

GUIDELINES FOR THE IDENTIFICATION OF PARKS, GARDENS AND HISTORIC LANDSCAPE IN DORSET OF COUNTY IMPORTANCE

Introduction

1. Many sites of historic parks and gardens in Dorset may not reach the English Heritage criteria for inclusion as nationally important in their Register. That does not mean they are not important in Dorset. They may be physically smaller, less well researched, partially intact, or reworked many times. Alternatively they could be well maintained example of less well regarded designers. They remain part of the history, character and culture of Dorset.
2. Because local sites may be less thoroughly documented, difficult to assign definitively to a particular designer, have attracted less research effort or be partially complete, it has been considered prudent to have a flexible system of classifying them. Merely to look at sites that have failed to satisfy English Heritage criteria would overlook those sites of County interest that have not attracted English Heritage's attention.
3. Local sites need the protection and support policies that relate to their situation and context as well the specific sites themselves. The direct and indirect implications of nearby new and existing development, or changes of management and use, need to be taken into account.
4. A version of the English Heritage assessment could have been used, but might have missed local or regional characteristics. To be recognised more widely as a designed landscape of County status has needed a more objective local process. The County status threshold has been crossed by a 'mix and match' system, depending on at least one of the criteria from the list below being met.

Criteria

5. The Dorset Gardens Trust has concluded that the following criteria should form the basis for the selection of gardens, parks and historic landscape of County importance:
 - (i) Sites formed before 1750, where evidence remains of the original layout.
 - (ii) Sites laid out between 1750 and 1820, where there is significant survival of the original design.
 - (iii) Sites between 1820 and 1880, which survive intact or where a significant element has survived intact.
 - (iv) Sites laid out between 1880 and 1939, which survive relatively intact.
 - (v) Regionally important post war sites, which are more than 30 years old.

6. Criteria (i) – (v) include reference to age and as a result are often rare. Scarcity is a complex definition, but takes account of scarcity of a type of site in a particular locality or county. Distribution comes under the same heading.

(vi) Sites which were influential in the development of taste in the county, either through reputation or literary reference.

(vii) Sites which retain examples of style of layout or work of a designer or owner of regional importance or, which have marked usage of local materials and methods.

7. In Sites (vi) and (vii) quality is always difficult to define, but small sites or remnants of sites of high quality may be as important as larger or more intact sites of less worth.

(viii) Sites having an association with significant persons or historical events, where the visual quality of the site illustrates and confirms the historical association.

(ix) Sites with strong group value. These may be a part of an historic designed landscape or a component in a good example of a planned landscape.

(x) Sites of particular social, economic or cultural significance in the region or county. These may include urban or industrial landscapes, public parks cemeteries or graveyards; also other types of gardens, such as allotments and common open spaces.

(xi) Sites in joint or fragmented ownership, whose totality or parts may be at risk. Development threat or fragility could be a contributory factor.

(xii) Sites containing features such as follies, eye-catchers, lodges, icehouses, ha-has, old boundary walls or fences, walks and drives either intact or in disrepair, whether listed or not.

Conclusion

8. The selected parks and gardens of County importance have fallen into one or more of these categories. Nevertheless these criteria may not be sufficiently comprehensive and may allow some important sites to fall through the net. They may need adjustment in the future. In the mean time a greater awareness of designed landscape in Dorset of County importance should be achieved.

DORSET GARDENS TRUST - 30th July 2005

DORSET GARDENS TRUST – LIST OF HISTORIC GARDENS AND DESIGNED LANDSCAPES OF LOCAL IMPORTANCE

Methodology

Since 1992 the Dorset Gardens Trust has been recording and researching historic gardens and designed landscapes within the county.

In the mid 1990s we were able to assist with the English Heritage Register Update of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England for Dorset. The Update was mainly a laptop exercise, based in the Dorchester County Records Office and since then a further 4 sites have been added to the English Heritage Register. The Register Update flagged up about 350 sites which needed further investigation.

The Dorset Gardens Trust has now prepared Criteria for identifying parks, gardens and historic landscapes of local importance based on the English Heritage Criteria and the experience of other County Gardens Trusts. The Criteria was refined and adopted in July 2005, and are now attached.. Using information obtained in the public domain, the DGT has now researched and recorded over 170 sites for which detailed files with photographs and plans were collated, and has a good knowledge of most of the others identified by the English Heritage Register Update. From this research we have drawn up our suggested list of Sites of Local Importance, copies of which have already been forwarded to the Dorset and District Councils. These recommendations are backed up with copies of relevant maps indicating site boundaries and references to OS and Tithe maps, John Hutchins' The History and Antiquities of the County of Dorset, Arthur Oswald's Country Houses of Dorset and Tim Mowl's Historic Gardens of Dorset, Country Life articles etc. Although in some cases it has not always been possible to walk around the park or garden, a visit has been to each site.

The Dorset Gardens Trust has also written to every owner (private and public) of selected parks and gardens, informing them that their garden is being placed on our list of Gardens of Local Importance, based on information from the public domain. They have been provided with all the background to the selection i.e the short note describing the value of their site with references, the general criteria and a copy of the map. Their comments were invited by few have been received.

We are also working with an archivist from the County Records Office who has looked over our recommendations and we are shortly to have another meeting to add more detailed references and backup information.

The Dorset Gardens Trust would welcome the opportunity to work with the County and District Councils to ensure that these important historic parks and gardens are recognised and protected for the future.

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