English Heritage

Guidance for the Conservation and Management of Historic Landscapes

April 2024

Executive Summary

Historic gardens and designed landscapes are a fragile and finite resource, which can be easily damaged beyond repair. English Heritage cares for an extraordinary range of historic landscapes and conserving their special qualities for future generations must be a primary consideration. However, historic gardens, designed landscapes, and the settings of historic monuments and buildings are also a public resource and must be attractive, versatile, adaptable and resilient.

This brings its own challenges: our fortified landscapes, castles and military sites were designed to keep people out, but now they need to welcome people in; rolling parkland, cherished for its tranquillity and dramatic views, might sometimes be transformed into a concert venue or events space; winding footpaths in private gardens, designed for occasional use, must now accommodate the footfall of thousands of visitors each year.

Management and maintenance of our sites must be considered in relation to legislation on Health and Safety, accessibility, environmental and wildlife protection and many other factors. These run alongside the day-to-day management of budgets, visitors, marketing, security concerns and education. We must also plan for the future, with climate change and sustainability issues becoming ever more critical.

We hope this document will help our staff to balance practical considerations against issues of natural and cultural heritage significance when managing conservation and change within our historic landscapes.

In order to conserve the landscapes in our care, decision makers must first value, understand and appreciate the cultural and natural significance of each landscape, which may itself be the result of historic management practices. This document outlines our methodology for landscape conservation and sets out our approach to management and maintenance in order to retain significance. It is intended to help guide decision-making for the cyclical management of the historic landscapes in our care as well as repair, restoration and reconstruction projects.

This document has been developed through discussion within English Heritage and with advice from specialists in both historic garden conservation and nature conservation. We hope it will help explain our approach to historic garden and designed landscape conservation and help us all to make informed choices about their future care.

Gardens and Landscape Team (2024)

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COVER IMAGE: Brodsworth Hall and Gardens, South Yorkshire

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1.0 Landscape Conservation Principles

Conservation is the process of managing change in ways that will best sustain the heritage significance of a place in its setting, while recognising opportunities to reveal or reinforce this significance for present and future generations.

Landscape is used as shorthand for gardens, designed landscapes and the settings of our historic monuments and buildings.

Landscape conservation is therefore the process by which we manage change in a wide variety of landscapes, ensuring that their unique aesthetic and historical qualities are safeguarded and, where appropriate, enhanced.

Making decisions about change requires reason and consistency. In order to make consistent decisions, accepted conservation principles should be followed, and these are set out in Historic England's 'Conservation Principles'[1]

Principle 1: The historic environment is a shared resource

Principle 2: Everyone should be able to participate in sustaining the historic environment

Principle 3: Understanding the significance of places is vital

Principle 4: Significant places should be managed to sustain their values

Principle 5: Decisions about change must be reasonable, transparent and consistent

Principle 6: Documenting and learning from decisions is essential

It is important to note that conservation principles can be interpreted in different ways in differing circumstances. This is where reason is required, and experience and educated judgement is critical to help assess and unpick complex and site-specific challenges.

Clarity in expressing conservation aims, the search for a consistent approach at each place, and informed and debated decisions should be amongst the defining characteristics of any new proposal for an historic landscape.

1.1 THE SHARED RESOURCE

Landscapes are of interest to a wide range of people, and often for a wide variety of reasons. They are also a shared resource in the sense that they serve as common ground for diverse life forms. They were created for aesthetic interest, power, status, privacy, resource management, sport and recreation, as well as for the display of plants and exotic animals, for public health and for many other personal or social aims. In many cases they were a combination of some or all these things.

The study of historic landscapes was initially informed by the study of other forms of cultural heritage, but subsequently they have also come to be appreciated in terms of social or political history, the history of plant collecting and as valuable wildlife habitats. They may also embody historic fabric from earlier periods of agricultural or settlement history and therefore may be of interest to archaeologists. They may contain early introductions of specimen plants and so be a genetic resource of interest in historical botany, and they may have created the conditions for unusual flora and fauna, or veteran trees.

[1] https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/constructive-conservation/conservation-principles/

All these perspectives and priorities are valid, and because each landscape has an individual history, topography and setting, it will have its own unique mix of cultural and natural qualities. Such distinctiveness and variety imbue historic landscapes with a sense of being special places. Gardens and designed landscapes therefore constitute a very considerable aesthetic, educational and economic national asset.

Each generation will recognise and cherish its valued landscapes, so that it may use, enjoy and benefit from them. Values and interests may vary in emphasis over time, but nevertheless there is an obligation to pass on this heritage so that the ability of future generations to do the same is not compromised.

1.2 INCLUSIVITY

Because such a wide range of qualities can be perceived in historic landscapes, a similarly wide range of experts, enthusiasts, local communities and volunteers have a legitimate interest in their future. A constructive and open approach to new knowledge and ways of appreciating and conserving these landscapes is appropriate. Many of our sites, particularly Free to Enter Sites, are at the heart of their local communities giving them a heightened interest in the way they are managed and cared for in the future. Volunteers at our sites also have a unique local perspective and can help input into priorities for conservation and future proposals.

Our responsibility to involve communities, existing volunteers and the potential for community engagement (for example through recruiting volunteers and Friends Groups), and the great possibilities that landscapes offer for study and learning, mean that a wide range of bodies and individuals can offer thoughts about their history, use, significance and care.

The management of landscapes requires expertise and specialist knowledge in those responsible for their day-to-day maintenance. It is vital to develop, maintain and pass this understanding on to the next generation by means of education and training. It is also important to employ knowledge and skills to encourage and enable others to learn about, value and care for gardens and designed landscapes, thereby encouraging a new generation of informed enthusiasts for the topic.

1.3 UNDERSTANDING THE SIGNIFICANCE

The history, fabric, character and dynamics of a landscape must first be understood in order to identify its cultural and natural heritage significance. Any assessment needs to ensure that all parts of the site are identified, properly recognised and understood. Significance may be hidden beneath subsequent layers, contained within subtle or difficult to read features, or obscured by lack of maintenance or poor state of repair.

In addition to the numerous cultural qualities that may be found in historic gardens, landscapes and settings, there are the symbiotic qualities of nature and culture relating to natural history and life sciences, geology and soils, ecology and biodiversity, horticultural craftsmanship and upkeep skills, and the benefits of physical and intellectual public access.

The significance of a landscape should be assessed against agreed criteria and, in comparison to assessments of other landscapes, creating a benchmark against which competing strategies for conservation can be measured.

Whether or not designated through national criteria, many historic designed landscapes are highly valued by local people, whose views and interests should be included in the assessment of significance.

The assessment of significance might also need to consider the context of the landscape as a cultural landscape, and its role as part of a network of green spaces and green infrastructure.

Assessing the heritage significance of historic gardens and landscapes does not significantly differ from the approach to assessing the heritage significance of assets and places.

*Assessment of landscape significance is discussed in more detail in **Section 2** of this guidance document.*

1.4 MAINTAINING SIGNIFICANCE

Once the significance of a landscape is understood, it must be maintained in order to ensure its special qualities are protected. These qualities will always be in flux, because change is in the nature of landscapes. This is a result of natural processes, such as seasonal change, natural patterns of growth, decay and regeneration, and weather events such as storms, heavy rains or drought. However, landscapes face many other threats and vulnerabilities.

Physical changes can come about through development, or through horticultural activities, farming or forestry, which constantly re-shape the landscape around us, whilst changes in the wider landscape can affect the setting of a special place by re-shaping views, impacting microclimates or causing pollution. Climate change is increasingly problematic, bringing more severe weather patterns and new pests and diseases.

Patterns of use can affect the way a landscape is accessed or presented, whilst noise and visual disturbance can impact our enjoyment of a place. Quality of presentation is influenced by maintenance practices, which can be hugely variable and dictated by broader economic circumstances or management considerations.

*Threats and vulnerabilities are discussed in more detail in **Section 3** of this guidance document.*

Maintaining the status quo in the face of such threats and vulnerabilities is a constant challenge. Some landscape features can be maintained almost indefinitely, for example banks and earthworks. Others, in particular garden structures, degrade over time or can be lost through damage, destruction or lack of care. Soft landscaping quickly loses its design intent of not maintained, becoming subsumed by scrub and natural regeneration.

Landscape features should be maintained for as long as reasonably possible, but once beyond reasonable repair more complex decisions must be made regarding restoration or reconstruction. The addition of new elements also requires careful consideration.

*Maintaining landscape significance is discussed in more detail in **Section 4** of this guidance document.*

1.5 MANAGING CHANGE

Landscape conservation is not always straightforward. There is often a broad range of people, local communities, volunteers and organisations with an interest in landscapes, and questions of change that arise within them can be complex. Although decisions about their future should be guided by general policy, its application in each case must be a result of consultation informed by expertise, experience and judgement.

In important or contentious cases, a peer review of proposals, methods, and results may be desirable. This should result in a decision that is consistent and transparent.

Conflict between sustaining heritage significance and other important interests, such as biodiversity, community use and accessibility, is sometimes unavoidable. In such cases, the weight given to heritage qualities in making the decision should be proportionate to the interest of the landscape and the impact of the proposed change on its significance.

*Managing landscape change is discussed in more detail in **Section 5** of this guidance document.*

1.6 DOCUMENTING AND LEARNING

Accessible records of the justification for decisions and the actions that follow them will provide a cumulative account of what has happened to a place, and an understanding of how and why its significance has altered. We should monitor and regularly evaluate the effects of change and responses to it.

There is also an onus on those responsible for managing the heritage to disseminate their knowledge when this would be of academic, scientific or public interest.

*Documenting and learning is discussed in more detail in **Section 6** of this guidance document.*

1.7 WHY DOES IT MATTER?

English Heritage cares for over 400 historic monuments, buildings and places, many of which are surrounded by historic gardens, designed landscapes or significant settings. We have a responsibility to care for these heritage assets, but we must make decisions about their care and management that balances the need for conservation with the need for safe public access, enjoyment, recreation and learning. These are unique places that are often fragile and easily damaged. If we fail to follow sound landscape conservation principles, we risk losing the details, qualities and character that make them special.

2.0 Identifying and Understanding Historic Landscapes

The historian W G Hoskins famously noted that 'the landscape is the richest historical record we possess'. Those who care for our historic landscapes must, therefore be able to identify and understand the rich histories they contain. **Assessment of significance is the first step in identifying the cultural and natural heritage qualities of a landscape, and the starting point for balanced assessment and decision making**.

2.1 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLACE

The significance of a landscape embraces all the diverse cultural and natural heritage qualities that people associate with it, or which prompt them to respond to it.

In landscapes, significance tends to grow in strength and complexity over time as they mature. For example, it may take 200 years for an avenue to reach maturity, during which time its aesthetic and ecological qualities develop considerably. The appreciation of places varies over time too, as understanding deepens and as values and norms vary between generations.

The purpose of defining the significance of a landscape is to assist appreciation of it at present and to inform decisions about its future. It will be vital to constructing a conservation or management plan, and it determines what, if any, protections or statutory designations are appropriate under law and policy.

A garden or designed landscape can be of significance for reasons other than its historical interest. It may, for example, be of interest because of its ecology or its modern horticulture, and its attributes may include its aesthetic qualities, or its role as a public amenity. Such factors can be of great importance at sites which also happen to have a high level of historical interest. The existence of all such other interests needs to be taken into account when considering the broader issue of the conservation and management of historic sites.

2.2 ASSESSING HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The various considerations that form or qualify judgements of significance need to be brought together in a **Statement of Significance**. A reasoned explanation will be much more helpful than merely citing a designation.

The Historic England guidance document 'Conservation Principles'[2] sets out the following process for assessing the heritage significance of a place:

- Understand the fabric and evolution of the place
- Identify who values the place, and why they do so
- Relate identified heritage values to the fabric of the place
- Consider the relative importance of those identified values
- Consider the contribution of associated objects and collections

[2] https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/constructive-conservation/conservation-principles/

- Consider the contribution made by setting and context
- Compare the place with other places sharing similar values
- Articulate the significance of the place.

2.3 UNDERSTANDING THE FABRIC AND EVOLUTION OF THE LANDSCAPE

A garden or designed landscape survey should seek to identify the special qualities of a place, which are derived from a combination of elements. These include physical features, such as archaeological remains, buildings, walls, hedges, veteran trees and avenues, which should be recorded. There may also be particular aesthetic qualities of a site or setting, on account of its views, topography or geology. Remnants of past and recent use may be evident, whilst the landscape's evolution will have had a direct impact upon its character and upon its wildlife and biodiversity interest.

It is worth noting that the collection of information for a garden or designed landscape may differ in emphasis from other types of historic survey. Unlike the survey of an historic building, for example, greater attention might be given to the dynamics at work, the range of qualities represented and practical landscape management. A study of recent land use and management will also assist in understanding current processes and the likely trajectory of future change.

Figure 1 - At Witley Court garden archaeology confirmed the pattern of the box hedging and identified original ornamental aggregates enabling the garden team to reconstruct the flowing scroll designs of Nesfield's east parterre.

2.4 WHO VALUES THE LANDSCAPE AND WHY?

People may value a garden or landscape for many reasons beyond utility or personal association: for its unique features, the story it can tell about its past, its connection with notable people or events, its landform, flora and fauna, because they find it beautiful or inspiring, or for its role as a

focus of a community. These are examples of cultural and natural heritage values that people want to enjoy and sustain for the benefit of present and future generations, at every level from the 'familiar and cherished local scene' to the nationally or internationally significant place.

Different types of values include:

- **Evidential value** – where a landscape provides evidence of past human activity, including physical remains, geology, landform, species and habitats
- **Historical value** – which can be illustrative or associative. Illustrative value can be provided where a landscape demonstrates a link between past and present, offering an insight into past communities and activities. Associative value can be provided where a landscape is linked to an historical event, a movement, or a notable person or family. There might also be links to literature, art, music or film.
- **Aesthetic value** – where a landscape provides sensory and intellectual stimulation. This can include designed and fortuitous features, and often combines the two. A picturesque landscape, for example, might make use of natural features and exaggerate or embellish them to create an enhanced aesthetic effect. There might be noteworthy designers or influential design composition associated with the landscape.
- **Communal value** – where a landscape has meaning for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory. They may have commemorative, symbolic, social or spiritual value, and can include places of remembrance or worship, highly cherished places of public amenity or places which have evolved through community effort.
- **Environmental value** – where a landscape is valued for the wildlife or habitats it supports, or for its role as part of a wider ecosystem.

It is important to remember that landscapes usually contain multiple values, and these are sometimes conflicting. Due to the dynamic nature of landscapes, sustaining these values tends to rely heavily on appropriate stewardship.

2.5 RELATING HERITAGE VALUES TO THE FABRIC OF THE PLACE

An assessment of significance will normally need to identify how particular parts of a landscape and different periods in its evolution contribute to, or detract from, each strand of cultural and natural heritage value. Understanding a landscape should produce a chronological sequence, allowing its surviving elements to be ascribed to 'phases' in its evolution.

Historical analysis is best written up as a narrative explaining the sequence of overlays in the design, their connection with people and events, and their influence on ecological, aesthetic and other interests. The various component areas of the garden or designed landscape can then be differentiated in terms of location and date, and ascribed relative significance. Some phases are likely to be of greater significance than others, while some values, such as historical or communal, will apply to the place as a whole.

Analysis can interpret the garden form and fabric of the various component areas in terms of style, function and associations, and that will assist in assessing historical interest. An experienced garden historian may need to be consulted, and occasionally a specialist in historic plantings is also required.

Gardens and landscapes very often consist of a series of design and planting overlays, as successive owners have added, changed or subtracted according to their own desires and tastes. Indeed, part of the interest of a garden or designed landscape may lie in the sequence and build-up of historic overlays.

Views can also play a vital part in historic designed landscapes, both urban and rural, whether designed to be seen as a work of art or, more commonly, forming an historical composite, the cumulative result of long development.

2.6 THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF IDENTIFIED VALUES

Once the history and roles of the surviving landscape components are understood through historical analysis, they can be categorised and assessed by their condition relative to design intentions, and their importance within the historic garden or designed landscape.

In gardens and designed landscapes, it does not necessarily follow that items of the greatest value should be given priority. Some features may have high significance, because they have been designated under protective legislation or for archaeological or nature conservation. However, there are many more subtle or incidental qualities that are equally valuable to our experience or appreciation of a landscape; for example an historic designed view or a piece of topiary that has been skilfully maintained for hundreds of years.

It is therefore important to recognise other qualities and to strive for an integrated and balanced approach to their future. It is important that dialogue starts at an early stage. Competing interests can usually be reconciled if all those involved in decision-making remain open-minded.

Figure 3 – At Down House the glasshouses are important because they display a range of rare and unusual plants. They have increased significance because this was the home of Charles Darwin, who used the plants at Down House as part of his experiments when researching and writing 'On The Origin Of Species'.

2.7 ASSOCIATED OBJECTS

Historically associated objects can make a major contribution to the significance of a landscape, and association with that landscape can add heritage value to those objects. This might include artefacts recovered through archaeological fieldwork, garden sculpture, plant collections, tools and machinery, and related archives, both historical and archaeological.

The value of the whole is usually more than the sum of the parts, so that permanent separation devalues both place and objects. The contribution of such objects and archives, including evolving

collections, should be articulated, even if they are currently held elsewhere, and regardless of whether their contribution falls within the scope of statutory protection.

2.8 SETTING AND CONTEXT

Settings are well-understood in the context of buildings as consisting of the surroundings within which the buildings are experienced. Extensive designed landscapes will have their own setting but will likely embrace multiple heritage assets and their settings, which are often nested and overlapping.

The garden or landscape might be an integral part of an historic designed entity, having been intended to complement a building of high architectural or historical interest and having an important role in its setting. The effect of new structures or facilities on the setting of a built historic asset is a key factor when considering significance and change in historic gardens and designed landscapes.

The context of a garden or designed landscape may also be seen in terms of the surrounding estate, or as part of the system of open spaces in which it is just one element. It could be one manifestation of a wider landscape trend, or of the corpus of work of a particular designer, or of a distinctive design form. The role of a garden or designed landscape in the context of an area's green infrastructure is likely to become increasingly important in a changing climate.

Figure 2 - Marble Hill is one of a number of interlinking historic designed landscapes along the River Thames between Hampton Court and Kew. The Arcadian setting was important to the design of these classical houses. English Heritage is a partner in the Thames Landscape Strategy to conserve and enhance this stretch of the river.

2.8 OTHER LANDSCAPES SHARING SIMILAR VALUES

Understanding the importance of a landscape by comparing it with other landscapes that demonstrate similar values normally involves considering:

- How strongly the identified heritage values are demonstrated or represented by the landscape, compared with others
- How its values relate to statutory designation criteria, and any existing statutory designations

Designation at an international, national or local level is an indicator of importance, but the absence of statutory designation does not necessarily imply lack of significance. Just because a garden or landscape is not recognised through formal designation does not negate the values it may have to particular communities. Such values should still be taken into account in making decisions about its future through the spatial planning system, or incentive schemes like Countryside Stewardship.

2.9 ARTICULATE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLACE

A Statement of Significance for a garden or landscape should be a summary of the cultural and natural heritage values currently attached to it and how they inter-relate, which distils the particular character of the place. It should explain the relative importance of the heritage values of the place (where appropriate, by reference to criteria for statutory designation), how they relate to its physical fabric, the extent of any uncertainty about its values (particularly in relation to potential for hidden or buried elements), and identify any tensions between potentially conflicting values. So far as possible, it should be reviewed and approved by all who have an interest in the place.

The result should guide all decisions about material change to that significant landscape.

3.0 Threats and Vulnerabilities

There are threats and vulnerabilities affecting all types of heritage, but historic gardens and landscapes face an especially broad range of challenges. These can be direct or indirect and can arise from both managed and unmanaged change. Change is not always negative, but when it is badly or insensitively managed it has the potential to be detrimental.

The chief and obvious difference between the care of buildings and the care of landscapes is that the latter are more dynamic - sometimes fleeting, sometimes permanent, the various elements of landscapes can last from the 3-4 months of a bedding display to the indefinite survival of an earthwork. Conserving the heritage significance of a landscape, where the design or fabric is in a constant state of flux, presents different issues to the conservation of a more static or fixed asset such as a building.

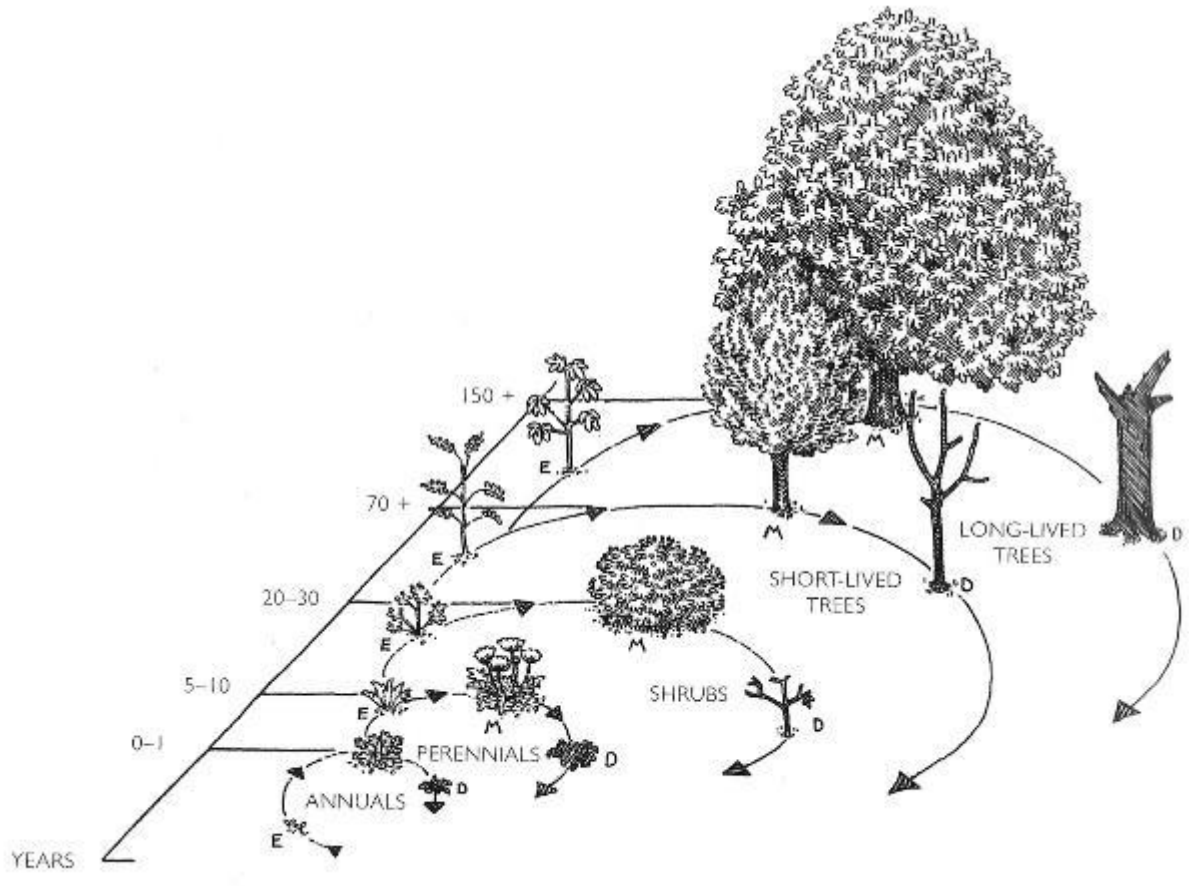

Figure 4: Each vegetation type (tree, shrub or non-woody plant) has its own cycle of growth. This cycle can vary from less than one year to many hundreds. Without active management, these cycles can lead to the degradation of a landscape and a loss of significance over time. In this illustration E = establishment, M = maturity and D = death.

3.1 NATURAL PROCESSES

- Growth and natural regeneration: avenues as design features mature and begin to senesce after 250 years, shrubbery can survive up to 40 years, whereas the fine effects of a herbaceous border lasts only for a few years.
- Degradation: waterways become silted up, features such as paths become grassed over and are lost. Architectural components can last as long as other buildings, but many were

constructed rapidly using cheap materials, including using wood instead of stone and degrade rapidly.

- Increases in soil compaction, affecting tree roots and drainage patterns.
- Pests and diseases, which can result in damage and loss to plants and ancient woodland, for example ash dieback or oak processionary moth.
- Changes to hydrology:- for example: an increase in the water table causing waterlogging or damage to trees; dams, retaining walls and ha-has which eventually succumb to hydrostatic pressure; stopping-off of watercourses beyond the boundary of the designed landscape resulting in the lowering of water levels within pools and lakes; seasonal flooding, which can seasonally inundate areas of land and cause erosion.
- Seasonal changes and weather events: storms and high winds can fell trees and accelerate erosion; frost heave can lift paths and damage masonry; heatwaves can bring drought; cold snaps can kill tender plants.

3.2 PHYSICAL CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

- Archaeological excavation, which can aid accurate restoration or reconstruction, but which is necessarily destructive of fabric
- Insertion of a building or structure which is at odds with the character of the place
- Physical removal of historic fabric, either due to degradation or due to changing fashions, which can see whole phases of landscape history erased
- Inappropriate tree felling, which can result in the loss of significant trees and ancient woodland. In some cases, tree plantations might not in themselves be significant, but can act as wind breaks, protecting more fragile landscape elements from damage and supporting species and habitats that are beneficial to the wider landscape. Removal of tree cover can also affect designed views, which can have positive and negative impacts.

3.3 PATTERNS OF USE AND ACCESS

- Deliberate change in order to accommodate new or different use patterns: for example, the need for car parking or step-free access provision.
- The effects of visitor pressure (driven by financial targets or increased publicity) which increase wear and tear and may result in the loss of ambience and character.
- Events, which can create new desire lines, cause compaction or increase the risk of damage to landscape features through the introduction of temporary infrastructure and surges in visitor numbers.

3.4 NOISE, VISUAL DISTURBANCE AND DAMAGE

- Development pressure on and around historic landscapes, resulting in increased urbanisation and with it increased noise and light pollution.
- Intrusion from increased traffic or vehicle movements, which can affect the ambience of a landscape, particularly one that relies upon tranquillity for its charm.
- Neglect of historic landscapes, making them more vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and deliberate damage.

- Loss of sounds from the landscape, for example, the cricket, the corncrake or the nightingale, which are under threat from loss of habitat, but which form an important part of our natural heritage.

3.5 POLLUTION

- Air pollution, which can cause unpleasant smells and affect the survival of particular species
- Water pollution, which can affect aquatic ecosystems and habitats and potentially pose a serious health and safety risk to people accessing watercourses, as well as looking unsightly
- Soil pollution, which can contaminate growing mediums and damage whole ecosystems and habitats

3.6 MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE PRACTICES

- The art of plantsmanship, which places a strong emphasis upon constant adjustment, removal and replacement in order to maintain desired effects, which means planting is constantly in a dynamic state and dependent upon the skill of the gardener
- Lack of knowledge or understanding of the significance of the historic landscape leading to unintended consequences, for example felling a significant tree, mowing out rare wildflowers, or inappropriate use of pesticides and plant protection products
- Shortage of skilled gardeners or changes in staffing and employment patterns, resulting in lack of continuity, which in turn leads to a loss of knowledge about sites and about their long-term management and maintenance priorities
- Over-reliance on external landscape contractors, which can result in a ‘one size fits all’ approach and increase the risk of loss or damage to special features, or inappropriate presentation standards
- Over-reliance on volunteers, which can result in disjointed or piecemeal maintenance activities, or the introduction of inappropriate features and additions to landscapes
- Fluctuations in budgets, making long-term planning for management and maintenance more difficult
- Irregular or reduced maintenance, resulting in areas becoming overgrown and losing their intrinsic character, which can often be hard to re-establish. Overgrown areas can become valuable habitats for wildlife or rare species, but this creates its own challenges in terms of balancing natural and cultural heritage values and conservation approaches.
- Changes to maintenance regimes affecting growth, texture or colour of shrubs and trees
- Inappropriate land management regimes, for example conversion of historic parkland to arable farming
- Loss of traditional management practices, for example using grass cutting machinery rather than grazing, resulting in mowing lines, loss of browsing beneath tree canopies, lack of wildflower regeneration
- Lack of replanting, resulting in landscapes that are over-mature with a poor age diversity within tree stocks, or with a loss of interest and variety in plant species
- Inappropriate use of materials, for example replacing a traditional hurdle fence with post and wire mesh, or resurfacing a gravel path with bitmac

3.7 CLIMATE CHANGE

We are already witnessing the effect of climate change in England, and this will increase over the rest of the century, although its full effect is uncertain. This is likely to lead to challenges such as:

- reduced frosts, an earlier spring, higher average temperatures all year round, and increased winter rainfall
- increased frequency of some extreme weather events, such as wind, floods and drought
- the spread of invasive species, pests and diseases

The greatest challenges in landscapes will be the long-term care of historic layouts with extensive areas of grass, as well as the survival of veteran and ancient specimens, and planting effects, from a time when climatic conditions were different. Climate change impacts will also have implications for landscape management programmes, staffing and budgets. In the future, adaptation strategies will need to be considered, which allow for a greater flexibility in protecting living assets to ensure that heritage significance is upheld.

English Heritage's Climate Action Plan (2022-2025)[3] provides the wider context for the impact of climate change on our historic places and assets and sets out how English Heritage is planning to become a more sustainable organisation. As part of this plan we are investing in infrastructure improvements, for example introducing electric car charging, building more composting facilities and looking at ways to reduce water consumption. All sites will be mapped for climate hazards, exposure and vulnerability and all land mapped for natural capital, identifying opportunities for environmental gain and biodiversity improvement. We will also be undertaking research projects around invasive species and pests on our sites.

Many of these targets will encourage beneficial changes to the way in which our landscapes are managed, but some are more challenging. Infrastructure changes, for example, need to be carefully considered in terms of both physical and visual intrusion, whilst biodiversity improvements need to be compatible with the historic presentation and character of a site. In all cases, there must be site-specific assessment of the impact of any proposed changes upon the landscape and landscape setting.

[3] https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/about-us/our-priorities/sustainability/climate-pl-22-2025/

Figure 5: Changes in climate may affect the amount of fruit that is produced in gardens and designed landscapes. Although this does not impact the significance of the tree in its design context, it may have consequences in relation to interpretation to visitors and the perceived continued value of orchards and fruit trees in the landscape, including in the Kitchen Garden at Audley End

3.8 EXTENT AND SETTING

Historic monuments, buildings, gardens and designed landscapes all have their own settings, which often 'borrow' the landscape beyond the present legal boundary of the property. Designers frame and thereby display views of interest such as those of mountains, church spires and bodies of water. The enjoyment of an historic monument, building, garden or designed landscape may depend in part on what lies outside its limits, and change affecting the exterior landscape can profoundly affect the heritage asset.

The settings of many of the sites within our care are provided by surrounding landscapes which are not within the guardianship of English Heritage. Proposed developments in the wider landscape that impact on these settings should be reviewed carefully and responded to appropriately, to minimise harm. The expansion of Corby outwards towards Kirby Hall and proposals for housing in the vicinity of Wrest Park are just two examples of the threat development can pose to the wider settings of our sites.

At Brodsworth Hall and Witley Court, changes to landscape management in the wider agricultural landscape are steadily eroding what was once formal parkland belonging to these properties. Fine parkland trees and tree clumps are steadily being lost due to ploughing, whilst the creep of modern agricultural buildings and machinery is beginning to impact adversely on what is now the 'borrowed' setting of these historic gardens.

4.0 Maintaining Significance

This section summarises our approach to the forms of conservation used to improve the lifespan, aesthetics or usability of historically significant gardens and designed landscapes. The approaches described here are all acceptable in conservation terms, in that they prolong a landscape's historic qualities whilst causing minimal harm to its fabric and significance, but the choice must be appropriate to the circumstances. The definitions used here are based on those set out in the Burra Charter 2013.[4]

Upkeep and renewal of historic fabric should always be the preferred treatment until such time as the fabric fails through normal decay, damage or use. As the vegetation in most landscapes has a variety of life cycles, ranging from one year to many hundreds, active management is always required to retain a design or habitat.

Repair will become desirable when the fabric of a landscape's elements starts to fail, and when there is sufficient information for the replacement fabric to be accurate.

Restoration involves returning the existing fabric of a place to a known earlier state by removing accretions or by reassembling existing components without the introduction of new material. In restoration the heritage significance of the elements that are to be restored should decisively outweigh the significance of those that will be lost. It can be achieved through careful selection of various forms and degrees of treatment.

Reconstruction involves returning a place to a known earlier state and is distinguished from restoration by the introduction of new material to the fabric. Any new additions should be based on compelling evidence with minimal conjecture. As with restoration, when considering reconstruction, the heritage significance of the elements that would be reconstructed should decisively outweigh the significance of those that would be lost. It can be achieved through careful selection of various forms and degrees of treatment.

Conjectural detailing involves reconstruction of an element of design using appropriate contemporary precedents, in the absence of reliable historic records showing its original form. It will often be possible and may be desirable in order to maintain the aesthetic coherence of the whole, provided its conjectural status is made clear in the Conservation Management Plan and in information provided to visitors.

Figure 6 (before) and Figure 7 (after) - Key to the restoring the garden throughout Wrest Park was an understanding of the site's hydrology. Waterlogging had undermined the establishment of new planting in previous attempts to rejuvenate the 18th century gardens. Here we see the Bath House Water, before and after dredging and re-presentation.

[4] https://australia.icomos.org/publications/burra-charter-practice-notes/

It is not unusual for cyclical maintenance, especially if it is delayed, to require minor elements of repair, restoration or reconstruction. However, these should always be carried out with great care, considering their impact on the significance of the cultural and natural heritage.

A common thread is that a premium is placed on the fabric of a garden or designed landscape as being a direct link to its creation. If and when intervention becomes necessary following decay, the historic design should be re-created on a like-for-like basis.

Figure 8 - The 19th century parterre at Boscobel House (Shropshire) is of historic interest as an example of the Victorian enthusiasm for “restoring” historic gardens.

4.1 UPKEEP AND PERIODIC RENEWAL

Upkeep, or maintenance, is the routine work necessary to keep the fabric of a place in good order. Much of it involves no intervention to the hard fabric, merely the removal of growth or obstructions to the proper functioning of the historic landscape: for example, grass mowing; hedge clipping; pruning; sweeping paths and keeping drains clear. In gardens and designed landscapes much of this work is cyclical or dependent on the seasons, giving rise to the gardeners’ calendar of work to be undertaken in each month.

Periodic renewal of elements of the planting design may be part of the design intention or implied in the nature of the fabric. The annual planting of bedding schemes, for instance, would be included in this category. Garden structures may also need re-roofing, and other renewal work may take place on planned cycles. Such renewal may involve a proportion of like-for-like new fabric.

The dynamics of plant growth and replacement must be considered if designed planting effects are to be maintained. The landscape and its planting may be allowed to mature, and then cleared and replanted at intervals to recover its original juvenile effect. Alternatively, to avoid such dramatic and

costly upheaval, the garden should be maintained in a constant cycle of growth and replacement. In order to achieve the latter, the relationships between the various stages of maturity must be understood, and an even age distribution across the garden attempted.

Any break of continuity in upkeep or like-for-like periodic renewal will cause premature failure of the fabric, including plantings. Upkeep and periodic renewal, undertaken regularly, will provide the best chance for the original vegetative and built fabric to survive, and thereby for the design intentions to be perpetuated. Any other form of treatment carries the possibility that the design intentions are not accurately reflected in new fabric. For this reason, upkeep and renewal is always the preferred treatment until such time as the fabric fails through normal decay, damage or use.

Figure 9 - The bedding schemes in the Victorian gardens at Osborne are renewed each spring and summer, as they would have been in Queen Victoria's time.

4.2 REPAIR

Repair is the work necessary in order to remedy defects caused by decay, damage or use. The objective is to perpetuate the design, even if not all the fabric of the landscape can be retained (and this includes the trees and long-lived plantings). During repair works, retaining historical accuracy is the most important consideration. The term 'repair' is well-understood in the building context, but here would include dealing with the failure of structural planting, by, for example, replanting a damaged section of hedge, as well as rebuilding a fallen section of a ha-ha, or re-laying steps. The ability to genetically replicate tree and plant species by producing cloned copies (via propagation) adds another dimension to the idea of 'repair' in historic gardens and designed landscapes.

Whilst gardens may contain art in the form of stone or metalwork (statues, urns, fountain sculptures), the artistic act in the creation of a garden or landscape as a whole is the design concept, with the combination of craftsmanship, earthworks, and planting being the means to that end. Hence it would not be necessary to rebuild a wall with all bricks in the same places, but more

precision might be important with a cascade constructed of large boulders in order to retain its design and appearance.

Repair is normally the desirable treatment when the fabric is failing, but the following provisos should be met:

- There is sufficient information on the intended design and appearance for the replacement fabric to reflect the original accurately.
- Repairs should incorporate as much of the sound existing fabric as feasible.

Repairs that are so extensive that none, or only a small part, of a landscape component is left fall into the category of restoration or reconstruction.

Figure 10 – At Wrest Park, yew hedges, which had become out of proportion and lost their design intent have been regenerated and will be managed to return them to their historic form without the introduction of new fabric. This is a good example of repair in historic gardens and landscapes.

4.3 RESTORATION

Restoration involves returning the existing fabric of a place to a known earlier state by removing accretions or by reassembling existing components without the introduction of new material. Pure restoration includes revealing or re-instating elements of the garden or designed landscape that have been eroded, obscured or partially removed. It would include the reinstatement of vanished railings, digging out silted-up lakes, the re-cutting of Victorian flower beds, and the replanting of fragmented avenues, for example.

The ‘known earlier state’ being sought is that before decay of the design set in. The intention of restoration is to put the existing garden or designed landscape into good order for future enjoyment, not to return it to its exact state in an earlier heyday. It should be noted that for features such as trees, decay is part of their life cycle and veteran trees are valued as individuals and as wildlife habitats.

Generally, restoration becomes the preferred treatment only because of a past failure, for a period of time, of upkeep and renewal. Nevertheless, a decision to restore is not unusual in gardens and designed landscapes, as their fabric is relatively ephemeral, and failures of upkeep are not uncommon. Even when upkeep has been continuous, the garden or designed landscape may have developed significantly differently from the original design intentions.

Restoration can be achieved through various forms and degrees of treatment. Some of the work might be considered repair; some recovery through garden archaeology; and some engineering work. The prescription for any particular landscape element has to be judged on a case-by-case basis. For example, there have been those who advocate replanting avenues by clear felling and replanting; others prefer a policy of continuous replacement; and yet others suggest alternative strategies. There is no standard conservation approach. Restoration strategies must relate to the significance and condition of each avenue. It should be borne in mind, though, that the position of each tree is historical information that can be retained through accurate replanting, and that the genetic identity of the original trees may also be of interest, arguing for propagation from them by cuttings, grafting or layering.

Whilst positive management tends towards the recovery of the unified experience of the whole landscape, it will also conserve the identity of the individual parts, or ‘character areas’, each requiring its own forms of treatment. Restoration may therefore translate into an interlocking set of different approaches, rather than a single blanket treatment.

As with buildings, there may be recent additions or insertions that have eroded a planned ornamental design and which can be viewed as damaging to its heritage qualities. It will be a matter of judgement as to whether such changes are retained as part of the actual history of the landscape, or whether removal is justified because they result from mere short-sightedness, financial pragmatism or neglect.

There are cases in which a better restoration might be achieved by altering some elements of the original design. At Wrest Park, for example, elms that were lost to Dutch Elm Disease have not been replanted using the same variety that was planted historically, but using *Ulmus lutece*, a variety that is disease resistant. This approach has allowed for the correct species to be reintroduced, but has mitigated the risk of repeat tree loss.

Modern pressures or ideas for improvement may also argue for adaptation of a garden or designed landscape, which is not necessarily beneficial in conservation terms. The approach may be to accommodate adaptation of some components in order to revitalise the landscape for today’s requirements. It may also be thought that there is scope for new design alongside other conservation or repair work. Reconciliation of competing aims calls for imaginative landscape design.

Figure 11: At Brodsworth Hall, the conservation project in the garden involved elements of repair, restoration and reconstruction. After an extended period of minimal maintenance the garden had become overgrown and the original design intention lost. Restoration included revealing and re-instating elements of the garden that had been eroded, obscured or partially removed.

The caution advised with other treatments with regard to removal of historic fabric applies with restoration too, but restoration should normally be acceptable if:

- the heritage significance of the elements that would be restored decisively outweigh the significance of those that would be lost;
- the work proposed is justified by compelling evidence of past changes, and is executed in accordance with that evidence;
- the change proposed respects previous forms of the place and does not introduce incongruities with its surroundings;
- the fabric to be removed is recorded as part of the documentation of change.

4.4 RECONSTRUCTION

Reconstruction involves returning a place to a known earlier state and is distinguished from restoration by the introduction of new material to the fabric. Any new additions should be based on compelling evidence with minimal conjecture.

As with restoration, when considering reconstruction, the heritage significance of the elements which are to be reconstructed should decisively outweigh the significance of those that will be lost. It can be achieved through careful selection of various forms and degrees of treatment.

The reconstruction of a lost element of a garden or designed landscape might, in isolation, be considered undesirable, but it may be acceptable if it is essential to the understanding of the wider landscape design: for example, re-instating a grotto or bridge on a garden circuit.

The restoration of a garden or landscape can sometimes more appropriately be described as reconstruction, because it involves rebuilding a lost garden structure, or because most of the plantings have to be reconstructed from archaeological or archival evidence, sometimes with a degree of conjecture. The legitimacy of this reconstructive approach to garden and landscape conservation must be defended on an exceptional case-by-case basis.

4.5 CONJECTURAL DETAILING

Conjectural detailing involves reconstruction of an element of design using appropriate contemporary precedents, in the absence of reliable historic records showing its original form. Whilst the aim of restoration and reconstruction is to consolidate and enhance significance, there may be minor details for which inadequate evidence exists, for example path edging and the precise species and positions of plants. Conjectural detailing will often be desirable in order to maintain the aesthetic coherence of the whole landscape, provided its conjectural status is recorded and shared in information provided to visitors.

The planting of borders and beds is often significant to gardens and gardening traditions, much as the decorative arts and furnishings add to the importance, aesthetics, and enjoyment of architectural heritage. Research into such contemporary details often exists or could be commissioned. However, it is also important to remember that planting schemes are usually reversible, so where evidence about the historic planting design is lacking the approach can be more flexible.

Figure 12 - Through scholarly research of a contemporary account and other garden references, plus corroborating garden archaeology evidence, the Elizabethan garden at Kenilworth was reconstructed to better understand the garden that was there in 1575 and offer a new experience for visitors.

The caution advised with other treatments in relation to removal of historic fabric applies with restoration too, but conjectural detailing will normally be acceptable provided:

- The details in question are not a major proportion of the whole
- Conjectural detailing is not employed as a substitute for careful recording, archaeological investigation and analysis
- Research into historic precedent shows the details to be reasonably predictable within a narrow range (the modern choice of planting might also be guided by climate change considerations)
- It is compatible with the known facts about an area or aspect of the design
- It is readily reversible
- The conjectural status of the details is made clear in the historic environment record and in information provided to visitors

Figure 13 - At Mount Grace a modern designer, Chris Beardshaw, was commissioned to provide a new planting design to overlay the historic garden. This approach was taken only after detailed research was completed to understand the history and significance of the garden. This concluded that although the historic hard layout remained, there were no surviving historic plans for the planting.

5.0 Managing Change

Whatever the scale of the proposal, the same fundamental process for assessing change applies, via a Statement of Significance and the definition of conservation aims.

There is no substitute for informed judgement on a case-by-case basis, but to be acceptable, proposals for change should be clear, technically accurate, honest, consistent and sustainable. The level of detail should be proportionate to the importance of the landscape and the scale of changes proposed. Local communities and other interested parties such as volunteers should be involved in decision-making where appropriate and given opportunities to propose changes for consideration.

5.1 NEW WORK AND ADAPTATION

New work produces a contemporary overlay to a landscape and usually often involves a full redesign of part of it (occasionally all of it). Adaptation is work intended to change the function or appearance of a place, usually in order to meet modern requirements. It consists of elements of new work in an otherwise historic design.

New work has the same potential for harm as other forms of change, but, well-conceived, it also has potential to enhance the overall qualities of a place. Adaptation has potential to confuse the historic design, but when necessary in order to meet pressing new needs, it should be carried out in a way that has the minimum impact on the qualities and significance of the garden or designed landscape.

The dangers of new work include the potential removal of historic fabric, changes to the manner and sequence of the visitor experience and adding confusion to the understanding of the fabric. Nevertheless, new work is not always detrimental: all significant landscapes were originally produced through a series of radical interventions in existing landscapes.

A new overlay or alteration by one of today's designers within part of a landscape that never had a high significance, or which has irretrievably lost much of its significance, may be acceptable if these additional criteria are satisfied:

- There is sufficient information to comprehensively understand the impacts of the proposals on the significance of the place
- The proposals aspire to a quality of design and execution which may be valued, both now and in the future, and make a positive contribution to the character, qualities and local distinctiveness of the historic environment
- The long-term consequences of the proposals can be demonstrated to be benign, or they are designed not to prejudice other options in the future.

There can be scope for new work to remove unfortunate recent additions, re-open lost vistas, or reinforce local characteristics such as scale and materials. Interventions in a landscape could also be beneficial to the ecology of the place or make it proof against climate change.

Development in sensitive historic environments like gardens and designed landscapes and their settings necessitates high standards of design and an approach bespoke to the site.

Welcoming visitors is integral to the charitable purpose of English Heritage, and visiting landscapes is a highly popular activity both recreationally and educationally. The income generated by visitors at our garden properties is also significant to the charity. Increasing public access often necessitates new facilities, such as expanded car parking areas, shops, and children's play. These facilities and visitor interpretation need to be carefully designed and integrated so as not to

negatively impact on the historic significance or detract from the very appeal and qualities of the landscape that make it a visitor attraction.

Figure 14 – At Wrest Park, new visitor facilities including a café and play area were added to the Walled Garden. This development is a contemporary design, but the proportions and style echoes garden sheds and it is tucked under the height of the existing garden walls. These decisions were the result of an evaluation and understanding of the history, significance and the survival of historic fabric.

Under the Equalities Act (2010), all service providers, including organisations with gardens and landscapes open to the public, need to 'make reasonable adjustments' to provide equality in the service offered to all. Improving access is an opportunity to attract new audiences, increase the likelihood of repeat visits and improve the quality of experience for all visitors.

Adaptation devised for presenting a landscape to visitors should be treated like any other proposal for new work, and in addition should:

- Manifestly be subservient to the fabric that is the subject of presentation;
- Potentially be reversible, in order not to prejudice future options for solving similar needs.

Landscape designs take time to take shape. Trees take decades to mature, and often their character and qualities derive cumulatively from decisions over generations. The landscape evolves over time to become an ecosystem. By the same token, sustaining the significance of landscapes requires a long-term view and a planned approach.

5.2 DOCUMENTS TO HELP GUIDE CHANGE

There are a number of documents that can be used to help guide and manage change in historic landscapes. The terminology for these can sometimes be used interchangeably, but they are distinctly different document, which should be used for different purposes. The main types are:

- **Statements of Significance** - as discussed in Section 2 of this document, these underpin our understanding of all historic landscapes, setting out what is valuable and why. These documents are an essential first step and are often triggered by a proposed change of some sort (for example, justifying the acceptability of a change within the historic landscape as part

of a planning application for development). They are usually prepared by a historian or curator. All sites should have a Statement of Significance, and these should include adequate consideration of historic landscapes and issues of landscape setting.

- **Conservation Management Plans** – these documents elaborate on the Statement of Significance, setting out a long-term plan of action with desirable activities and changes to help improve and enhance the current condition of an historic landscape. They help identify opportunities for change or improvement that would increase understanding of a landscape or improve its presentation and accessibility. They are critical documents for supporting funding bids and wider masterplanning proposals. They should be prepared by a curator or landscape specialist, with input from all staff who contribute to the day-to-day running of a site and practical maintenance.
- **Masterplans** – these documents identify specific changes that are desirable and specify a proposed plan of action for achieving that change. A masterplan is usually detailed and covers a complex scope of work, over a longer time period. They often include a phased and costed plan of work. They can be entirely landscape focused, or include landscape works as part of a wider plan of improvements. They are often prepared and collated by an external specialist, with input from a wide range of curatorial and management staff within the organisation but can also be prepared internally.
- **Management and Maintenance Plans** – these documents set out the day to day activities that are needed to ensure landscapes are conserved appropriately and significance is maintained. They might include practical information, such as mowing regimes and cyclical maintenance activities. All intensively managed gardens and landscapes, especially those with significant horticultural interest, should have a Management and Maintenance Plan. These are prepared by the Gardens & Landscape team, with input from head gardeners, landscape managers and estate managers.

5.3 CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLANS

The most favourable method of managing change is through a Conservation Management Plan. Incorporating an analysis of survey and documentary research, it should contain a Statement of Significance, and then propose conservation aims for the landscape.

Ideally every landscape of significance (not just those of major historical significance) should have such a plan. It forms the basis for establishing what works are required, how urgent they are and how they might be phased, which in turn informs the development of detailed proposals and costed plans for their repair, restoration or reconstruction.

The application of such a plan is wide, as it will seek, for example, to:

- Balance the historic, cultural, scenic, natural, horticultural, agricultural and silvicultural, touristic and other interests represented at the place.
- Identify and evaluate previous approaches to managing change, presentation and conservation.
- Provide a vision for formulating related policies and decisions.
- Define the conservation aims and policies so that there are yardsticks against which proposals for change, however minor, may be assessed.
- Address management issues, such as those arising from divided ownership.
- Demonstrate the need for change or enhancement, which can help support bids for funding

Thought needs to be given to the scope of the plan, in terms of the requirements of the individual property, the detail needed, and the plan's long-term use. Over-ambitious plans often become impractical to use, unwieldy to update and can be unnecessarily costly to produce. The work required for research and development of proposals can be scaled down proportionately to suit smaller conservation projects, or projects within projects, as long as the core of the process – an informed statement of the significance and conservation aims for the whole design – is accomplished. Outline proposals can always be augmented later, with additional research and surveys for specific projects.

Once the Conservation Management Plan is in place, it should be adhered to consistently. That is not to say that the conservation aims and proposals cannot change over time. However, changes should represent mature reflection, not the ascendancy of the immediate over the long-term, or the consequence of a whim. An example of sensible adaption would be adding a policy to monitor climate change impacts to inform the development of a longer-term climate change strategy for the site. Plans should be reviewed, updated, and rolled forward regularly, usually every five years.

The long-term implications for viability and sustainability need to be treated realistically. Expensive works devised without an assessment of the increased resources needed for upkeep are likely to be counterproductive. Issues like the impact of climate change, potential future shortages of water and the desirability of reducing energy consumption and improving waste recovery will be part of the backdrop to management.

5.4 STRATEGY FOR DECISION MAKING

Whatever the scale of the proposal, the same fundamental process for making decisions applies. Smaller proposals require no less experience and judgement, although the level of information supplied in the proposal should be proportionate to the significance of the heritage asset and the likely effect on that significance via the change proposed.

The process should include the following steps:

- Assemble historical, ecological and topographical information that explains the origin, use, and development, to the present, of those elements of the landscape that may be affected by the proposal.
- Assess the cultural, natural and historical significance of these elements both to the landscape, and in terms of landscape history and nature conservation generally.
- Define conservation aims for the area of the proposed changes.
- Establish the policy context within which the decision is being made.
- Assess the proposals against the conservation aims, and also aesthetic and other considerations, defining threats and opportunities.
- Involve local communities and other interested parties, such as volunteers, in the decision-making where appropriate.
- Consider the effects of mitigation or compensatory works.
- Decide on whether the proposals should be accepted.
- Record the decision and the reasons for it.

Where a Conservation Management Plan is in place, several of these steps will already have been taken.

5.5 DECISION MAKING

The balance of benefit and harm to the landscape may be hard to judge, especially when evaluating existing vegetative fabric at the end of its viable life (for example, a two-hundred-year-old continuously renewed hedge) against original design intent, or against the merits of sustainable renewal for future centuries. Consistency, whilst always desirable, must be weighed against site specific needs. At Brodsworth Hall, for example, the house is conserved 'as found', but whilst this 'light touch' approach is perfectly viable for a building and its contents, it would be catastrophic for the surrounding gardens, which depend upon intensive maintenance to conserve their character.

Quite often the replanting of an historic garden requires considerable reconstruction (in the sense of entirely new materials, with conjectural detailing). Repair or restoration is often more feasible for built elements, such as garden buildings or terraced walls, where there might be tangible remains, original plans or strong documentary evidence of the original design. Decorative replanting (herbaceous borders, bedding plants etc) is unlikely to be a destructive intervention, due to its reversibility. However, harm can be caused by structural replanting, such as trees, which can cause damage to archaeological deposits or landscape infrastructure.

There is often also a balance to be found between cultural and natural heritage. The fundamental tenet of all landscapes is that their form has been shaped by human intervention and often maintained and managed continuously for many centuries. This has resulted in a diverse range of habitats, some of which have high biodiversity value (for example, wood pasture and parkland, or traditional orchard, both of which are UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority habitats and common in historic landscapes). Historic landscapes are also home to many different types of wildlife, including UK BAP priority species.

There is no substitute for informed judgement.

Proposals for landscapes should:

- Be conceived and interpreted with authenticity to the history of the place
- Have a clarity of purpose made manifest by philosophical, functional and visual cohesion
- Seek opportunities for repair and renewal, a sustainable use, an improved conservation regime, interpretation and public access, whilst not significantly harming the prevailing qualities of the place
- Be historically and technically accurate, in the case of repair and renewal
- Work in harmony with other aspects of conservation at the place, notably those applying to associated buildings
- Be sustainable in the medium-to-long-term in order to minimise future disruption and use of resources
- Monitor and review both short- and long-term conservation benefits
- Be consistent with previous conservation decisions (consistency in management being a virtue in itself in landscapes)
- Be shared with specialists not within the immediate project team for informed assessment and debate.

6.0 Documenting and Learning

The scope of documentation to be recorded for a historic landscape will be similar to other forms of conservation involving heritage assets:

- Historical research, and site survey, as a factual basis for establishing its interest
- The justification for decisions and the consequent changes
- Monitoring and evaluation of change as part of the management process.

This documentation needs to be maintained in a form likely to be useful in the future: for example, by transmission to site teams, deposition in shared drives and/or publication.

Our landscapes are a valuable historic resource and provide a living record of planting designs. Plant records should be created and managed to allow us to maintain the accessibility and continuity of this information for future custodians of our landscapes. This may prove particularly useful with the on-going changes in today's climate, as plant records data will provide a useful record of plant losses and plant viability.

The dynamics and inevitable changes of landscapes over time argue for such documentation being central to the process of their conservation. Recording becomes increasingly essential in proportion to the ephemerality of the elements and effects involved.

Initial surveys will be immediately useful in establishing historical and ecological interest. In the longer term, they will provide a baseline for monitoring the landscape to assess change or decay and evaluate the success or failure of the actions chosen. Ideally surveys will include key indicators of condition and suggest periodic monitoring activities and actions to be taken in response.

Figure 15 - Historic paintings such as Tomkins' views of Audley End provide historic research insights.

In landscapes, the periodic renewal of elements very often encounters the results or remains of earlier change. A record of earlier decision-making could then be highly illuminating. By the same token, the justification for fresh decisions and a record of the actions that followed them can be gathered. In this way an understanding of how and why the place and its qualities may have been altered is offered to one's successors.

Every project should have an 'archive' that can include photographs, surveys, committee papers and minutes, research reports, archaeological reports, design drawings, monitoring reports and so forth.

7.0 Further Information

APPENDICES

- Appendix A – List of Registered Landscapes in EH Guardianship

REFERENCES

- Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment (Historic England, 2008)
- The Setting of Heritage Assets Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition), (Historic England, 2017)
- Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets Historic England Advice Note 12 (Historic England, 2019)
- The Management & Maintenance of Historic Parks, Gardens & Landscapes: The English Heritage Handbook (John Watkins and Tom Wright, 2007)