

Setting

Its importance to historic parks and gardens



thegardenstrust.org

[@thegardenstrust](https://twitter.com/thegardenstrust)

A training presentation from the Gardens Trust, including materials from Historic England's conservation staff

National Planning Policy Framework

Para. 189

'In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting.'

Para. 200

'Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.'



thegardenstrust.org

 [@thegardenstrust](https://twitter.com/thegardenstrust)

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) - a policy from the Department of Communities and Local Government to guide local authority planning decisions – includes two paragraphs of particular relevance to setting:

Para. 189 'In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting.'

Para. 200 'Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.'

So what is setting? It is the surrounding in which the heritage asset is experienced. All heritage assets have a setting. Like with a ring, where the diamond is the asset, but the gold around it is the setting and adds to its beauty.

For a landscape, you have the garden that might be owned and designed by someone, but the land around it will also affect its beauty.

Question – what kind of things could be part of a landscape's setting?



Historic England

What do we mean by 'setting'?

- 'the mounting in which a jewel is set'
- 'the surroundings or environment of a thing'
- 'the locale or period in which the action of a play, film or novel takes place'
- 'the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced'



thegardenstrust.org

[@thegardenstrust](https://twitter.com/thegardenstrust)

NPPF glossary. Setting of a heritage asset: The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

The contribution that setting makes to the significance of the heritage asset does not depend on there being public rights or an ability to access or experience that setting. This will vary over time and according to circumstance.



Historic England

What do we mean by 'setting'?



'the surroundings in which an asset is experienced'



thegardenstrust.org

[@thegardenstrust](https://twitter.com/thegardenstrust)

We can use the analogy of a precious gemstone set into a gold ring. If the sapphire in the middle is an historic garden (or 'heritage asset'), then the other gems, the gold of the ring, and even the dark background and reflection, form the surroundings which complement and help to show off the main gem, but don't overshadow or distract from it. Without the setting, the main gem would still be intact and beautiful, but somewhat lacking.



Historic England

What do we mean by 'setting'?



THE
GARDENS
TRUST

thegardenstrust.org

[@thegardenstrust](https://twitter.com/thegardenstrust)

Now what happens if we make changes to the setting?

By adding a red gem, we have thrown out the symmetry of the setting and distracted the eye from the main stone.

By removing the black background and sparkling reflection, we have taken away much of the drama of the piece.

By changing the background colour to green, we have reduced the contrast and made the ring look duller and less appealing.

How far is Setting?



It can be really hard to decide how far the setting extends from the heritage asset.

This is, thankfully!, a mocked-up photo of Corfe Castle with a wind turbine in the near distance.

Most people would agree that such a development in its setting would unacceptably harm the significance of Corfe Castle...



Historic England

How far is Setting?



And most (or many) would agree that this would not harm it

How far is Setting?



But how about this.....



Historic England

How far is Setting?



Or this?

In order to know how a proposal may affect setting, you have to really know the site, on the ground, and understand each element of its setting.

HE's Good Practice Advice: ...need to consider impacts on setting even where past changes in setting have compromised its contribution to the asset's significance



Historic England's publication, 'The Setting of Heritage Assets' Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition, 2017) points to the importance of considering cumulative impacts in relation to setting and the implications that change within the setting of a heritage asset can have on its future economic and social viability.



Historic England

Assessing impact of development on a heritage asset

- Start with the asset itself
- Then consider:
 - The asset's physical surroundings (including other heritage assets)
 - The way people can (or may be able to) experience the asset
 - The asset's associations




thegardenstrust.org

[@thegardenstrust](https://twitter.com/thegardenstrust)

Setting embraces far more than just views.

HE Guidance: "The starting point for this stage of the assessment is to consider the significance of the heritage asset itself and then establish the contribution made by its setting.


Historic England


Assessing whether, and how much, settings contribute to experience


The asset's physical surroundings

- Topography
- Aspect
- Other heritage assets (including buildings, structures, landscapes, areas or archaeological remains)
- Definition, scale and 'grain' of surrounding streetscape, landscape and spaces
- Formal design eg hierarchy, layout
- Orientation and aspect
- Historic materials and surfaces
- Green space, trees and vegetation
- Openness, enclosure and boundaries
- Functional relationships and communications
- History and degree of change over time

Experience of the asset

- Surrounding landscape or townscape character
- Views from, towards, through, across and including the asset
- Intentional intervisibility with other historic and natural features
- Visual dominance, prominence or role as focal point
- Noise, vibration and other nuisances
- Tranquillity, remoteness, 'wildness'
- Busyness, bustle, movement and activity
- Scents and smells
- Diurnal changes
- Sense of enclosure, seclusion, intimacy or privacy
- Land use
- Accessibility, permeability and patterns of movement
- Degree of interpretation or promotion to the public
- Rarity of comparable survivals of setting
- Cultural associations
- Celebrated artistic representations
- Traditions


thegardenstrust.org

 @thegardenstrust

HE Guidance Note: The lists shown here “is a (non-exhaustive) check-list of potential attributes of a setting that may help to elucidate its contribution to significance. It may be the case that only a limited selection of the attributes listed is likely to be particularly important in terms of any single asset.”

We need to consider the attributes of the **development** that may affect the contribution the setting makes to significance, including its:

- Location and siting
- Form and appearance
- Other effects (e.g. noise)
- Permanence
- Longer term or consequential effects

Setting: Views



thegardenstrust.org

[@thegardenstrust](https://twitter.com/thegardenstrust)

Views are the most obvious part of setting.

Belsay Hall, Northumberland – clearly the view from the Hall is critical and if a factory were built in this view, even if it were miles outside of the actual designed landscape, then it would be very detrimental.

Setting: Senses



thegardenstrust.org

 [@thegardenstrust](https://twitter.com/thegardenstrust)

Setting is not limited to visual factors. Setting includes issues such as noise, odours, dust and vibration from other land uses in the vicinity.

Chiswick House – looks like arcadian idyll but experiences considerable traffic and aeroplane noise, as well as the associated visual movement.

Setting: Connection



thegardenstrust.org

[@thegardenstrust](https://twitter.com/thegardenstrust)

The experience of setting is also affected by our understanding of the historic relationship between places. For example, buildings that are in close proximity but are not visible from each other may have a historic or aesthetic connection that amplifies the experience of the significance of each.

The image shows St George's Gardens, Bloomsbury. This site has always been surrounded by development of the Coram family charity, who have historically operated facilities for needy children, and still do today. A few years ago there was an application for a huge new building adjacent to St George's Gardens by the Coram organisation, for a new children's facility. Theoretically it was damaging to the setting of St George's Gardens, because it was a large dominating building right adjacent to the gardens so changing the views and feel of the garden without actually being in it. In reality, we need to take into account that this garden's setting is defined by the Coram organisation, not just visually but in terms of its emotional and historical context, so perhaps in this case it is appropriate to have this new building.

Should we map Setting?



"While setting can be mapped in the context of an individual application or proposal, it does not have a fixed boundary and cannot be definitively and permanently described for all time as a spatially bounded area or as lying within a set distance of a heritage asset.

This is because the surroundings of a heritage asset will change over time, and because new information on heritage assets may alter what might previously have been understood to comprise their setting and the values placed on that setting and therefore the significance of the heritage asset."



thegardenstrust.org

[@thegardenstrust](https://twitter.com/thegardenstrust)

Historic England's, 'Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3' makes clear that, while setting can be mapped in the context of an individual application or proposal, *it does not have a fixed boundary* and cannot be definitively and permanently described for all time as a spatially bounded area or as lying within a set distance of a heritage asset because what comprises a heritage asset's setting may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve or as the asset becomes better understood or due to the varying impacts of different proposals

Where this has been attempted, such as at Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire, by the National Trust, it can be something of a hostage to fortune.

In this case a wind farm proposal lay outside the area mapped as the setting of the property but was still considered to have a negative impact on setting. While it may well be helpful to map key views and zones of visual influence in order to better understand the setting of a heritage asset: it is not advisable to draw a simplistic red line on the map as the boundary to setting.

The National Trust now refers to the mapped setting of Hardwick Hall as its "core setting", allowing more flexibility in defining its broader setting.



@thegardenstrust



@thegardenstrust



www.thegardenstrust.org

All materials produced by The Gardens Trust and its predecessor organisations are available for free download and reuse for non-commercial purposes.

All such materials are subject to the © copyright of The Gardens Trust and may not be used for any commercial purpose without the permission of The Gardens Trust.



thegardenstrust.org

 @thegardenstrust