

Cabinet

16 March 2020

**Local List of Historic Parks, Gardens
and Designed Landscapes**

Key Decision No: REAL/01/2020



Report of Corporate Management Team

Geoff Paul, Interim Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services

Councillor Brian Stephens, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Local Partnerships

Councillor Carl Marshall, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economic Regeneration

Councillor Kevin Shaw, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing and Assets

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide.

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To consider the adoption of a Local List of Historic Parks, Gardens and Designed Landscapes for County Durham, which will be used in the consideration of planning proposals and for helping to conserve the County's historic environment.
- 2 To consider the approval of a review process to update and add to the Local List on a 5 year cycle using a similar assessment methodology.

Executive summary

- 3 Historic Parks, Gardens and Designed Landscapes are an important part of the county's cultural heritage and are often of considerable scenic value. They encompass a wide range of features including medieval deer parks, the ornamental gardens, grounds and landscape settings of country houses, and municipal landscapes such as public parks and cemeteries.

- 4 Our most important historic parks and gardens are identified in *Historic England's Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England*. A number of parks and gardens of local interest have been identified in the past in some Local Plans, but many remained unidentified. A systematic review was carried out between 2017 and 2019 to develop a Local List of Historic Parks, Gardens and Designed Landscapes as part of the evidence base of the County Durham Plan.
- 5 Government guidance on the historic environment advises that plan-making bodies should make clear and up to date information on non-designated heritage assets accessible to the public to provide greater clarity and certainty for developers and decision-makers. Non-designated heritage assets are buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by plan-making bodies as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets such as being a Scheduled or Listed asset.
- 6 While the primary impetus to the production of a local list has been to support the Council's planning function, it has wider benefits in raising awareness and understanding of these important components of the county's landscape.
- 7 A list of potential sites was drawn up by Durham County Council Landscape, Archaeology and Design specialists. The list was reviewed by a panel of experts, including a representative of the Northumbria Gardens Trust, which produced a list of 109 candidate sites for further assessment. Durham County Council appointed consultant garden historian Fiona Green to undertake an assessment of the significance of each candidate site: 96 were recommended for inclusion in a local list.
- 8 Consultation on the findings of the assessment was carried out between January 2019 and March 2019. Residents and landowners were contacted and directed to an online public consultation hosted on the Durham County Council website. Comments were reviewed by the expert panel and by the consultant garden historian. Some changes were recommended to individual sites including changes to boundaries, background information and/or assessments of significance
- 9 The proposed local list includes 96 sites. Following adoption, the list and its supporting information will be publicly available at www.keystothepast.info and www.heritagegateway.org.uk and reviewed on a 5 year cycle.

Recommendation(s)

10 Cabinet is recommended to:

- (a) adopt the Local List of 96 recommended sites;
- (b) approve the proposals to review the list on a five year cycle using a similar process used in this review;
- (c) note that in exceptional cases, a nomination may be considered ahead of the 5 year cycle if there is a clearly demonstrable and immediate need.

Background

- 11 Historic Parks, Gardens and Designed Landscapes are an important part of the county's cultural heritage. They are as much a part of that heritage as historic settlements and buildings. They encompass a wide range of features including medieval deer parks, the ornamental gardens, grounds and landscape settings of country houses, and municipal landscapes such as public parks and cemeteries. These landscapes are also often of nature conservation value because of their age, physical structure, or continuity of management, and contain some of the county's most notable ancient and veteran trees.
- 12 Our most important historic parks and gardens are identified in Historic England's *Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England* which was established in 1983. A number of parks and gardens of local interest have been identified in the past in some Local Plans, but there has been, until now, no systematic assessment of these features on a county-wide basis.
- 13 Work started in 2017 to carry out a review of parks, gardens and designed landscapes to contribute to the evidence base of the County Durham Plan. This was undertaken to provide more consistent information on the location, character and significance of these features across the county, and to support the development of a local list of sites that make a particular contribution to local character and sense of place because of their heritage value.
- 14 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines a heritage asset as a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).
- 15 Landscapes identified as Designated Heritage Assets include Registered Parks & Gardens and Registered Battlefields, together with some World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments and Conservation Areas. Designated Heritage Assets benefit from varying levels of statutory protection. Registered Parks and Gardens are identified and designated by Historic England. Eighteen of these lie wholly or partly within County Durham.

- 16 Government guidance on the historic environment defines non designated heritage assets as buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by plan-making bodies as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets.
- 17 Non-designated parks and gardens may be identified in development plans or on local lists, many of which in the past were prepared by local garden societies or garden trusts. Local lists are now typically prepared in association with development plans, either as part of their evidence base or as supplementary planning guidance. Twenty-eight parks and gardens of local interest have been identified in Local Plans in the past in County Durham. The identification of these parks and gardens was not supported by a detailed evidence base or an assessment of significance of individual assets.
- 18 Government guidance on the historic environment advises that plan-making bodies should make clear and up to date information on non-designated heritage assets accessible to the public to provide greater clarity and certainty for developers and decision-makers. This includes information on the criteria used to select non-designated heritage assets and information about the location of existing assets. While the primary impetus to the production of a local list of historic parks, gardens and designed landscapes has been to support the Council's planning function, it has wider benefits in raising awareness and understanding of these important components of the county's landscape.
- 19 Local listing is not a form of designation. The identification of a landscape on the local list does not provide any statutory protection and does not result in any additional legal requirements for owners or occupiers. Local listing does not affect Permitted Development Rights. In dealing with planning applications for development affecting Registered Parks and Gardens, local planning authorities must consult Historic England and the local Gardens Trust. This is not the case for features identified on the local list, although in some cases local planning authorities may do so at their discretion.

Methodology

- 20 The approach to local listing was based on that adopted for the National Register. The emphasis of the Register is on the landscape of gardens, grounds and other planned open spaces. The majority of sites registered are, or started life as, the grounds of private houses, but public parks and cemeteries also form important categories. Landscapes associated with institutions such as hospitals, or features such as pumping stations, are included where they demonstrate

skilfully-planned surroundings reflecting the landscaping fashions of their day. In County Durham, other important categories included in the list are ornamental estate farmland and medieval deer parks.

- 21 A list of potential sites was drawn up by Durham County Council Landscape, Archaeology and Design specialists. This included:
- parks and gardens previously identified in local plans;
 - parks, gardens and designed landscapes identified in the County Durham Landscape Character Assessment (2008);
 - parks, gardens and designed landscapes identified in the County Durham and Darlington Historic Landscape Characterisation (2013);
 - parks, gardens and designed landscapes identified by local experts.

The list was reviewed by a panel of experts including Durham County Council Landscape, Archaeology and Design specialists and a representative of the Northumbria Gardens Trust who produced a list of candidate sites for further assessment.

- 21 Garden historian Fiona Green was appointed to undertake an assessment of the significance of each candidate site on the basis of a desktop review of published evidence, and make recommendations as to whether sites should be included in a local list. The criteria used in the assessment reflect Historic England's guidance on Local Listing (Advice Note no. 7, 2016). Costs for the review were met from the service budget.

The findings of the report were reviewed by the panel of experts. Of the 109 candidate sites, 96 were recommended for inclusion in a local list.

- 22 Consultation was undertaken on the full list of candidate sites between January 2019 and March 2019. All reasonable efforts were made to identify, and write to, residents and landowners of the land involved, and they were directed to an online consultation hosted on the Durham County Council website. This was also open for comment from the wider public and provided opportunities for people to get in touch more directly. The website provided an interactive online GIS map of the candidate sites and downloadable pdf files of individual site assessments.

- 23 A total of 88 responses were received, relating to 35 candidate sites out of the total of 109. All comments were reviewed by the expert panel and by the consultant garden historian. Some changes were

recommended to individual sites including changes to boundaries, background information and/or assessments of significance. In some cases, the garden historian carried out additional research to inform those decisions. Where further research was required to inform future review of the list this was noted. A summary of the comments received, the response of the panel to those comments and any actions taken or recommended is given in the full report.

- 24 Historic England were consulted on both the methodology and results of the study. It commented as follows;

We consider the work done by Durham Council to be exemplary as it provides a comprehensive assessment and reference document of designed landscapes of local historical significance across the county, and we welcome and acknowledge the investment and effort put into producing the study.

- 25 The assessments of significance and site boundaries for individual sites given in the report are considered to be informative rather than definitive and may need to be revised as further information comes forward. In some cases, the boundaries of sites are still mapped as 'uncertain'. The boundaries shown represent the current understanding of where the main features of the asset are most likely to lie. Unlike statutory or planning designations where very different considerations might apply inside or outside of a designation boundary, the boundaries of these non-designated assets are intended to be indicative.
- 26 Following adoption, the list and its supporting information will be publicly available at www.keystothepast.info and www.heritagegateway.org.uk
- 27 The review process identified some areas where further research was required to inform the boundaries and/or assessments of listed sites, or in respect of candidate sites that were not listed due to lack of information. The consultation exercise identified some additional sites for consideration and it anticipated that other sites will come forward in the future.
- 28 It is therefore proposed to carry out a review of the list on a 5 year cycle at which time the list will be updated to include additional information and any additional sites that have been assessed as suitable. Additional sites can be proposed and should be submitted to the County Council's Landscape & Arboriculture Team. These will be assessed against the selection criteria, and a similar assessment process will be undertaken to determine their suitability for local listing.

- 29 The first review is scheduled for 2025. In exceptional cases, a nomination may be considered ahead of the 5 year cycle if the need to do so can be clearly demonstrated.

Conclusion

- 30 This review presents a systematic assessment of parks, gardens and designed landscapes on a county-wide basis. It provides consistent and comprehensive information on the location, character and significance of these features. It will support the Council's planning function, whilst delivering wider benefits in raising awareness and understanding of these important components of the county's landscape.

Background papers

- None.

Other useful documents

- County Durham Plan, Supporting Document: Local List of Historic Parks, Gardens and Designed Landscapes

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

None.

Finance

None.

Consultation

Details of the extensive consultation undertaken are included in the full report.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

None.

Climate Change

None.

Human Rights

None.

Crime and Disorder

None.

Staffing

None.

Accommodation

None.

Risk

None.

Procurement

None.

**Appendix 2: County Durham Plan, Supporting Document: Local
List of Historic Parks, Gardens & Designed Landscapes**
