



Green Futures

Understanding Setting

View from Mount Edgcumbe, over Plymouth. Image: Tamsin McMillan



Historic England



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What is setting?

NPPF Glossary:

- **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

Historic England, Conservation Principles, 2008:

- relates to the surroundings in which a place is experienced, its local context, **embracing present and past relationships to the adjacent landscape**. Definition of the setting... will normally be guided by the extent to which material change within it could affect (enhance or diminish) the place's significance.
- 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.

What is significance?

NPPF Glossary:

- Significance is **the value of a heritage asset** to this and future generations **because of its heritage interest**.
- The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic.
- **Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, BUT ALSO FROM ITS SETTING.**

Key publication



Historic England

The Setting of Heritage Assets

Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in
Planning Note 3 (Second Edition)



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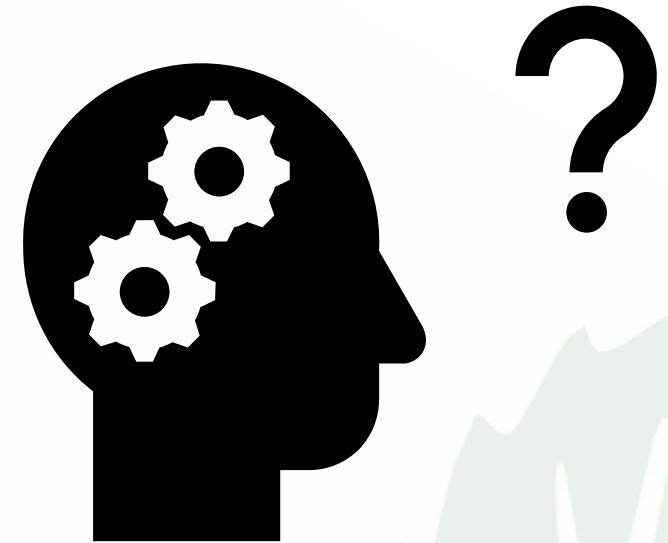
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*How many different
elements of setting
can you think of?*



Consider:

- The designed landscape's **physical surroundings** (including other heritage assets)
- The way people can (or may be able to) **experience** the landscape
- The landscape's **associations**

Historic England's check-list of potential attributes of a setting

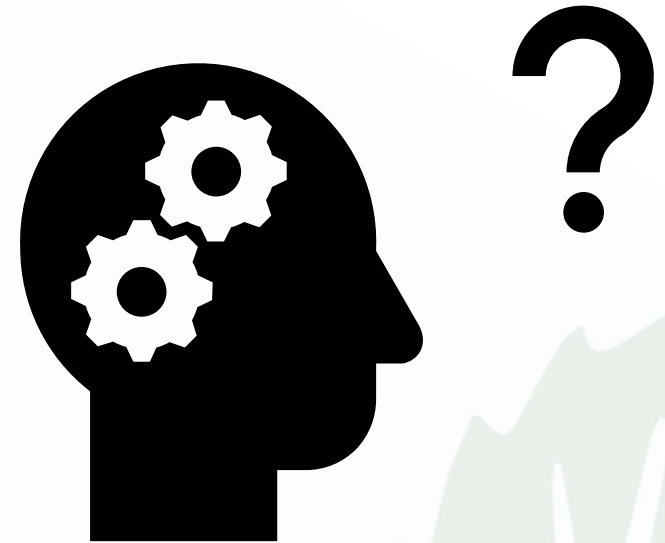
The asset's physical surroundings

- 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

*What other heritage
assets could have
settings?*



Consider:

- Structures?
- Landscapes?
- Areas?

What other heritage assets could have settings?

- **Registered Parks and Gardens** – Historic England and the Gardens Trust are statutory consultees on planning proposals which affect Registered sites or their settings
- **Important designed views** beyond the boundary may be protected by local planning policy
- **Listed buildings** – parks and gardens surrounding them
- **World Heritage Sites - mapped** ‘buffer zone’ + larger setting
- **Conservation Areas** have a setting which, though not protected by primary legislation, can contribute to its significance.
- Archaeological sites which are designated **Scheduled Monuments** - planning authorities obliged to give ‘great weight’ to conservation of their setting in local plans
- **Settings of towns and cities** - may be given some protection by Green Belts

National Policy

NPPF, February 2025:

Proposals affecting heritage assets:

- **207.** 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.** The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum **the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted** and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary.
- **208.** Local planning authorities should **identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset** that may be affected by a proposal (**including by development affecting the setting** of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

National Policy

NPPF, February 2025:

Proposals affecting heritage assets:

- **213. Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.** Substantial harm to or loss of: a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional; b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional⁷⁵.
- **219. Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance.** e those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.

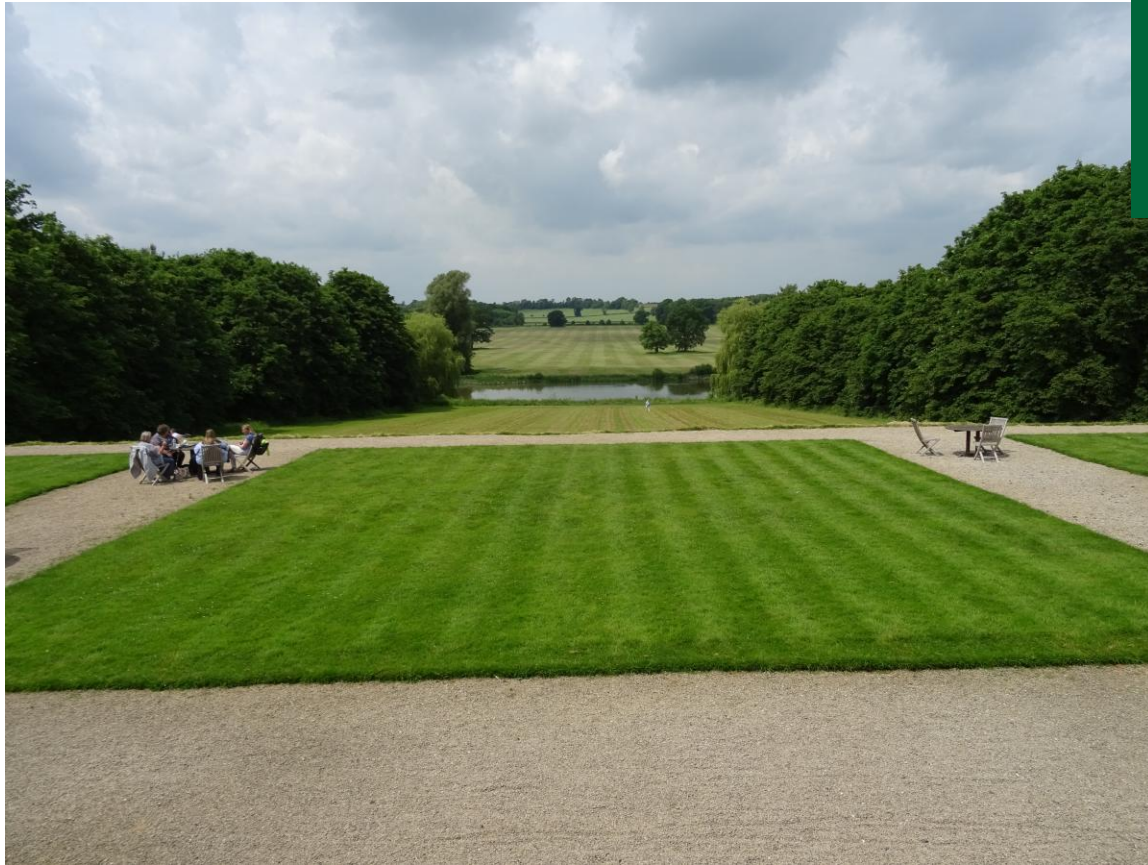
Elements of setting - Views



Image: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/13/Belsay_Hall%2C_Belsay_-_geograph.org.uk_-_3409262.jpg



Elements of setting - Views



Above: Image, Sally Bate. Right: Creative Commons image
Cirencester Park (4924).jpg|Cirencester_Park_(4924)



Elements of setting - Views



Image: Sally Bate

Elements of setting - Views

Image: Google Streetview



Elements of setting - Senses



Images: Sally Bate

Elements of setting - Senses



Elements of setting - Senses





Elements of setting - Senses

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Elements of setting - Association



Assessing change in the setting

From Historic England's Seven Step process:

Step 2: Assess the **degree to which these settings and views make a contribution to the significance** of the heritage asset(s) or allow significance to be appreciated.

Step 3: Assess the **effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful, on the significance** or on the ability to appreciate it.

Changes in the setting

Affect on the heritage asset:

- Change to built surroundings and spaces
- Change to skyline, silhouette
- Noise, odour, vibration, dust, etc
- Lighting effects and 'light spill'
- Change to general character (eg urbanising or industrialising)
- Changes to public access, use or amenity
- Changes to land use, land cover, tree cover
- Changes to communications/accessibility/permeability, including traffic, road junctions and car-parking, etc
- Changes to ownership arrangements (fragmentation/permitted development/etc)

Development in the setting





Development in the setting

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How far is setting?



How far is setting?



How far is setting?



How far is setting?



Should we map setting?



Hardwick Hall from the Old Hall -
geograph.org.uk - 4111074.jpg

“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.”

**What information on setting
will the Green Futures
volunteers need to collect?**



What information on setting will the Green Futures volunteers need to collect?

Heritage Assets

NHLE Names and Numbers*

Any Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments **within the landscape or relating to it.** See Historic England's National Heritage List for England:
<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list>
E.g. Holme Pierrepont Hall, Grade I Listed Building (LB), no. 1249330

What information on setting will the Green Futures volunteers need to collect?

Are there any threats to the preservation of the site?	Have you noticed anything during your desk-based research. E.g. neighbouring construction, quarrying, swimming pool in the walled garden etc.?
Are there any other issues and/or vulnerabilities that could potentially affect its preservation?	e.g. divided ownership, conflicting uses (internal to site), unsympathetic development (internal to site), lapsed maintenance, features/structures in poor condition etc.

What information on setting will the Green Futures volunteers need to collect?

Section 4. Description of the Site

Type of Location	Include location in relation to settlements, roads, rivers etc. Area of the site in hectares (use a free app like Google Maps Area Calculator https://www.mapdevelopers.com/area_finder.php) and how the parts relate to each other. What forms the boundaries? What sort of land is adjacent?
Entrance points and pathways*	Where? Main dates, features and changes. What was the view as people approached?
Views and vistas	Record direction and features. Any changes, through different phases of development?
Land beyond the boundary that makes a contribution to significance	Near and distant views and vistas, other elements of setting e.g., sound of neighbouring stream, 'borrowed' landscapes, neighbouring historic buildings etc. which adds to the character.

Quick Recap

- Setting is **the surrounding in which a heritage asset is experienced**.
- It is so important to a site's significance that it is **protected by national planning policy** (NPPF)
- **Developers must understand it**, its effect on the landscape's significance, and the potential impact of their proposals upon it
- Setting can comprise **tangible and abstract elements**
- **Changes in the setting can affect the significance** of the heritage asset
- **Positive development in the setting may be encouraged**
- Setting **can't be definitively mapped**
- **For the Green Futures project, volunteers will collect a range of information about setting**, including potential threats and issues, a description of the physical features, and any other aspects of setting that contribute to significance.
- **This information will be deposited on each county's HER**, so that it can be used by developers, and by consultees who help to guide planning decisions.



Green Futures
Next: Understanding
Significance, 12th June

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