

West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041 (adopted June 2025)

Policy DM12

Registered Parks and Gardens

Proposals for development that could affect designed landscapes identified on the 'Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England' (Registered Parks and Gardens) will be required to be sensitively designed and clearly demonstrate that great weight has been given to the conservation and significance of the asset and its setting in accordance with policy SP9. Particular regard will be given to the following criteria:

- a. Its historic character and appearance;
- b. The integrity of the landscape;
- c. Prevention of the sub-division of the landscape;
- d. The cumulative impact of successive small scale changes;
- e. The conservation of both human-made and natural features of architectural, archaeological, artistic and historic interest within it and the requirement to record such features and deposit the evidence with the Historic Environment Record;
- f. Its biodiversity interest; and
- g. The setting, including key views into, through, or out of the park or garden, particularly those which are an integral part of the design.

Depending upon the size of the historic park or garden, its current condition, the level of change proposed, and the complexity of the site, the Council may require an appropriate Conservation Management Plan (CMP). The CMP should provide a comprehensive review of the history and development of the site, its current condition and use and the constraints and opportunities that will influence its management, together with a clear plan to for its holistic management over the longer term.

Supporting Text

10.104 The purpose of this policy is to set out more detailed criteria for development proposals affecting historic designed landscapes that are nationally designated as Registered Parks and Gardens. It recognises the value of these designed landscapes and aims to protect them from development that would be harmful to their character or setting.

10.105 Historic parks and gardens are a fragile and finite resource, and can easily be damaged beyond repair or lost forever. As designed landscapes they differ from other heritage assets because:

- They often cover large areas of land, sometimes in different ownerships;
- Their structure is based on a range of both natural and human-made features of historic significance such as lodges and gates, walls, hedges, walks and drives, parkland, ha-has, pleasure grounds, formal and informal planting, woodland and agricultural land, kitchen gardens, water features and garden buildings and ornaments. Some of these features may also be protected in their own right as Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments or through Tree Preservation Orders;
- They can have high biodiversity value; and
- Each park or garden is a reflection of its location and due to natural growth or deliberate alteration, is a dynamic entity that changes over time.

10.106 Applications within or adjoining historic parks and gardens will therefore be expected to protect the special features, historic interest and setting of the designed landscape.

10.107 Historic England compiles a Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England (National Heritage Act 1983) which forms part of the National Heritage List for England. The main purpose of the Register is to identify historic parks and gardens that are of importance, in the national context, to England's cultural heritage, and to encourage their appreciation, maintenance and enhancement. In 2020 there are currently twelve Registered Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest that fall completely within West Berkshire, three at Grade II* and nine at Grade II. There are also two in Wiltshire and Oxfordshire that have elements which cross the county boundaries. Several such as Aldermaston Court and Hamstead Marshall evolved from medieval deer parks; many were created as designed landscapes around country houses, particularly in the 18th and 19th centuries. Basildon Park and Purley Hall are examples of these. The avenues and compartments of the formal garden around Inkpen House survive; at Shaw House there is a raised garden walk and planting that may date back to the 1600s. West Berkshire's position

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on the coaching route between London and Bath played a part in the creation of some estates. Benham Park and Sandford Priory were landscaped by Capability Brown and one garden at Folly Farm was created in the early 20th century by garden designer Gertrude Jekyll.

10.108 Inclusion on the Register does not provide statutory protection, nor does it imply any additional powers to control development. However, the historic interest of a park or garden is a material planning consideration when determining planning applications within or adjoining Registered Parks and Gardens. The NPPF makes clear that substantial harm to or loss of grade II Registered Parks and Gardens should be exceptional and for grade II* and grade I Registered Parks and Gardens it should be wholly exceptional.

10.109 There are also historic parks and gardens of more local interest, which, whilst not on the Register, are of sufficient quality to warrant their protection when considering development proposals. As non-designated heritage assets these will therefore be considered under policy DM11.

10.110 The policy emphasises that a holistic approach will be taken to understanding the potential impact of development proposals on the setting of Registered Parks and Gardens. Historic designed landscapes have their own qualities and cultural attributes which set them apart from other open or amenity spaces and consideration of their setting is important. Whilst they themselves often provide the setting for a large number of historic buildings, the actual setting of the designed landscapes can often include land, topographic features or structures that extend some distance from the park or garden. Views in and out of designed landscapes were important features particularly in the 17th and 18th century for instance. In many instances there is an overlap with Conservation Areas. Parks often contain archaeological earthworks and cropmarks, either relating to earlier use of the designed landscape, such as mottes and park pales, or as unrelated features that have survived within the uncultivated land. The parks that include historic churches like Wasing and Englefield are also likely to have once contained villages that were shifted during emparkment to outside the boundaries. Donnington Grove encompasses the listed 14th century Donnington Castle and its surrounding scheduled Civil War star fort as well as part of the non-designated site of the Second Battle of Newbury 1644.

10.111 The policy makes clear that for some proposals the Council may require a Conservation Management Plan (CMP). CMPs are valuable tools for developing informed long term management strategies for historic designed landscapes which help prevent inappropriate ad hoc changes that may be detrimental to the historic character of the park or garden.

10.112 The Council will consult Historic England⁽¹²³⁾ on applications for development likely to affect a Grade I or II* Registered Park and Garden. The Gardens Trust (formerly known as The Garden History Society)⁽¹²⁴⁾ is the statutory consultee for all applications for planning permission likely to affect any park or garden on the Register; The Berkshire Gardens Trust as the local county organisation will also be consulted.

123 Historic England: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/conserving-and-enhancing-the-historic-environment#consult-or-notify-Historic-England>

124 The Gardens Trust: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/conserving-and-enhancing-the-historic-environment#consult-The-Gardens-Trust>