

# Guidance Notes for the Appraisal of Historic Gardens, Demesnes, Estates and their Settings

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# introduction

The ever-increasing pressure for development within the grounds of old estates has become an important planning issue in Co. Cork. This has arisen as a result of the economic boom and of recently introduced tax incentives for the development of hotels in particular. Large demesnes are attractive for the development of hotels and golf courses, but are also under threat of sub-division for other uses including the development of large housing estates. The difficulty with formal protection mechanisms for demesnes and historic gardens, coupled with the lack of guidance for both developers and Planning Authority staff in dealing with such sites during the planning process, exacerbates the problem. The production of this guidance has been in response to these issues.

### The purpose of this guidance note is to

- Facilitate the preparation of appraisals of historic gardens and designed landscapes in the context of any development proposal that might impact on their heritage value;
- Foster a better understanding of designed landscapes.

An appraisal will assist the Planning Authority in assessing if and to what degree a proposed development respects and enhances the special qualities of a designed landscape. It offers a methodology for avoiding unnecessary negative impacts on features of heritage value. An appraisal prepared prior to the submission of a planning application will best facilitate the process.

### Basic Concepts:

#### How do we define landscape?

Landscapes are the spaces we inhabit. They are the distillation of history, fusing natural components such as bedrock, climate, soil, plants and animals with the effects of human activity. Landscapes display the effect of human activity over thousands of years. Landscapes are dynamic and reflect and record the changing environment as well as human culture and practice. They are perishable and renewable and their appearance changes with the seasons and with the growth and death of vegetation.

#### What makes a designed landscape special?

These are places designed to serve a cultural need and to express a particular aesthetic quality. In Ireland designed landscapes can be urban squares, parks, demesnes, or landscaped estates. The origin of many designed landscapes can be traced back to the early Middle Ages and these sometimes overlie landscapes that were created in even earlier periods. The passing generations have laid down successive patterns of buildings, gardens, parkland, enclosures, avenues, drives, canals and lakes.

#### The following characteristics could be features of a designed landscape:

- Significant aspects of landscape/garden history or design;
- Notable plant collection(s) including specimen trees included on the Tree Register of Ireland (TROI);
- Integral setting to an historic building;
- Associations with particular significant people or events;
- Archaeological, scientific or technical features of interest;
- Conspicuous and intrinsic landscape interest.



### How many designed landscapes are there?

There are well over 6,000 demesnes and designed landscape sites in Ireland and over 1,000 in Co. Cork. Many other landscapes can be considered to be of value because they possess one or more of the characteristics listed earlier. It is estimated that such landscapes occupy more than 6% of the land mass of the country.

### What can be defined as a designed landscape?

Designed landscapes range from small and intimate places to wide sweeping parkland that dominates entire valleys and influences the form and function of large parts of the surrounding countryside. They include the following:

- Complex and elaborate gardens and parkland, with a clear outer boundary, that provides a setting for a house;
- Planned agricultural landscapes that may fall outside the demesne or parkland boundary;
- Archaeological remains of a former site that are only visible above ground as relic features such as boundaries;
- Designed landscapes serving a public purpose such as urban squares.

In some cases designed cemeteries, gardens to religious houses, small private gardens and town parks could be included in the list.



# the appraisal

The approach that is outlined in the following text is an iterative one. It is one to be carried out alongside the conceptual and pre-planning stages of layout design. The appraisal will be a progression through an information gathering and assessment stage, to a point where the designer can identify the areas where heritage features would be damaged by development and the areas where it would not. Proposals for development can then be formulated. A suite of effective measures can be proposed to mitigate or compensate for any residual impacts that development might cause to the heritage site.

Above all the appraisal method is a working tool that should add value to a development and should take conservation beyond theory and into practice.

### When should an appraisal be prepared?

Where a proposed development is to be sited within or adjacent to a historic or culturally significant garden, a demesne, a landscaped estate or the setting for one of these, it is recommended that an appraisal be carried out. Many of these may be listed on the Record of Protected Structures or are designated as Architectural Conservation Areas. However, a designed landscape does not have to form the setting of a Protected Structure or an Architectural Conservation Area to be considered for appraisal. The appraisal should reflect the size, complexity and heritage importance of the site in question.

### Checking the status of your site:

- 1 The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage website [www.buildingsofireland.ie](http://www.buildingsofireland.ie) contains the Survey of Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes. The survey, carried out on behalf of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government between 2003 and 2006 includes over 6,000 sites in Ireland. The website includes historical maps and recent aerial photographs of the majority of demesnes.

- 2 County Development Plans and Local Area Plans will contain all relevant designations, such as Architectural Conservation Areas and Protected Structures that may include elements or entire complexes of designed landscapes.
- 3 Review of historic OS 1 inch and 6 inch maps (demesnes are shown as grey tone overlaid on the map detail). See also, Research, page 8.
- 4 Reference to library and archive sources (see Useful Sources of Information on page 20).
- 5 Field visit undertaken by a suitably experienced expert, to examine possible historical evidence such as structures, landforms and vegetation.

### Who should prepare an appraisal?

Appropriately experienced professionals should undertake the appraisal. It is unlikely that an appraisal will be the work of only one professional, however, most will require the input of a landscape historian.

### Note on Terminology

The subject of these guidelines will simply be referred to as 'designed landscapes'. It is intended that historic gardens are covered within this title. The appraisal process will be referred to as the 'appraisal' and the report that will be submitted to the Planning Authority will be the 'appraisal report'.







# stage 1

identification and description of development, history, features and boundaries of the designed landscape

## Boundaries

Designed landscapes can be deceptively big. The appraisal should cover the maximum extent of the landscape. If the site is designated as an Architectural Conservation Area, the boundary of the area might provide a basis for consideration. The size of a designed landscape may have been determined in the 17th, 18th or 19th century and the design could include long vistas and avenues extending from the core of a demesne into the wider landscape.

## Research

Archival, library and internet searches are essential to provide a framework of known information. Time can be usefully spent systematically studying:

## Aerial photography

Coverage as early as the beginning of the 20th century and current aerial photography may enhance our overall understanding of a site at a glance. Where comparisons can be made between earlier and later photography it is also possible to establish the development or destruction of a designed landscape.

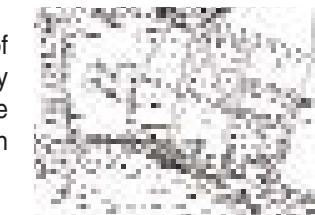
## Libraries and archives

Good coverage of many designed landscapes is to be found in the form of books, estate plans, correspondence, public records, pictures and photographs and in articles and papers in specialist interest publications. Local history texts or estate histories, where available, can be a rich source of information on the development of a designed landscape in terms of the commissioning of building work, gardening and planting. The personalities behind the commissions can be very important in terms of understanding the aspirations of the owner and their intentions.



## Maps

Ordnance Survey have been making maps of Ireland periodically since the mid 19th century and the more detailed '6 inch' and larger scale maps show useful detail at different times in the 19th and early 20th Century.



### Components of the landscape

Typical components of a designed landscape are often arranged as concentric rings around principal buildings. The components are described below and each of these, if they are present will need to be covered by the appraisal.

The presence of one or a number of these is indicative of a designed landscape.



### Principal Building

Principal Building is a focal point in the landscape, normally a main residence, with stables for example, but sometimes remaining as a ruin or replaced by a new building. The exception might be an urban park or square, where the focal point is most likely to be an open space or feature.



### Drives

Access routes to the principal building are often carefully aligned to give gentle gradients and offering a controlled and often dramatic views are offered to arriving travellers in a contrived sequence that displays the designed parkland, gardens and house in the most impressive manner.

### Gardens

Are important, but often remain to a reduced extent surrounding or lying close to the principal building. Sometimes new features have been superimposed, for example in walled gardens. Gardens are generally in the form of clearly defined areas, some with a formal geometric structure and some informally laid out and dominated by past or current horticultural management regimes. Sometimes old gardens are not readily discernible from woodland. Gardens can contain important individual trees, plant collections or structures and works of art of heritage interest.

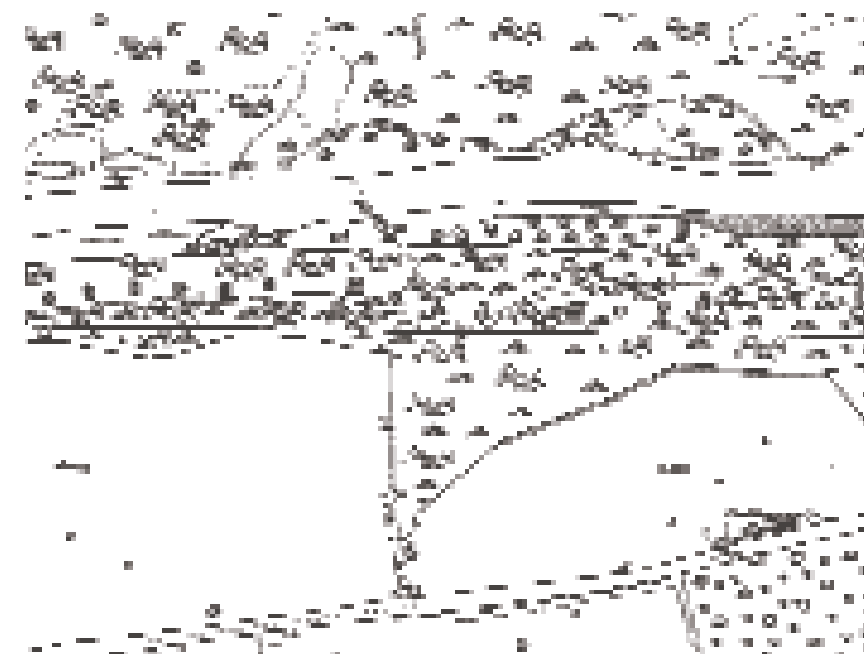


### Follies

The presence of follies and other manmade features within a landscape contribute to our understanding, particularly, where a designed landscape has been much eroded. Where a site has been heavily altered the location of a folly might indicate the termination of vistas, paths, hedges and so on.

### Parkland

Parkland is present in the majority of cases as a setting for the principal building. Parkland is a large area of grazed land with few internal boundaries dotted with individual trees, clumps of trees and avenues as well as blocks of woodland of considerable age. Much parkland has been ploughed and trees lost, but where it survives, veteran trees can be found which are important for biodiversity and scenic value.



### Deer Park

Deer parks can be present in some older sites and are often disassociated from more recent parkland or gardens. Often of significance to archaeology, they can contain residual areas of ancient woodland, veteran trees or other species-rich habitats. Often a deer park, which was once rough grazing and scrub enclosed within a wall, or a fence or hedge on a bank will now be merged with the surrounding agricultural landscape, but with the outer boundary visible in field boundaries or as a residual earthwork.





#### Vistas

Narrow and highly directed views out from the principal building to a single focal point. The vista is generally directed or contained by structural and formally arranged planting. These can be protected more easily than panoramic views, but like landscape views, can form structural components in spatial planning of areas around important sites.



#### Views

These can be wide or panoramic and are part of designed landscapes dating from the late 18th century to the current day. Views are typically associated with a romantic or sublime natural setting. They are difficult to protect because of the wide swathe of land that can be involved, but key features and character could be protected by sensitive design of development.



#### Demesne

A generic title that covers the majority of sites. However, the definition is "all the land retained by the lord for his own use" as distinguished from that "alienated" or granted to others as tenants. The demesne normally contains the full extent of the 'ornamented' landscape.

#### Setting

This is often overlooked, but can include lowland agricultural landscapes that were originally designed as model farms or as a display of good agricultural practice. They can also include natural landscapes such as loughs, coastlines, upland moors and mountains.

Using a sequence of old OS maps it is possible to plot the development of a designed landscape onto a modern map. Aerial photography can also be helpful in identifying:

- Subtle evidence in the landscape that shows changes to the landscape that are difficult to see at ground level and are never shown on maps;
- Sequential changes to the landscapes that have occurred over the last 70 to 100 years.

# stage 2 evaluation & significance

## Historical Landscape Evaluation And Reporting

The evaluation should explain how the landscape developed, how it is made up today, how this landscape structure contains, screens and opens up views and vistas, provides focal points and creates visual thresholds. The evaluation will also need to address the evolution of the designed landscape and to identify critical creative or damaging changes that have occurred that add to or compromise the heritage value (for example afforestation or loss of parkland trees).

The evaluation will need at least two components:

1 A report with a step by step history of the landscape and development including recent changes, details of any designers, owners or gardeners who were responsible for creation of any part. The report should also describe the landscape character in terms of topography, vegetation and land use, explain aspects shown on the maps including the current landscape quality and describe the modern factors that detract from quality. The report could be illustrated as required with:

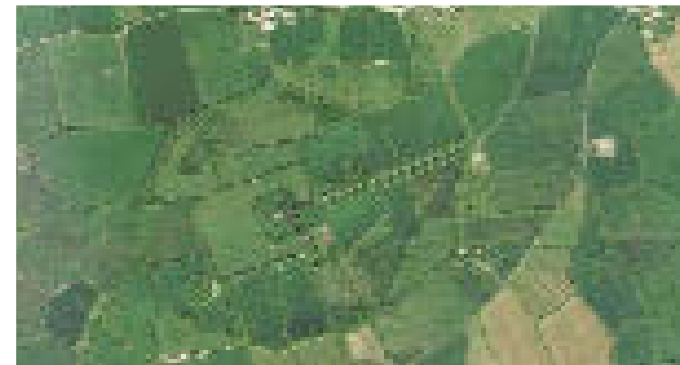
- Sequential historical maps showing evolution of the landscape;
- Photos, sketches and other drawings of the landscape in the past and today;

2 A map (or maps at different scales) to show the wider landscape and the more intensively designed core to show:

- Visual envelope (all areas visible from within the designed landscape);
- Landscape structure (significant landform, plantations, drives, walks, gardens, buildings, views, vistas and focal points) which defines how the landscape is seen and appreciated;
- Landscape function (how the land was intended to be used and how it is used today);
- Landscape character and quality;

## Archaeological Aspects

There will be some cross-over between the archaeological and the historical landscape evaluation. To avoid duplication, archaeological evaluation should focus on the identification of designated archaeological sites.



## Horticultural and Arboricultural Aspects

Research might show that a designed landscape contains elements of horticultural interest. Fieldwork is the most effective way to establish whether the site contains plant collections, unusual plants or particularly large or old specimens, such as yew trees or holly bushes. There may also be structures, or remnants of structures with specialist horticultural functions such as glasshouses or orangeries. The location of these features should be shown on a map and their general condition referred to in the text.

Woodland and mature trees could be present on the site. The horticultural evaluation should make an initial assessment of the condition of trees and the need for remedial work with the initial assumption that the trees are to be retained.

If there is no horticultural interest, a brief statement should be prepared supporting this view.



## Statement of Significance

The statement should draw on the valuable information about the condition of the designed landscape, its development and components. The designed landscape may be considered within the following categories where applicable:

- Designed landscapes
- Horticultural
- Architectural (relationship to an architectural piece)
- Historical
- Archaeological





## stage 3 assessing development proposals

It should now be possible to identify those areas and features of the designed landscape which:

- 1 Should not be developed in order to protect heritage;
- 2 Could be developed within certain clearly defined design parameters;
- 3 Could be developed if clearly defined mitigation is provided that is compatible with heritage conservation;
- 4 Could be developed with no impact on heritage.



For areas that fall into 2 and 3 above, a three-dimensional development envelope should be proposed within which development can be contained so that the value of the designed landscape is not compromised. The envelope will need to respect the value of the whole designed landscape and its important features.

The envelope should define:

- Height limits for buildings and other structures such as lighting columns;
- Restriction on use of development e.g. office, residential, light industrial etc;
- Layout extent, style and density;
- Design code for external finishes, colours, landscaping, species selection, lighting, signs, car parking;
- Restrictions on construction activity such as temporary or permanent storage of spoil, haul roads, construction compounds;
- Heritage conservation requirements in mitigation or compensation for development;
- Landscape restoration requirements, if for example the development is a minerals extraction.

There might, in some circumstances, be a case for setting the duration over which a temporary envelope would apply to reflect temporary circumstances. These simple statements of fact could be set out in tabular form in the manner shown in the sample 'Area Development Schedule' (pg 18).



# stage 4 recommendations for mitigation & management

Proposals for mitigation present an opportunity for enhancement of the designed landscape. Effective integration of new development into a designed landscape could involve additional landscape planting and other measures to provide visual or noise screening, for example. Other mitigation measures might include restoration of a garden adjacent to a development in compensation for damage. Column 5 of the sample Area Schedule shows how design parameters and proposals for mitigation such as new or replacement planting, conservation plans and management agreements could be included in the appraisal report.

## Area Schedule that might accompany an appraisal plan

1	2	3	4	5
Area	Description of zone	Appraisal of value (summary)	Development Envelope	Mitigation
<i>Ref No.</i>	<i>Brief notes perhaps referring to other parts of the appraisal report.</i>	<i>Description of heritage and value given</i>	<i>Design criteria</i>	<i>Proposals</i>
Sample Area 1	Parkland and informal gardens in primary views from Georgian Mansion	Landscape considered of high value as a component of the designed landscape, and as of high ecological value for over-mature native parkland trees and unimproved grassland. A Ring Fort noted in south east corner which appears to be retained as a feature of the designed landscape.	No development	Screen from any development of adjacent areas by replacing 1830s plantings on the east boundary of area.
Sample Area 2	Paddocks on north east corner of 1870s extension to demesne.	Paddocks do not contribute to main designed landscape and include modern agricultural buildings and arable cultivation. The landscape quality is poor and development here would not detract from the Georgian designed landscape, nor from the 1830 addition which included the main driveway and its setting, nor from the 1870s ornamental lake.	Maximum build height of 6 metres on low-lying ground, with no buildings on the slightly elevated ridge crossing the north corner. The road access through north boundary from public road. Retain Victorian roundels of trees.	Replace 1870s plantings of south boundary and instigate woodland management regime to existing plantations.

## Details of mitigation

Landscape and ecological proposals are likely to be the principal mitigation measures that are proposed for dealing with the negative impacts of development in most designed landscapes. Conservation of buildings and major structures might also be proposed, but is outside the scope of this guidance document. Careful consideration of the manner in which mitigation measures are designed and carried out is fundamental to conserving the character and quality of a designed landscape. The selection of appropriate species for planting in a designed landscape must be carried out by a suitably qualified expert, who knows the site and preferably has been closely involved in the heritage appraisal. This would mean that tree and shrub planting species would normally be selected on the following basis:

- To look appropriate in the designed landscape
- Because they are indigenous to that locality and suit the soil and climatic conditions
- Because there is a historical justification and the species has previously been part of the designed landscape

Conflicting heritage priorities can occur in some circumstances. These conflicts could arise between, for example nature conservation and garden conservation. The conflict must be reported and the means by which it is to be avoided or managed or reconciled should be stated.

## Management of Heritage Landscapes

Management of heritage is a continuing responsibility and it is essential that development proposals should detail plans for conservation, management and maintenance of the existing designed landscape and the additions and changes made to facilitate development. In some cases appropriate mitigation or compensation might be funding of conservation management of part of a designed landscape adjacent to new development to ensure that the existing plantations are managed into the future. Alternatively a scheme to convert a mansion into apartments or a hotel might include a clear commitment to manage the gardens and the core of the demesne in a particular manner.

A Management Plan should set out long term objectives and policies where a consistent approach is required in the management of a designed landscape for:

- Further research and survey
- Conservation and management of a designed landscape
- Short to medium term commitments to undertake landscape conservation tasks
- Long-term management objectives or policies to protect heritage features



Further research and investigation can be important particularly for a site where new discoveries are likely to be made or one where the little has been found during the appraisal process.

## Useful Sources of Information

National Inventory of the Architectural Heritage (NIAH). The NIAH is a section of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. Their work involves identifying and recording the architectural heritage of Ireland. Their website contains information and images of buildings around Ireland and includes information relating to a survey of Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes recently completed on their behalf. The web pages list information relating to over 6,000 demesnes including maps, aerial photographs and site survey results.

**National Library of Ireland: houses the country's collections of books, manuscripts, prints, drawings, maps, newspapers etc. The library also includes the Photographic Archive at a different site.**

Trinity Library, Dublin: a source of historic OS maps.

**Library of the National Botanical Gardens: a library with a substantial collection dedicated to horticulture and landscape design.**

Irish Architectural Archive: houses a collection of material relating to the architecture of Ireland.

**National Archives of Ireland: holders of the records of the modern Irish state.**

Tree Register of Ireland: lists exceptional trees county by county.

**County Archives: Cork City and County Archives holds large quantities of archives from local authorities and from privately donated sources. Most holdings date from the 19th and 20th centuries, with small amounts of material dating from pre-1800.**

The British Library: this is a useful source of material. Catalogues can be accessed via the web and copies of material can be requested. See also the British Library Newspaper Archive.

**The Royal Horticultural Societies Lindley Library in London houses comprises more than 50,000 books, ranging in date from 1514 to the present, includes periodicals, botanical drawings, a large collection of horticultural trade catalogues, and the Society's archives.**

Private archives and collections can be a very useful resource, but are not always accessible or available.

A good bibliography can be found on the Survey of Historic Gardens & Designed Landscapes web pages at [www.buildingsofireland.ie](http://www.buildingsofireland.ie). Sources are listed as a general list that includes nationally relevant books, books relevant to individual counties and books that include references to particular sites .

A useful selection includes:

- A Guide to Irish Country Houses', Bence-Jones, M., 1996, Transatlantic Publications.
- A History of Gardening in Ireland', Lamb, K. and Bowes P., 1995, The Stationary Office for Glasnevin Botanic Gardens.
- Archaeological Inventories for Co. Cork, Government of Ireland' 2000, Stationary Office.
- Informed Conservation; Understanding historic buildings and their landscapes for conservation', Clark, K., 2001, English Heritage.
- Irish Gardens and Demesnes from 1830.' Malins, E. and Bowe, P. London, 1980, Barrie and Jenkins.
- Lost Demesnes, Irish Landscape Gardening from 1660 –1830.' Malins, E. and The Knight of Glin, 1976, Barrie and Jenkins.

Dún Scéine, Harcourt Lane, Dublin 2.  
Tel: 01-647 3000

[www.buildingsofireland.ie](http://www.buildingsofireland.ie)

Kildare Street, Dublin 2. Tel: 01-603 0200

[www.nli.ie](http://www.nli.ie)

College Street, Dublin 2. Tel: 01-608 1661

[www.tcd.ie](http://www.tcd.ie)

Glasnevin, Dublin 9. Tel: 01-804 0300

[www.botanicgardens.ie](http://www.botanicgardens.ie)

45 Merrion Square, Dublin. Tel: 01-6633 040

[www.iarc.ie](http://www.iarc.ie)

Bishop Street, Dublin 8. Tel: 01-407 2300

[www.nationalarchives.ie](http://www.nationalarchives.ie)

Tree Council of Ireland, The Park, Cabinteely, Dublin 18.  
Tel: 01-284 9211

[www.treecouncil.ie](http://www.treecouncil.ie)

Great William O'Brien Street, Blackpool, Cork.  
Tel: 021-4505866.

[www.corkcity.ie/archive](http://www.corkcity.ie/archive)

Euston Road London, NW12DB.

[www.bl.uk](http://www.bl.uk)

Royal Horticultural Society, 80 Vincent Square, London SW1P 2PE. Tel: 00 44 20 7821 3050.

[www.rhs.org.uk](http://www.rhs.org.uk)

- Palimpsest - Change in the Irish Building Tradition' McCullough, N., 1994, Anne St. Press.
- The Conservation Plan: A guide to the preparation of conservation plans for places of European cultural significance', 2000, Kerr J.S., National Trust of Australia (NSW), Sydney.
- Houses of Cork, Vol 1 North' 2002, Hajba, A, Ballinakella Press.

Enabling Development And The Conservation Of Heritage Assets, Policy Statement and Practical Guide to Assessment, English Heritage.

[http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/upload/pdf/enabling\\_devt\\_cons\\_assets.pdf](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/upload/pdf/enabling_devt_cons_assets.pdf)

A number of periodicals and journals are also a useful starting point. Some of these include:

- Country Life Magazine
- Garden History' the journal of the Garden History Society
- The Gardener's Magazine' Edited by J.C. Loudon, 1826-44
- The Journal of the RHS' (Royal Horticultural Society) continued as 'The Garden'.



1. Identification and description of development, history, features and boundaries of the designed landscape



2. Evaluation & assessment of significance



3. Assessing development proposals



4. Recommendations for mitigation & management

Scoping  
Archival research  
Fieldwork

Historical landscape description  
Archaeological aspects  
Horticultural aspects

Assessment of heritage impact

Recommended mitigatory measures

Recommendations for future management

Recommendations for further investigation

