



Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Position Statement Number 2

Historic Parks and Gardens

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are nationally designated areas of especially fine landscape. The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB has been established under the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act to conserve and enhance the outstanding natural beauty of this area. Natural beauty includes wildlife, scientific, and cultural heritage, and it is also recognised that in relation to their landscape characteristics and quality, National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are equally important aspects of the nation's heritage and environmental capital.

Historic Parks and Gardens are special aspects of our cultural heritage that contribute significantly to the character and qualities of natural beauty. Conserving parks and gardens is, therefore, an important element in conserving and enhancing the landscapes of this AONB. This is recognised in the AONB Management Plan [p58]. In addition to those Historic Parks and Gardens of national and international importance included in the Register established and maintained by English Heritage there are many of regional, sub-regional, and local interest and value.

Historic landscapes, and designed parks and gardens, are of particular importance to Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. There are significant linkages between the historic sites and ecological features within them, however they are not all identified or recognised. Some of those that are known are at risk from a lack of appropriate management and insensitive development proposals.

In many ways Historic Parks and Gardens are a cultural parallel to the natural environment Sites of Special Scientific Interest and County Wildlife Sites, and often these historic and cultural sites contain rare habitats and species. Most Local Planning Authorities have adopted and operate policies that provide protection for sites on the English Heritage Register. However, sub-regional and local parks and gardens, possibly less complete, less substantial, or not attributed to a nationally significant designer or owner, are rarely protected. Nevertheless, these lesser sites are valuable assets, contributing to local character, identity, and sense of place. They are worthy of protection and conservation, and some existing Local Plans, for example, West Dorset, include policies to do so, based on sites identified by the relevant County Gardens Trust.

This AONB has an Historic Landscape Characterisation study [sponsored by English Heritage] which can inform management and restoration activities, the formulation of conservation and protection policies, and the consideration of development proposals.

The AONB Partnership is appreciative of the County Gardens Trusts in their efforts to encourage and facilitate appropriate management of Historic Parks and Gardens.

This AONB is, nevertheless, concerned about :

1. Protection, conservation, management, and restoration opportunities for all Historic Parks & Gardens.
2. Potential development affecting [either directly or within the setting of]:
 - a. Historic Parks & Gardens on the English Heritage register of national or international importance
 - b. Historic Parks & Gardens of regional, county, AONB, or District importance

The Partnership for this AONB therefore recommends that all its constituent Local Planning Authorities should work with their relevant County Gardens Trust and the AONB team to establish consistent policies for Historic Parks and Gardens across this AONB and within the setting of the AONB.

Consistent assessment criteria should be established with the Gardens Trusts, and background text to policies could explain both the EH Register and the County Gardens Trusts roles, along with the significance of historical and designed aspects of the landscapes of the AONB. The risks of lack of protection and inappropriate management could be set out. The risks, and general unacceptability, of the so called 'enabling development' approach [whereby an historic park or garden is developed as a means of funding the maintenance of an historic building] could be explained. The known sites should be listed on a District basis, making it clear that research and enhanced knowledge may add further sites.

Policy wording could be both protective, restricting development, and encouraging, facilitating the conservation and restoration of sites.

Where there are proposals that could impact on Historic Parks & Gardens then applications would need to include detailed landscape assessments and assessments of landscape and visual impact.

The Partnership for this AONB recommends, and encourages, all its Partners to

- a) Acknowledge and accept the need for the identification and conservation of Historic Parks and Gardens of local and sub-regional interest in addition to those on the English Heritage Register
- b) Work with the County Gardens Trusts and the AONB team, taking account of their views and professional opinions and judgements, to identify sites, facilitate their appropriate management and conservation, and formulate detailed policies
- c) Appreciate and take account of the linkages and interactions between their own interests and those of Historic Parks and Gardens in their activities
- d) Adopt policies to recognise, conserve, and enhance the Historic Parks and Gardens of this AONB, such as

“The identification, conservation and, if appropriate, the restoration of historic parks and gardens will be sought and facilitated”

In connection with development proposals for Historic Parks and Gardens the Partnerships recommends the following policies to its Local Planning Authorities and encourages them to adopt them:

- a) **Development which would adversely affect the character, interest or setting of an historic park or garden will not be permitted**
- b) **Development proposals that could impact on an historic park or garden, or its setting, will only be considered if they include a fully detailed landscape assessment and an assessment of the potential landscape and visual impacts.**

At its meeting on 9th December 2008 the AONB Partnership Panel endorsed the Position Statement and said:

The Partnership Panel recommends, and encourages, all its Partners, Local Planning Authorities, and County Gardens Trusts to work together with the AONB team to recognise, protect, and conserve Historic Parks and Gardens as set out in the Position Statement Number 2.