would therefore require planning permission.

Replacement of Windows or External Doors: Original timber or metal windows, doors and fanlights are key features which enrich the character of the ACA. Examples of authentic historic fenestration and external doors are relatively rare in Skerries and their retention is therefore crucial to the preservation of the character of the ACA. Decayed timber sections can in most cases be repaired and cannot be accepted as a reason for replacement. Replacement of original windows and doors with modern artificial materials such as uPVC or aluminium has a particularly negative impact and will always be deemed unacceptable. Unfortunately, a large number of original windows and doors have already replaced. Where windows and doors have been altered

or replaced prior to ACA designation, the reinstatement of windows of correct historic design will be encouraged, and where planning applications are made for the buildings concerned such reinstatement may be made a condition of permission. Any alteration to windows or doors within the ACA requires planning permission

8.1.4 Vernacular Buildings

Traditional houses, often single-storey, built of simple materials in unpretentious style are an essential component determining the special character of the Skerries ACA. Most thatched roofs have long disappeared from the streetscape of Skerries, but vernacular forms are still strongly characteristic, now roofed with corrugated-iron sheeting or slate. In recent years the rate of attrition of vernacular houses has increased to the extent where the special character of Skerries is now under threat. Alterations to provide modern facilities must be carried out in sympathy with the historic value of these buildings. Alterations to increase the size of vernacular houses are not always appropriate and must be confined to the rears of houses. Reinstatement of traditional vernacular features such as thatch roofs, lime-washed external walls, timber sheeted doors and sash windows will be encouraged, but must conform to correct historic detail in form, material and technique. Demolition or replacement of single storey vernacular buildings and the raising of eaves levels, alterations of roof pitches or insertion of dormer windows can significantly change the character of vernacular buildings. Any such interventions would generally be deemed to be unacceptable to the Planning Authority. Only in exceptional circumstances, in the context of an agreed overall design approach relating to any individual of combined redevelopment and which would result in no adverse impact on the special character of the ACA, can these interventions be considered appropriate by the Planning Authority.

8.1.5 Commercial Frontages

Traditional Shopfronts: There are several fine traditional shopfronts, such as: 'Coco C', No. 38 The Square; 'Out of the Blue', No. 36a The Square; 'Present Company', No. 21a Church Street; 'Seasons' (formerly the Post Office), No. 11 Strand Street; 'Kingstons', No. 61 Strand Street, and two other shopfronts on Strand Street. Certain pub-fronts are also notable, such as; 'The Gladstone Inn', No. 16 The Cross; 'Nealons', No. 12 Church Street; 'Johnny Babanas' No. 65 Church Street; 'The Coast Inn', No. 66-67 Church Street; and 'The Bus Bar', No. 98 Strand Street. Some of these are Protected Structures. All historic shop and pub-fronts should be retained as they are a strong contributing factor to the special character of Skerries. Any proposed alteration to traditional shopfronts will require planning permission. Traditional shopfronts often retain historic painted lettering, sometimes beneath later paint layers. Repainting or stripping of paint

from traditional shopfronts should therefore only be carried out in consultation with the Conservation Officer.

Alterations to Existing Shopfronts and Signage: Existing shopfront or pubfront signage fascias may cover earlier fascias beneath, which are often fine examples of traditional sign writing. Where such concealed features are discovered they must always be retained. If it is not appropriate to leave such signs exposed, new signage should be placed over it retaining the historic sign in situ and taking care to avoid damage. Whilst planning permission is required for any alteration to commercial frontages, whether within an ACA or not, applications for alterations within the ACA boundaries will also be assessed in the impact of the proposed design on surrounding structures and the special character of the ACA, having regard to scale, proportions, materials and detailing.

New Shopfronts: New frontages should never obscure architectural details of the original building such as sills, stringcourses, windows, doorways, etc. As for existing shopfronts, applications within the ACA boundaries will be assessed in the impact of the proposed design on the special character of the ACA, having regard to scale, proportions, materials and detailing. This does not preclude good modern design, and well-considered design solutions will be favoured over poorly detailed pastiche, which can devalue the authentic quality of the ACA.

Extended Commercial Frontages: Shopfronts spanning more than one property must have regard to the scale of shopfronts typical to Skerries. The design should respond to the width of individual properties, and where these are buildings of different style or scale this should be reflected in the design. Where internal connections are made between adjoining buildings, an active function must be ensured to all the structures, to avoid dead or underused street frontages.

New signage: Care should be taken that outdoor advertising does not detract from the special character of the ACA. In Skerries most signage consists either of flat fascia bands or surface-mounted lettering. Vertical projecting signs are not a characteristic of the town. New signage on structures in the ACA should be of an appropriate design to complement or enhance the structure, and should not be overtly dominant on the streetscape. Internally illuminated and plastic fascia boxes are therefore not acceptable. Standard corporate signage which would detract from the character of the ACA should be adapted in scale, colour or material colour to be more in keeping with the area. Proposed shopfront designs should follow general design guidance for shopfronts given in Appendix C of the Fingal Development Plan 2005-2011.

Shutters: The design of security shutters should complement rather than damage the character of the building and the ACA. Metal roller shutters with visible boxes are not acceptable within the

ACA boundaries. Shutter boxes should be positioned discreetly behind the fascia board, or sliding lattice grills be positioned behind the shop window. In some buildings the original internal timber shutters can be used for security purposes. Security shutters should not cover the whole commercial frontage but only the vulnerable glazed areas. Where appropriate to the type of shop or to the historic interior arrangement, security shutters should be placed behind the window display. Where external security screens are deemed acceptable they should be of transparent open chain-link grille design rather than solid or perforated shutters, which are not transparent when viewed obliquely. Shutters and grilles should be painted or finished in colour to complement the rest of the exterior.

Other External Elements to Commercial Premises: Canopies, awnings, enclosing ropes, canvas windbreaks, newspaper receptacles, vending machines, etc. can incrementally damage the special character of an ACA, and can only be accepted to a limited degree. Where canopies or awnings are deemed acceptable in the ACA, they should not be made of plastic but of heavy-duty cotton material with painted metal or timber hardware. Planning permission is required for external vending machines, ATMs, newspaper receptacles, storage bays, seating etc. Commercial premises should limit the clutter of temporary external retail furniture, such as external heaters, bins, menu-boards, etc. Such fittings are only acceptable where their design complements or enhances the character of the area.

External Seating: External seating should be of wood, painted metal or other material which enhances the visual appearance of the ACA. Plastic seating is not acceptable. Nor is plastic an acceptable material for the screens to enclose external seating areas. These screens may be made of heavy-duty cotton, glazed or metal panels and should not be used for advertising purposes.

8.1.6 New Build Interventions

Plot Size: New buildings should follow existing plot boundaries to retain the existing grain which is an important determining factor of the special character of the ACA. Where larger developments span across former individual boundaries, the original plot divisions should be articulated in the volume of the new buildings, both to the front and the rear.

Infill Developments: Designation as an ACA puts an onus on prospective developers to produce a very high standard of design, which respects or enhances the particular qualities of the area. New buildings should be designed to blend into the streetscape of Skerries using the materials, proportions and massing which determine its special urban character. Buildings should follow the eaves heights, roof pitches, chimney positions and building lines which predominate in the

street. Windows should be of matching proportions and alignments at head and cill, and the window-to-wall ratio should be derived from the historic buildings forming the context of the infill site. Contemporary interpretations should be favoured over pastiche in order to maintain the authenticity of the town.

Alternative Design Approach: New buildings which depart from the proportions and façade arrangements typical to Skerries must be of a very high standard of architectural design and must positively contribute to the character of the area. A character impact statement outlining the design concept and providing justification for the proposal in terms of its response to the scale, materials and grain of the ACA must accompany any such application.

Materials and Features: Only materials of good visual quality and durability may be used in new developments. Features which are not found amongst the historic buildings of the town should be avoided. These include projecting eaves, fascia and soffit boards, dormer windows and roof lights, standard-issue concrete sills or copings, top-hung casement windows or uPVC features of any kind. Roofs should be covered with natural slate, lead or other roofing which enhances the character of the ACA.

Extensions to Front or Side: All new additions to the front or visible elevations of structures within the ACA will require planning permission. Very careful consideration will be given to applications for extensions to the side or front of a structure within the ACA, as these can be particularly detrimental to the character of the area.

Rear Extensions: Additions to the rears of properties can often be visible, because of the network of streets and laneways. Rear extensions which may otherwise constitute exempted development may materially affect the external appearance of a building within the ACA and would in that case require planning permission. As the laneways are key elements of the special character of the Skerries ACA it is important that extensions should therefore be designed to minimise their visibility from any public laneway, they should be subsidiary to the main building, of an appropriate scale, and should follow the guidance for new infill buildings given above.

8.1.7 Amalgamation of Properties or Sites

Amalgamation of Structures: Joining buildings together into one functional unit requires planning permission irrespective of whether located in an ACA or not, unless this involves reversing the subdivision of what had originally been a single dwelling. Any proposals for the amalgamation of properties within the ACA will be considered with regard to the impact of the change on the

special character of the ACA, whether in its visual appearance or characteristic use. Original entrances should therefore remain in use to maintain an active and vibrant street frontage.

Amalgamation of Plots: Any proposed development of a group of sites within the ACA, especially at an increased density, must respect the scale, mass, height, and design of adjoining buildings and of the whole streetscape. This does not preclude modern design but should reflect the predominant grain of the town, characterised by narrower frontages of varying height. Developments which span across former individual plot boundaries, should be articulated in their volume and facades to reflect the historic plot divisions, both to the front and the rear, avoiding wide frontages of continuous height. However, the demolition of buildings that contribute positively to the character of the ACA is not acceptable and they should be retained and incorporated to form part of any proposed re-development.

8.1.8 Demolition

Demolition of any building with street frontage within the ACA, whether it is a Protected Structure or not, will require planning permission. Demolition will only be permitted where the structure makes no material contribution to the character or appearance of the area, or does not have the potential to do so through reinstatement of historic features. There will be a presumption in favour of retaining any structure that makes any positive contribution to the character of the ACA to avoid incremental loss or damage to its special character. Where permission is sought for demolition on the grounds of structural defects or failure, a condition report produced by a suitably qualified and experienced conservation professional, supported by photographs and drawings indicating locations of defects will be required. Justification on structural grounds for any demolition within the ACA must include details of repairs or remedial works normally used in similar circumstances demonstrating why they are not suitable in that instance. A full photographic record will be required before any demolition commences.

8.1.9 Boundary Treatments

The majority of structures within the Skerries ACA open directly onto the street but a considerable number are set back behind front gardens or have front or rear yards with a variety of boundary treatments. Other sites are bounded by historic walls or railings. Removal of historic railings, bollards, boundary walls, piers, gates, etc. always requires planning permission. Loss of such features can be seriously damaging to the character of the ACA and is therefore not acceptable. Reinstatement of lost features to correct historic detail will be encouraged by the planning authority, or required by condition where appropriate when granting permission for developments within the ACA.

8.1.10 External Lighting.

Proposals for the illumination at night of buildings and other features within the ACA requires the consent of Fingal County Council. The method of lighting, i.e. type of fitting, fixing method and type of light, must be specified by the applicant in seeking permission and should be designed so that it does not affect public lighting levels, result in light pollution, or negatively impact on other structures in the ACA.

8.1.11 Views

The key views out of the ACAs such as those of the sea at the end of laneways on Strand Street and Quay Street and the view of the harbour area from the west end of Harbour Road must be preserved and any works within the ACA should not adversely impact on or block these views.

8.2 Works Not Requiring Planning Permission

8.2.1 Maintenance & Repairs

Planning permission is not required for regular maintenance and necessary repairs works, such as to roofs, rainwater goods or windows within the ACA, as long as original materials are retained, and necessary replacement is strictly limited to damaged fabric, and made on a like-for-like basis.

8.2.2 Internal Alterations

ACA designation for Skerries does not prevent internal changes or re-arrangements to those buildings within the area that are not Protected Structures (see list of Protected Structures in earlier section of this document), as long as these changes do not impact on the exterior of the building.

8.2.3 Restoration of Character

Where original materials have been removed and replaced with modern or inappropriate alternatives, the restoration or reinstatement of these features will not require planning permission where the method, materials and details for the works have been agreed with the Conservation Officer.

8.3 Works To The Public Realm

In general, works to the public domain will be carried out by Fingal County Council or major utility and service providers, and may be exempt from planning permission. However, consultation with the Conservation Staff of Fingal County Council will be required before any works commence, to ensure that these works do not adversely affect, but rather enhance the character of the area.

8.3.1 Historic Paving & Street Furniture

Removal of original material and items, especially the cobbled gutters and stone kerbing along Church Street, Strand Street, Balbriggan Street, Quay Street, New Street etc. is not acceptable. If development works require temporary lifting or removal of paving material, paving units must be properly recorded, carefully removed & stored and reset following best conservation practice. Street furniture such as the cast-iron post-box on Strand Street and Church Street and the water pump on Balbriggan Street should be retained in-situ during any works.

The character of the ACA can be strengthened, enhanced or better appreciated if certain improvements are made to the urban environment. Areas that could benefit from improvement are detailed below.

8.3.2 Traffic & Parking Signage

Cluttered traffic signage and poles prevent proper appreciation of buildings and architectural spaces in the ACA. Fingal County Council will therefore seek to minimise clutter through the use of innovative integrated designs. Designs for lighting, signage and fittings such as parking meters, litter bins and bollards should be of a scale sympathetic to the character of the ACA. Where historic evidence of street furniture does not survive, new elements should be chosen to be low-key, and conspicuous arrays of lamp standards or bollards should be avoided.

The lanes off Strand Street leading to South Strand, Heeney's Lane, Fair's Lane, Callaghan's Lane and Manning's Opening, all provide important views of the sea and islands. The sea side of South Strand opposite these lanes should therefore be kept clear of any obstructions such as utilities, bins, electricity poles, traffic signage or lighting standards. Ideally these spaces should be kept free of parking to maximize the views out to the sea which are important features of the historic core of Skerries.

8.3.3. Planting & Landscaping

The design of open spaces should strive for the spatial simplicity visible in historic photos of Skerries. Good quality landscape design can enhance the setting of historic buildings and improve the appreciation of the urban spaces. Such designs should employ good quality natural materials which are already found in the streetscape, or are in sympathy with its scale and materials. The Conservation Office should be consulted in the design of any such schemes, to ensure that the impact on the historic character of the town is acceptable.

8.3.4. Management of Parking

Kerbing, line-painting and other means of delineation for parking, where necessary, should be designed in such a way that the surface quality of the open spaces in the ACA does not suffer when cars are absent. A high standard of landscape design should be employed and the Conservation Office should be consulted regarding the impact of proposed parking schemes on the special character of the area.

8.3.5. Wires And Distribution Poles

As noted above the architectural character of Strand Street benefits enormously from the removal of overhead electricity supply and telephone cables and placing these underground. The Council should facilitate and support any further initiatives to place overhead services underground within the historic ACA. The removal of redundant services from the facades of buildings should also be required of the utility companies.

NOTE:

Some of the works listed above require planning permission irrespective of whether they are located within an ACA or not, but are included to highlight the need for careful consideration of the design of the proposed works to ensure that they do not impact negatively on the character of the area. The guidance given above is not in itself a comprehensive list of all works, in all circumstances, that require planning permission, but identifies those works that would impact on the character of the ACA. Development works would still have to adhere to the general provisions of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2006 and Planning Regulations. The Area Planner and Conservation Officer of Fingal County Council can be consulted if there is any doubt as to whether planning permission is required or not.

**SKERRIES ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION AREA
STATEMENT OF CHARACTER**

October 2008

