

HANDOUT 1



Researching Historic Designed Landscapes for Local Listing

Historic Landscape Project – Southeast

LOCAL LISTS: Parks And Gardens Of Importance In Local Districts Or Boroughs

The national ‘Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Importance in England’

Historic parks and gardens, perhaps more so than buildings, are a fragile and finite resource: they can easily be damaged beyond repair or lost forever. Today there is a national ‘Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Importance in England’, compiled by English Heritage, which identifies sites of particular historic importance. Registered sites are now included within the ‘National Heritage List for England’ of all nationally-designated heritage assets and accessible on line at www.english-heritage.org.uk. The purpose of the Register is to raise awareness of their value with owners and managers and to safeguard their key features if change is contemplated.

The ‘Register’ comprises designed landscapes; it is concerned with their more permanent elements such as landform, built structures, walks and rides, water features, structural shrubberies, hedges and trees rather than ephemeral, shorter-lived plantings of herbaceous perennials, annuals, roses, and most shrubs. Sites comprise landscape parks and gardens, other planned open spaces such as town squares, public parks, cemeteries and hospital grounds.

The development of local lists of parks and gardens

Over the last few years, through its advisory body on the heritage, English Heritage (EH), the government has been in discussion with local authorities over developing the concept of lists of locally important heritage assets. These are defined as sites that are important at a local rather than national level. Planning authorities are now advised to ‘consider...compiling a ‘local list’ of heritage assets in partnership with the local community and on the basis of objective criteria of heritage interest that have been tested through public consultation’. Around 50% of local planning authorities across all regions of England now have some form of local list. The majority of local lists of parks and gardens of historic interest have been prepared by county garden trusts although often with assistance and funding from local authorities.

Lists are non-statutory, i.e. they represent a *voluntary* agreement between local authorities and their communities and therefore, while a good way of achieving greater recognition for local heritage assets, they offer potentially limited protection. Currently lists are building-biased but government guidance set out in Planning Policy Statement 5 (known as PPS5) is set to change this as it encompasses the full scope of heritage assets - buildings, monuments, special places, and of course parks, gardens and designed spaces and landscapes.

How local lists will work

In late 2011, EH will publish ‘Developing Best Practice Guidance for Local Heritage Assets’. This will explain the process including how the public will be involved in selection, what sorts of sites are appropriate and how to get them onto local lists. For more information, see: www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring/listing/local/local-designations/local-list

To date local authorities have adopted a common approach of inviting anyone to nominate a park or garden, building or structure for inclusion on a local list. There is often a nomination form online. The kind of information required to accompany a site’s nomination may include:

- Up to date photographs

- Historical photographs/illustrations
- Maps (past and present)
- Information on its historical relationship to the local area
- Information on its architectural merit and design
- Information on any historical association to famous local people, local historic events, strong community or social development. This must be well documented.

You may be asked to set out clearly how you think the asset meets the criteria for local designation (see below), providing evidence in support your view. You may also be asked to provide details of any current substantiated threats (risks) to the asset, such as pre-application planning discussions or intent to demolish, remove or substantially alter. This enables an authority to prioritise any assessment. A local authority is likely to consult an owner whose site is nominated as part of the assessment.

Potential benefits of local listing of park and gardens

Although local parks and gardens generally won't meet criteria for national status they will contribute as much to a district or borough's cultural history as its buildings and archaeology; they are highly valued by their owners, by local communities and by visitors; many owners generously share their heritage through opening to the public through the National Gardens Scheme.

The South East especially suffers from development pressures of all kinds. Even moderately-sized landscapes can be fragmented through multiple ownership; in towns, garden land may be classified as previously developed land (i.e. classified as brownfield land) and vulnerable to infill with non-listed buildings (including garden buildings) replaced with intensive development.

If owners or managers lack the knowledge or understanding of a site's design, the outcome can often be inappropriate change, management and maintenance - or no maintenance at all. Key features will decay or be damaged; views become blocked by self-sown trees, waterworks no longer function and structural surfaces of paths and garden buildings become subject to damp, cracking and even collapse.

EH's new guidance will encourage a more consistent approach to the identification and management of local heritage assets across England. It will also signal a move away from the buildings-led approach to local listing to encompass the full range of assets that make up the historic environment and ensure the proper validation and recording of local heritage assets.

At the heart of local listing is a push to improve access to clear, comprehensive and current information about the local historic environment. This will involve ensuring that the information contained on local lists is publicly available, best achieved by migrating information onto the Historic Environment Record for the area.

A local list forms part of what is referred to in the local plan or local development framework as the 'evidence base', which is used to inform planning policy.

A local authority will therefore benefit from:

- An up-to-date and robustly selected list of historic, designed parks, gardens and open spaces which will strengthen the role of local heritage assets as a material consideration in deciding the outcome of planning decisions.
- Site descriptions accompanied by well-researched and accurately-recorded site descriptions with supporting reference material.

- A list that can form part of the schedule of designated sites within a local authority's area for the evidence base of its Local Development Framework/Plan and that is capable of being updated and amended as and when new information becomes available.
- Additional contextual information for informing the selection and/or extent of associated designations such as conservation areas, listed buildings, scheduled monuments and tree preservation orders.
- Information on designed historic parks, gardens and open spaces in an electronic and accessible format to meet E-gov requirements
- A robust methodology for the survey, description and appraisal of sites capable of endorsement by statutory and non-statutory consultees.

County Garden Trusts will benefit from:

- An opportunity for Trust members to have their research acknowledged and put to real, practical use in the planning process
- An opportunity to hone personal knowledge and skills or gain new ones while contributing to something of lasting benefit
- Completed site reports which can be entered on a local authority's Historic Environment Record (HER) and on the UK Parks and Gardens Database to provide a permanent and widely-accessible resource for learning about park and garden heritage both in the local area and nationally.

Selection Criteria

National criteria: how sites are selected by EH for the national *'Register of Parks and Gardens'*

EH already has in place a set of criteria to select parks and gardens for inclusion on the national *'Register'* which has been tried and tested over the last 20 years or so. Most local lists of parks and gardens have either used these as they stand or in a slightly adapted form. Below is a summary of EH's nine criteria with some notes on how they are applied.

To guide its assessment of whether a site meets the required 'special' level of historic interest, English Heritage has drawn up nine criteria; these are applied together with expert and extensive knowledge of the country's historic parks and gardens as a whole, to ensure that decisions are consistent. The criteria are based on the premise that the older the surviving features of a site the rarer that type of site is likely to be, although other factors are considered.

Age and registration:

The first 5 criteria are related to the age of a site; they comprise a set of date bands which broadly mirror the main trends in the history of the development of gardening and landscape design. A park or garden where the surviving design and layout is particularly old (early 18th century or older) is rare and therefore likely in itself to be sufficiently 'special' to be registered. Designed landscapes less than 30 years old are unlikely to be considered unless they are of outstanding importance and under threat.

1. Sites with a main phase of development before 1750 where at least a proportion of the layout of this date is still evident, even perhaps only as an earthwork.
2. Sites with a main phase of development laid out between 1750 and 1820 where enough of this landscaping survives to reflect the original design.
3. Sites with a main phase of development between 1820 and 1880 which is of importance and survives intact or relatively intact.
4. Sites with a main phase of development between 1880 and 1939 where this is of high importance and survives intact.

5. Sites with a main phase of development laid out post-war, but more than 30 years ago, where the work is of exceptional importance.

Broadly, the more recent the structure of a park or garden the more likely it is to have survived. These more common survivors will undergo a more rigorous selection process to be nationally recognised and will have to demonstrate that they have something in particular that makes them 'special'; this is where the last four criteria come into play:

6. Sites which were influential in the development of taste whether through reputation or references in literature.
7. Sites which are early or representative examples of a style of layout or a type of site or the work of a designer (amateur or professional) of national importance.
8. Sites having an association with significant persons or historical events.
9. Sites with a strong group value.

Influential sites, major designers and good standard examples:

The added 'extra' could be that the park or garden has been laid out by a nationally famous designer, that it became famous or well-regarded in its day, or that it had a strong influence in changing fashions. It could also be that the site is a very good example of its type.

Associations:

Close and direct associations with nationally important people or events can make a site more historically interesting than its layout alone suggests. In such a case, we consider the importance of the person or event, and the importance of the park or garden in relation to the person's life and work, or in relation to the event in question. To be eligible for registration, there must be a direct link between a site and a person or event, and this must be reflected in the actual layout of the site itself.

Group value:

When a park or garden is of historic interest, but not sufficiently so to merit registration in its own right, it may still be registered if it provides strong group value with buildings, with other land, or with a group of other 'registerable' sites, providing this link is in itself of special historic interest. The setting of a major historic building might, for example, be carefully designed to form a piece with that building; alternatively, one or more gardens might form an important element within a fine example of town planning.

Other considerations:

Multi-phases: while the '*Register*' criteria might suggest that parks and gardens were laid out within a given date-band, with little change after that time, the reverse is more the case. Most will be multi-phased, having developed as a series of additions or alterations as needs and fashions changed, with each phase of varied impact on the landscape and degree of interest. With such sites, it is the sum of the developments as seen in the landscape today which is considered.

Documentation: good surviving documentation – archives and published material – also add to our understanding of a site and can contribute to its special interest.

Condition: the register is concerned with sites as they survive today so no matter how important a site once was, if it no longer exists, having been lost for example to irreversible development such as housing, it will not be registered. However, if a site is in poor condition, provided its overall design or layout remains sufficiently intact, it may still qualify for registration.

Local List Criteria

Below is a preview of the criteria given in the guidance for including buildings, parks/gardens and structures on a local list; they are very similar to those used for national list selection but they introduce (criteria no.5) the idea of a place or site as a local amenity contributing to the area's sense of place and visual quality.

Local List Selection Criteria (draft)

1. Historic Interest

- a) Does it relate to an important aspect of local social, cultural, religious, political or economic history?
- B) Is it historically associated with an important local feature?

2. Historic Association

- a) Is it closely associated with: famous local people, local historic events, strong community or social development, significance or people? (Must be well documented)
- b) Does it relate closely to any statutorily protected structure or site?

3. Architectural & Design Merit

- a) Is the surviving building/structure/park or garden the work of a particular architect or designer which illustrates local or regional architectural history or design?
- b) Does it show qualities of age, style or distinctive characteristics relative to the area?

4. Survival

- a) Does it remain in a substantial and recognizable form?
- b) Does it retain its historic features and layouts?
- c) Does it represent an important element in the development of the area?

5. Townscape Merit

- a) Does it provide an important visual amenity locally? For instance, does it make interesting use of visually significant sites and form a landmark?
- b) Is it a notable building(s) on an important route into the area, which creates a vista or contributes to the skyline? Does it emphasise corner sites or provide focal points in the townscape?

Virginia Hinze
for Historic Landscapes Project - Southeast
Association of Gardens Trusts
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