

West Berkshire HER User Guidance

April 2020

West Berkshire Historic Environment Record

Access and Information Terms and Conditions

West Berkshire Council Archaeology Service



WestBerkshire
C O U N C I L

Introduction

This document sets out the purpose and content of the West Berkshire Historic Environment Record, how to access information, the charging structure and conditions of use.

1 Purpose and Content

The West Berkshire Historic Environment Record (HER) is the primary source of information about the historic environment of the unitary authority of West Berkshire.

The historic environment is defined in the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) as, “all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora”, and HERs as, “information services that seek to provide access to comprehensive and dynamic resources...for public benefit and use” (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2019: 67).

The West Berkshire HER is an index of known buried sites, ancient monuments, historic buildings and landscapes, archaeological investigations, sources and finds within the geographical boundary of the local authority. Records are held of [nationally designated sites](#) (Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields) and heritage assets of local significance including those on the [Local List](#). The database also contains information on all the consultations to the West Berkshire Archaeology Service. Linked to the HER are three historic characterisation projects, providing area-based analysis and advice about the district’s evolution and traits.

The HER also includes a reference collection of books, articles and unpublished reports, aerial photographs, and copies of historic and modern maps.

There is a [national network](#) of HERs, generally based within local authorities. HERs can be used to:

- advance knowledge and understanding of the historic environment and improve its protection
- support conservation, management and enhancement of the historic environment
- inform strategic policies and decision-making relating to local plans, neighbourhood plans, spatial planning, development management and countryside management, such as forestry and agricultural land management
- support heritage-led regeneration, environmental improvement, place-making and cultural tourism initiatives
- contribute to research, education and social inclusion
- promote public participation in the exploration, appreciation and enjoyment of local heritage.

The West Berkshire HER is managed by the [Archaeology Service](#), part of West Berkshire Council’s Culture and Libraries Team within the Public Protection and Culture service area. Other elements are West Berkshire Museum in Newbury, the Elizabethan mansion of Shaw House and West Berkshire Libraries. Specialist staff in the Archaeology Service compile and

explain the information contained in the HER. The HER's data is continually updated as archaeological work is undertaken, reports are produced and advice is sought.

At a glance:

What information does the West Berkshire HER contain or cross reference?

- Monuments
 - archaeological sites, cropmarks and earthworks, buildings, structures, designed landscapes, battlefields, findspots and artefact scatters
- Events
 - desk-based assessments, evaluations, watching briefs, excavations, building recording, fieldwalking surveys and geophysical surveys
- Sources
 - published and unpublished references, including site reports, academic and local group research
- Finds
 - stray finds and artefacts uncovered during archaeological investigation
- Characterisation data
 - Historic Landscape Characterisation data (HLC), Historic Environment Character Areas (HECA), Historic Environment Character Zones (HECZ) and the Newbury Historic Character Study
- Reference Collection
 - site reports, research reports, selected local archaeological journals, aerial photographs, historic and current maps, LiDAR imagery

2 Access

The HER serves a broad range of users, both within West Berkshire Council and externally. The HER is a public record for professional and public user groups, and is also part of the evidence base for the planning authority (NPPF 2019, para 187). Local planning authorities should have up-to-date evidence about the historic environment in their area which is used to assess the significance of heritage assets and the contribution they make to their environment, as well as to help predict the likelihood of other assets being discovered in the future. Information about the significance of the historic environment which is gathered as part of plan making or development management should be made publicly accessible.

2.1 Internal Users

HERs (originally called Sites and Monuments Records, SMRs) evolved from records generally held by county planning authorities, and used primarily as planning and conservation tools. The West Berkshire HER developed in this way from the Berkshire SMR, and still underpins the work of the Archaeology Service in both development management work and strategic planning, advising West Berkshire's Planning Officers. Data from the HER is also used by colleagues in the Culture and Libraries Team, the Countryside Service and many other officers within West Berkshire Council.

2.2 External Users

The HER is used by many different categories of enquirers including

- developers and agents
- archaeological contractors and consultants
- statutory undertakers
- landowners and farmers
- Government agencies such as the Environment Agency and the Forestry Commission
- community groups such as those preparing Neighbourhood Development Plans
- students and researchers
- media authors
- local residents and other interested individuals.

To request HER data, the HER Enquiry Form should be completed:

www.westberks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=28030.

For complex enquiries you may prefer to contact the Archaeology Service initially:

archaeology@westberks.gov.uk.

2.3 Facilities

The Archaeology Service is located in West Berkshire Council's Market Street office in Newbury. Appointments may be made within office hours (Monday-Friday, 9.00-16.00) to view HER resources. Archaeological reports, paper files and a reference collection of books are all available for consultation.

To arrange a visit to the West Berkshire HER, please email the Archaeology Service with details of the material you would like to consult: archaeology@westberks.gov.uk. Please note, it is not

possible for visitors to 'browse' this collection. Requested material will be retrieved and made available for visitors upon their arrival.

2.4 Response Times

Enquiries to the HER are acknowledged within the Council's service standard of three days and some customers may receive replies to their questions at the same time. If an immediate answer cannot be given, the Archaeology Service aims to respond to most categories of enquirers within 15 working days. This standard is monitored as an Archaeology Service Performance Indicator, with 90% as a target rate for achievement.

Where data is urgently required within a shorter time frame, efforts will be made to meet user's needs, but cannot be guaranteed. If your enquiry is urgent this should be indicated on the Enquiry Form.

2.5 Data Access

Access to the information held in the HER is available under the provision of Section 141 (1) of the 1972 Local Government Act and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. West Berkshire Council supports the objectives of the General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (<http://info.westberks.gov.uk/dataprotection>) and the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (<http://info.westberks.gov.uk/foi>). The collection and supply of data in the West Berkshire HER complies with this legislation (<https://info.westberks.gov.uk/privacynotices>).

Data may be withheld:

- where the enquiry is considered unreasonable. For example, a request to copy extensive parts of the HER because of a large area of geographical interest or an unstructured enquiry
- if it is considered that the data is being used for purposes other than those specified
- where there is reasonable cause to believe that the aim of the enquiry is to identify sites in order to deliberately damage them
- if the enquiry involves data of a confidential nature.

Requests for the provision of very large quantities of data over long periods of time may require a licence.

All users are asked to indicate their acceptance of the Terms and Conditions of Data Provision (see section 4, below).

3 Charging

Charges for searches are dependent on the nature of the enquiry, whether it is for a commercial or non-commercial purpose. Additional costs may also be incurred for printing and photocopying.

3.1 Non-Commercial Searches

There will be no charge for using the HER for

- reasonable enquiries from the public and local societies which fulfil an educational or community service, and promote a better understanding of the archaeological resource and the work of the West Berkshire Archaeology Service
- academic research enquiries aiming to improve understanding of the local, regional or national archaeological resource
- media enquiries with an educational benefit in interpreting West Berkshire's archaeological resource.

It is recommended that researchers and other non-commercial users consult the sources listed below (section 3.1.1-3) in the first instance. If further detail is required, the HER may be consulted for no charge.

Particularly large and complex searches of a non-commercial nature may, however, incur a fee and should be discussed with the Archaeology Service.

Photocopying and printing charges are outlined below (section 3.3).

3.1.1 Heritage Gateway

Summary extracts from a large part of the West Berkshire HER database are freely available online via a portal called the Heritage Gateway: www.heritagegateway.org.uk. A step by step guide on how to use this point of access to many different historic environment datasets is available online: <http://info.westberks.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=36550&p=0> or from the Archaeology Service. It should be emphasised that West Berkshire HER data derived only from the Heritage Gateway is not suitable for enquiries associated with development, planning and land-use changes. However, this remote access is provided for anyone with a general interest in the historic buildings, sites and monuments of the district.

3.1.2 West Berkshire Online Map

Historic Environment layers showing a selection of West Berkshire's Monuments (see page 3, above, for a definition of Monuments) can be added to the West Berkshire Online Map: <https://gis1.westberks.gov.uk/applicationtemplates/onlinemap>. As with data available on Heritage Gateway, this spatial data is not appropriate reference material for enquiries related to development, planning or land use changes.

3.1.3 Historic Characterisation Projects

Three historic characterisation projects have been carried out in West Berkshire. Information on the Newbury Historic Character Study, Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) and Historic Environment Character Zoning (HECZ) is accessible online at <http://info.westberks.gov.uk/historicenvironmentprojects> or via the HER. HLC and HECZ information can also be added to the Online Map (see section 3.1.2, above).

3.2 Commercial Searches

There will be a charge for

- commercial enquiries relating to the prospective purchase or development of land or other property (including land use changes)
- enquiries where data is being collected for commercial use, such as a commercial publication.

Charging is based on an hourly rate and covers staff costs to extract information from the HER and make it available remotely in a suitable format.

Users will be advised of charges and provided with a quote before their enquiry is processed.

Scale of charges

- Minimum charge of £75 for the first 30 minutes
- £120 for 60 minutes
- £60 per additional 30 minutes thereafter

Nationally agreed charges apply for providing historic environment information and advice for [Countryside Stewardship](#) applications, and this is administered separately through the Rural Payments Agency.

3.3 Additional Costs

Computer printouts or photocopying

- 10p per A4 b/w sheet
- 30p per A3 b/w sheet
- £1 per A4 colour sheet
- £1.60 per A3 colour sheet

4 Conditions of Data Provision

- It is expected that users of the HER will inform staff of the purpose of their enquiry and the use to which the requested information will be put. The HER data should not be used for purposes which damage the historic environment.
- Data is provided for the purpose specified and should not be reused for any other purpose without the prior consent of the West Berkshire Archaeology Service. Data should not be stored beyond the life of the project for which it was required.
- The HER is constantly changing as new discoveries are made. Information supplied can be considered to be current for no longer than six months.
- Whilst every effort is made to check the accuracy of the HER, no liability can be accepted for errors, omissions or inaccuracies in the data, or for advice based on that data. Users who identify inaccuracies or omissions in the HER data supplied should notify the Archaeology Service.
- The absence of data in certain areas should not be taken as an absence of archaeological features. Similarly, omission from the HER does not mean that a feature is not a heritage asset. The HER cannot be assumed to have identified all relevant heritage assets within a study area.
- Inclusion in the HER is not in itself a recognition of the value and significance of a heritage asset, which will always be subject to further assessment through the planning process.
- Although the HER is a public record, the inclusion of a site does not imply public access to that location. Many monuments are on privately owned land.
- The data, maps, computer records and other material that comprise the HER are copyrighted and cannot be copied or used for any other purpose other than that for which it has been provided without the written permission of West Berkshire Archaeology Service. They should also not be given to a third party.
- It is a condition of the provision of data that copies of any resulting research, reports, publications or leaflets shall be provided to the Historic Environment Record when in the public domain.

Contact Details

Archaeology Service
Public Protection and Culture
West Berkshire Council
Market Street
Newbury
Berkshire
RG14 5LD

Tel: 01635 519534

Email: archaeology@westberks.gov.uk

Web: <http://info.westberks.gov.uk/archaeology>
www.westberkshireheritage.org/local-heritage

References

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2019. National Planning Policy Framework (www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2).

Historic England, 2019. A Guide to Historic Environment Records (HERs) in England (<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/guide-to-historic-environment-recordsengland/heag266-guide-hers-england>)

Links

Heritage Gateway: <https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/>

Both a portal to national and local historic environment data, and the central register of contact details for English HERs.

Historic England, Historic Environment Records (HERs):

<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/information-management/hers>

Historic England, What is Designation?

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/what-is-designation>

Informing the Future of the Past: Guidelines for Historic Environment Records:

<https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/ifp/>

West Berkshire HER enquiry form: www.westberks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=28030

West Berkshire Local List of heritage assets: <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/locallist>

West Berkshire Online Map: <https://gis1.westberks.gov.uk/applicationtemplates/onlinemap>

Neighbourhood and Community Planning: <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/communityplanning>