

# DARTMOUTH SQUARE AND ENVIRONS

## ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION AREA (ACA)



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### 1.0 Introduction / Location

Dartmouth Square is located due south of Grand Parade and midway between Ranelagh Road and Lesson Street Upper, approximately 2km south of the city centre. The square comprises a central park, approximately 0.8 hectares (2 acres) in size surrounded by four streets, Dartmouth Square East, West, North and South, which are two-storey over basement red brick Victorian houses.

Dartmouth Square is one of a series of formal Victorian residential squares, which were laid out in Dublin in the nineteenth century. The landscaped central area, with its mature planting, provides a contrast to the surrounding terraces of Victorian houses (which are protected structures) and is a visually important element in the character of the area.

The relationship of the landscaped central park to the uniform red brick residential Victorian terraces forms an integral component of this architectural set piece.

As part of an initiative to retain this setting and to protect and enhance its unique character, Dublin City Council is proposing to designate Dartmouth Square as an Architectural Conservation Area. The boundaries of the ACA are delineated on the map below.



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### 2.0 Historical Context

Dartmouth Square was the last in the series of formal Georgian and Victorian squares to be developed in Dublin. St. Stephen's Green was the earliest, commencing in the late 17th century /early 18th century, and the longest in coming to fruition. Buildings took place around the Green in an ad-hoc manner. Plots were laid out around Parnell Square in the mid-eighteenth century, and Mountjoy Square, Merrion Square and Fitzwilliam Square were laid out in the late-eighteenth century. Unlike St. Stephen's Green, where plots were used for various purposes, in the later squares there were strict controls on building form and style to ensure uniformity.

The development of Dartmouth Square coincided with the movement of the middle class from the city to suburbs. Suburban growth generally commenced in Dublin as with many European cities from the beginning of the nineteenth century. The expansion of the middle class population together with the dereliction of the fabric of the city, precipitated by the Act of Union in 1801, and the distress and poor health of the city population were incentives to move to healthier surroundings. The suburban development of the Rathmines Township was carried out in the classical style. The roads were laid out in a formal manner and the houses built in the classical style that followed closely the earlier Georgian developers of Dublin. Developers of the private estates had a major responsibility for the classical extension of the city from the late seventeenth century. One of the main characteristics of these squares was the layout consisting of straight and wide streets providing vistas to distant features and landmarks.

The Victorians were strongly influenced by the earlier classical approach to design but adopted features from wider sources introducing less restrained and more varied styles.

Mountpleasant Square in Ranelagh was laid out in the early nineteenth century in the late Georgian period, and Dartmouth Square, laid out in the late nineteenth century, finishes the series of formal squares associated with residential development.



Dartmouth Square

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### 2.1 Historical Background to Dartmouth Square

This was the last nineteenth century square to be developed. The Darley Estate built the houses as part of the speculative development of part of the south side of the city.

From about mid nineteenth century, a single quite substantial house stood beside the canal at the end of what is now no. 1-17 Dartmouth Square (formerly Uxbridge Terrace). It may have been a nursery as there were plots adjoining it. Other than this, there appear to have been no other buildings on what is now Dartmouth Square until the late 1890's. The ordnance survey map of 1864 shows the area undeveloped, while the 1870 ordnance survey map shows the square laid out, but with the surrounding buildings not yet built. Though it is marked on the ordnance survey maps c. 1870, other maps in the Valuation Office for the same period show the east, west and south sides designated as 'pasture' lands and the central park and north side as 'tillage'. By the 1897 ordnance survey map, houses have been built on all sides, trees are evident around the exterior perimeter of the park.

Generally, at the time, when construction of residential squares or streets was under way the roads were laid out by one person and full time builders operated on a small scale, building just three or four houses at a time. Rathmines and Rathgar township were developed on partly speculative lines without a single controlling landlord. However Dartmouth Square was an exception as this was built by a single developer.

The area where Dartmouth Square is now was relatively low-lying with two streams crossing it. A small tributary of the River Swan, which started in the vicinity of Portobello, went eastward alongside the canal and on reaching Ranelagh changed course to diagonally cross the south-west corner of the square and continue down Lesson Street. Another mysterious stream with no name is shown meandering snake-like along the east side of the square. As the area was low-lying with two streams crossing this may account for the fact that it was the last area between Ranelagh and the canals to be developed.

According to the minutes of the Rathmines Urban District Council for 1896, the owner of the land, a Mr. Darley, 'offered the council a small piece of land as a scavenging station' (dump). Some years must have elapsed between the laying out of the square and the building of the houses, and this lapse of time suggests that the dump was used to raise the level of the low-lying land. Recent excavations (pre 2001) when Dublin City Council's Parks Department did extensive landscaping in the park unearthed, amongst other things, many bottles of different shapes and sizes, reinforcing the possibility that it may have been built up by dumping.

Uxbridge Terrace was the name given to the first terrace of houses, no. 1-17, built on the square, from Dartmouth Road to the Canal. The north and south sides followed and then the east side. Lastly, no.s 37-40b, originally called Dartmouth Villas, were built on the canal end of the east side.

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### 3.0 Description and Character Appraisal

Dartmouth Square is a rectangular square lined on all sides by houses. These are identical in design and are good examples of Dublin's Victorian residential architecture. The central open space which is divided off from the surrounding roads by railings and plinth is part of the composition of this residential Victorian square and forms an integral component of this architectural set-piece.

#### 3.1 Architectural Character

##### *Dartmouth Square*

The houses facing onto the square comprise terraced two-bay, two-storey over basement houses with redbrick facades on the two upper floors and rock-faced granite facing to basement level. The facades display decorative cornices of brick corbels, which support cast-iron rainwater goods. The houses facing the square have double span pitched slate roofs, which are hipped to terrace ends. The roofs are nearly all covered with natural slate, probably Blue Bangor but a number have been replaced with artificial slate. The redbrick chimneystacks are especially noteworthy displaying narrow recessed panels, string and cornice courses. The chimneystacks on the west side of Dartmouth Square still retain their attractive terracotta chimneypots. These houses were the first terrace of houses to be constructed on the square and were originally known as Uxbridge Terrace.



Dartmouth Square



Dartmouth Square

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The houses all display recessed porches, a common feature of late nineteenth century houses. The doors are set back within the porches and are flanked by sidelights, the upper half of which are glazed with a square-headed overlight, some of which are separated by glazing bars. The doors are largely intact and are generally composed of six vertical timber panels and they still retain original door furniture including doorknockers and letterboxes. The windows have segmental-headed openings to ground and first floor with square-headed openings elsewhere, all with granite cills. The windows were originally timber single-pane sash windows, with two-over-two timber sash windows to basement level and perhaps also to rear elevation. Most windows survive to the front elevation. A striking feature throughout is the monumental granite steps which lead up to the front doors. Door scrapers are found adjacent to the doorway.

The gardens are fronted by granite plinth walls surmounted by cast and wrought-iron railings with pedestrian gates, which are flanked by decorative arched cast and wrought-iron gateposts. Most of the railings survive with only one front site changed. The houses are all protected structures.



Detail of railings and granite plinth



Front elevation

The houses around the square have not been altered to any great extent and most of them retain their original period features and present an attractive façade of typical Victorian terraced housing. The houses are built in pairs in a terrace with recessed porches. This area does not appear to be an area of parking stress, which has meant that the vast majority of the front gardens are still intact. This significantly enhances the setting of the square and is an important aspect of the character of the conservation area.

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### *East Side of Dartmouth Square*

A short terrace of six houses is located between the canal and Dartmouth Square. Today the addresses are 37-40b Dartmouth Square East but originally these were called Dartmouth Villas and were the last houses to be built on the square. These houses are very different in construction style and scale to the rest of the houses facing onto Dartmouth Square. They are comprised of terraced, two-bay, two-storey redbrick houses, built c. 1890 with gable-fronted full height canted-bay windows. They display recessed square-headed porches with most retaining their original timber panelled and glazed doors. Two houses still retain their original timber casement windows. Again granite is used to great effect on cills, lintels and plinth walls.



Terrace of six houses

### *Dartmouth Road*

Number 5 Dartmouth Road is located within the Architectural Conservation Area for Dartmouth Square. Number 5 is an imposing redbrick house which displays yellow brick detailing. Number 5 (along with numbers 1-4) was constructed in the 1880's in a similar style and scale to the nearby houses on Leeson Park. Number 5 is a protected structure.

### *Cambridge Terrace*

Numbers 10 and 11 Cambridge Terrace fall within the Architectural Conservation Area for Dartmouth Square. These redbrick houses are also Victorian in date and link Northbrook Road to Dartmouth Square. They are both protected structures.



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### 3.2 Landscape Character

Dartmouth Square Park is a traditional Victorian park characterised by mature trees and areas of grass. Inside, the grassed area is sub-divided into two parts by a central walkway, hedging and a pergola structure. A pedestrian path and hedging also cordons off the mature trees and shrub borders running around its perimeter from the grassed area. These trees have received maintenance over the years with lower branches being removed to create clearance over pedestrian footpaths to create views in and out of the park. There are four pedestrian gates that would have provided access for the residents of the square. The Park is rectangular in shape and is enclosed by original low plinth wall with wrought-iron railings. It is surrounded on all sides by the Victorian residential terraces of Dartmouth Square that face onto it. The mature trees on this square provide a high amenity value to the leafy ambience and setting of Victorian residential square.



Landscape character



Landscape character



Landscape character

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Although strongly urban in character, Dartmouth Square provides a surprising variety of tree species. These trees have grown up within linear tree belts along the perimeter railings, and, due to their close-knit growing environment, many are reliant on one another for support/shelter. The central garden area comprises of a mixture of Lime, Sycamore, Black Walnut and Turkey Oak trees, which together with hedges line the perimeter of the garden, enclosing the central grassed area and reinforcing the gardens symmetrical layout. Mature trees also line the adjacent public footpaths and complement the formal arrangement of trees within the central garden. This layout forms a key element in the appearance and streetscape of this architectural set piece and the linear form of the mature vegetation complements the uniform residential terraces.



Urban character

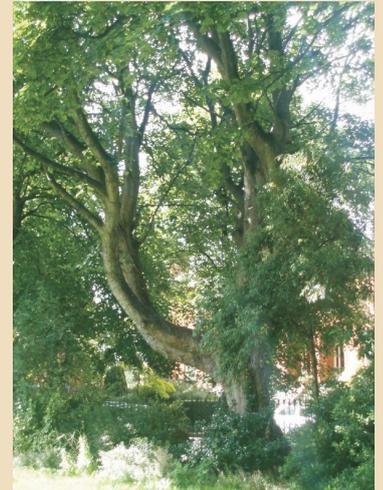
The central garden area and the mature street trees also provide an attractive aspect for the surrounding terraces and help give the square a relatively peaceful atmosphere in an area surrounded by heavily trafficked routes, i.e. Lesson Street Upper, Ranelagh Road and Grand Parade. This enhances the sense of enclosure provided by the cul de sac nature of the square on three sides. The central area retains its private, enclosed character, created by dense belts of mature trees, low plinth wall and wrought-iron railings along all four sides of the boundary. The sylvan character of Dartmouth Square gives the area a secluded special character and a welcome peaceful feeling of separation from the urban bustle.



Urban character

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Landscape character

Dartmouth Square is also an integral component of the spatial structure of the urban parks and green chains throughout the city. The square, although a local park, is part of the urban forest which encompasses all trees in and close to urban areas, including trees in streets, gardens, parks, small woodlands, cemeteries and other open spaces.

It is recognised in Section 11.1.0 of the Development Plan 2005 – 2011 that open spaces, both private and public, provide for visual breaks and green chains throughout the city and provide a setting for natural vegetation and help to preserve wildlife habitats. In recent years the benefits of parks with mature trees, such as Dartmouth Square, in urban areas are becoming better understood and their benefits for healthy and sustainable city environment appreciated. These trees and woodlands are invaluable for a number of reasons; they provide wildlife habitats, screening, noise reduction, dust traps, storing of greenhouse gases, summer cooling, shelter, recreation and provide corridors to other wildlife areas. The square links city dwellers to the natural world and the changing rhythm of seasons. As for the natural environment, they add in a small but significant way to bio-diversity. Although rarely large enough to provide a substantial habitat, many squares are a sanctuary for wild life and form links in the ecological chain between large parks, small open spaces and back gardens.

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In conclusion therefore, the landscaping and vegetation in this residential Victorian square forms an integral component of this architectural set-piece. The importance of Dartmouth Square's landscape character is reflected in the form, layout and sense of enclosure provided by the mature vegetation and its relationship with the unified architectural treatment of the houses presenting a quiet and enclosed atmosphere. The mature trees within Dartmouth Square Park make a particularly significant contribution to the setting and character of the area and it is important that they are protected and maintained.

### 3.3 Pavement

The pavement in Dartmouth Square is largely composed of concrete although some sections of granite kerbstones still survive in places. Sections of original kerbstones are largely found at the corners of the square.



Granite kerbstones

### 3.4 Street Furniture

An attractive Victorian cast-iron pillar post box is located on the south side of the square and should be protected. The lamp standards around the square are late 20<sup>th</sup> century in date and are constructed of concrete.

The provision of furniture in central park area is minimal, consisting of several wooden benches, painted green with decorative wrought-iron armrests, and modern litterbins.



### 3.5 Summary Character Statement

This ACA is a quiet residential enclave just minutes from the city centre. It is located adjacent to the busy Grand Parade Road which runs alongside the Grand Canal and is not far from Leeson Street Upper and Ranelagh Road. The houses are laid out formally around Dartmouth Square and boast quality materials which are repeated throughout the square with its use of redbrick, granite and decorative cast and wrought-iron railings.

This square is significant it being the last square to be constructed as a formal residential square in Dublin.

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The square is characterised by its formal architecture and many mature trees, the form and fabric of the boundary plinths, railings and gates, and the Victorian terraces surrounding it. The houses looking onto it and adjacent to it are all protected structures, and the formal space created by the square contributes positively to the architectural group.

The character of the area is also defined by its natural setting. The mature trees and planting in the park, street and gardens contribute to the areas unique setting and provides an interesting and peaceful townscape.

#### **4.0 Character and special interest (under Planning and Development Act 2000)**

##### *Architectural:*

The area due to its form and layout has a sense of place and separateness. Its parkland setting is also special providing a peaceful oasis within the city.

##### *Architectural:*

The unity and consistency in architectural treatment of the structures surrounding the square is a good example of Victorian architecture and has remained little altered over the years. The quality of design is reflected in their protected status.

##### *Architectural:*

The high standard of design and materials used to the front boundaries to the houses.

##### *Architectural:*

The sylvan quality and leafy canopy provided by the general vegetation, planting and mature trees within the central enclosed square and on the surrounding streets.

##### *Historical:*

The Square is significant as one of the last in a series of formal Georgian and Victorian residential squares constructed in Dublin. It forms part of the tradition of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century formal squares associated with residential architecture for which Dublin is renowned.

#### **5.0 Building features which contribute to the character**

##### *Materials*

##### · *Roofs:*

Pitched slate roofs with no parapets are generally the norm around the square except for Cambridge Terrace. The roofs are generally double span and covered with Bangor Blue slates.

##### · *Rainwater Goods:*

Cast iron rainwater goods

##### · *Facades and boundary treatments:*

Redbrick walls to the upper levels of houses facing the square with granite rock-faced walls to basement level. Rubble stone granite walls also found to some rear and side boundary walls. Granite stone plinths surmounted by cast-iron and wrought-iron railings are found to all front gardens.

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- **Decorative details to facades:**  
Rock-faced granite walls, granite cills and lintels, granite plinth walls, redbrick cornices, stringcourses and panels. Number 5 Dartmouth Road displays yellow brick decorative detailing.
- **Windows:**  
There are a variety of openings found on Dartmouth Square. The houses facing the square display segmental-headed and square-headed window openings. Number 37-40b Dartmouth Square East, and, No. 5 Dartmouth Road, display full height canted-bay windows. Most of the windows have brick reveals. Timber sash single-pane and two-over-two timber sash windows is the most common window type with casement windows found at No. 37-40b Dartmouth Square.
- **Porches and doors:**  
Recessed doors are found all around Dartmouth Square with the exception of Cambridge Terrace. Timber door frames with sidelights and overlights are the norm with timber panelled (Dartmouth Square) and timber and glazed panelled doors (No 37-40b Dartmouth Square East).
- **Built form:**  
The houses are two-storey over basement / semi basement with access approach to ground floor by monumental steps.

### 6.0 Interventions which would detract from the character

- Removal of boundary walls including plinth walls and railings
- Insertion of new drive ways
- Replacement of natural slate roofs with artificial slate.
- Removal of original features and replacement with inappropriate modern replacements such as windows, doors, rainwater goods, railings etc.
- Removal of trees
- Removal of park setting

### 7.0 Policies and Management of Area

#### a. Existing Protection – Dublin City Development Plan 2005 – 2011

Dartmouth Square Park itself is zoned Z9 'To preserve, provide and improve recreational amenity and open space'. Generally, the only new development allowed in these areas, other than the amenity / recreational uses themselves are those associated with open space use.

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Dartmouth Square North, South and East are zoned Z2 'To protect and/or improve the amenities of residential conservation areas' in accordance with the provisions of the Dublin City Development Plan 2005 - 2011. The general objective of the Z2 'Residential Conservation' zoning is to protect structures or group of structures from unsuitable new developments or works that would have a negative impact on the amenity or architectural quality of the area'.

Dartmouth Square West is zoned Z1 'To protect, provide and improve residential amenities' in accordance with the provisions of the Dublin City Development Plan 2005 - 2011. The general objectives for primarily residential areas are to provide a measure of protection from unsuitable new development or certain developments that would threaten or be incompatible within overall residential function of the area.

All the buildings within Dartmouth Square, i.e. no.s 1 – 68 Dartmouth Square, no. 5 Dartmouth Road and 10 – 11 Cambridge Terrace are on Dublin City Council's Record of Protected Structures.

The northern section of Dartmouth Square that adjoins Grand Parade and the Grand Canal is designated a Conservation Area. This Conservation Area includes 15 – 17 Dartmouth Square West, the rear gardens of 18 – 36 Dartmouth Square North and 40 – 37 Dartmouth Square East.

As with most other formal squares, the boundary and the established trees associated with Dartmouth Square are not protected. The boundary includes low plinth walls, wrought iron railings and four pedestrian gates.

### **b. Policies for Architectural Conservation Area**

The purpose of an Architectural Conservation Area is to identify areas of special character and architectural interest and to manage change in such a way as to preserve that special character.

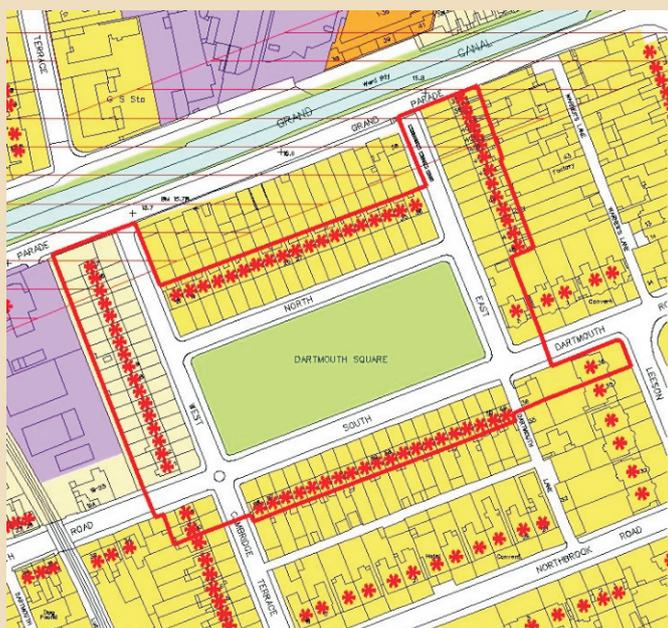
The aim is to provide a framework that will permit a degree of flexibility in terms of design consistent with the maintenance and improvement of the essential character of the ACA. To fulfill this aim all new development in the area of the ACA should be implemented and carried out in accordance with the following policies/objectives.

#### *7.1 Preserving the Character*

It is the overall policy of Dublin City Council to protect and conserve the character and setting of the ACA, as set out in this document.

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Zoning map 2005-2011

### 7.2 Tree Preservation Orders

It is recognized in this document that the mature trees, both within Dartmouth Square Park and on the public footpaths, are an integral component of this Victorian residential square and make a significant contribution to the setting of this architectural set-piece. It is therefore recommended that the City Council make provision for Tree Preservation Orders, in accordance with Section 204 of the Planning and Development, Act, 2000, in order to protect those mature trees, that are an integral component to the character of the area and which would merit protection.

### 7.3 Park Area

The central park area is to be maintained as an open space / garden occupied only by trees, shrubbery, paths and small structures associated with its open space garden use. The existing railings, gates and plinth wall are to be maintained

### 7.4 Reinstatement

It is the policy of Dublin City Council to encourage the reinstatement of features where the original and historic features have been lost or replaced. To this end the reinstatement works set out below will not require planning permission. To ensure that new features are appropriately detailed such works will normally require agreement with the Conservation Section of the Planning Department and an application for a Section 5 Declaration can be made. Such works will include:

- The replacement of later inappropriate windows with timber sash windows where appropriate, and timber casement windows where appropriate, to match the original samples which survive in each terrace – all to have a painted finish.
- The replacement of later inappropriate doors with painted timber panelled doors to match the original samples which survive in each terrace.
- The replacement of later inappropriate roof coverings with Bangor blue slates.
- Re-pointing and brick cleaning, has the potential to impact negatively on the character of this uniform terrace of Dartmouth Square. Owners should seek advise of the Conservation Section, Dublin City Council, prior to the carrying out of these works.

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### 7.5 Front Sites

The front garden/sites are in effect the public face of the private domain and how these are treated will ultimately determine the overall visual characteristics of the area. In Dartmouth Square, which is not an area of parking stress, the vast majority of front gardens and their front garden boundary treatment, including low plinth wall and wrought-iron railings are intact. This significantly enhances the setting of this Victorian terrace and adds to the character of this architectural conservation area.

It is considered that, in the case of Dartmouth Square, car parking to the front garden areas should be discouraged, as it would significantly detract from the visual amenity of the architectural conservation area.

### 7.6 Public Domain

Dublin City Council will endeavour to ensure that works to the public domain, such as works of environmental improvement, or of utilities improvements, are of the highest standards and do not detract from, nor add clutter to, the character of the area.

- a) Retention of historic kerb-stones  
Surviving historic kerb-stones around Dartmouth Square (largely found at the corners of the square) shall be preserved and retained in situ. This shall complement Policy H22 of the Dublin City Development Plan 2005 – 2011 which sets out to preserve, repair and retain historic streetscape and paving.
- b) Public Lighting  
Any new public lighting, whether reproduction or contemporary design, should be designed to complement and enhance the architectural character of the area.

### 7.7 Skyline Clutter

- a) New electrical and other wiring should be underground
- b) Redundant and unused wiring should be carefully removed.
- c) Satellite dishes and solar panels will not normally be permitted on the front elevations, front slopes, front chimneystacks or above the ridge line of buildings.
- d) All external fixtures to buildings, e.g. alarm boxes, should be located so as to minimize their visual impact.

### 7.8 Domestic Extensions

Domestic rear extensions, which are within the limits set out in the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001, and which are not visible from the public domain within the ACA would not affect materially the character of the Architectural Conservation Area and consequently would be considered to be exempted development. This does not apply to structures on the Record of Protected Structures.