The Royal Parks

DESIGN GUIDE

Maintaining the Historic Landscape
THE ROYAL PARKS CONTEXT

The eight Royal Parks comprise Bushy Park, The Green Park, Greenwich Park, Hyde Park, Kensington Gardens, The Regent’s Park with Primrose Hill, Richmond Park and St James’s Park. The Royal Parks is responsible for managing all these spaces and conserving them for the future generations to enjoy. Brompton Cemetery, the gardens of 10, 11 and 12 Downing Street, Victoria Tower Gardens and Grosvenor Square Gardens are also cared for by The Royal Parks.

The Royal Parks are important urban greenspaces in London for their history, facilities and access to high quality recreational open space. The Parks have characters that have developed over many years, often with origins as royal hunting grounds. All are listed landscapes on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens (Grade I with the exception of The Green Park which is Grade II). Many great designers have had a part moulding the Parks, including André Le Nôtre, John Nash and Charles Bridgeman. The quality of the landscape design is not only reflected in the overall layout and topography but also in the detail and craftsmanship employed. This guide aims to ensure these quality standards are secured for future generations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This summary document has been prepared by Ruth Holmes (Landscape Development and Design Manager) and Emily Alleway (Landscape Development Assistant) with the help of the Park Management Teams and Park Services Team.

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BACKGROUND

PURPOSE
The Royal Parks Landscape Design Guide has been compiled to provide information in an easily accessible format for Park Managers and others working in the Parks when implementing improvements, refurbishing areas or replacing elements. This section of the guide looks at the general policies and principles that guide any landscape interventions. The data sheet section contains supplier and specification information that can be extracted and copied as necessary. The aim of the document is to reduce research time and help provide consistency and quality.

The loose leaf data sheet section of the guide is designed to be a living document that will be updated and reviewed regularly. It is not designed to restrict the design process or innovation but to enable Park Management to access information easily. It contains the Elements of Design palette which is a guide to the appropriate quality of materials and furniture.

AIMS:
- Demonstrate and disseminate best practice
- Align with procurement procedures
- Guide policies and procedures
- Provide relevant information with good practice examples
- Be easy to use and accessible
- Protect the landscape quality and historical value

Heritage Gas Lamp, Hyde Park
The guide sets out the policies and principles with which improvements and developments are undertaken in the parks by The Royal Parks and external organisations who are carrying work out in agreement with The Royal Parks.

Policies and Principles cover the following sections:

- Traffic signs and road markings
- Ground surfaces
- Park furniture
- Planting schemes
- Landscape design

It is appreciated that each Park has its own qualities and unique sense of place. The sense of place has developed over time due to local demands and physical attributes, such as topography. There are, however, many common elements which carry The Royal Parks’ brand and quality standard.

The Elements of Design considered are:

- Benches
- Bins
- Bollards
- Road surfaces
- Path surfaces
- Fencing
- Lighting
- Raised planters and containers
- Edging details
- Tree support, guards and grilles
- Water bodies
- Cycle parking
- Signage and markers
POLICIES AND PRINCIPLES

This section sets out principles of design for groups of design elements.

TRAFFIC SIGNS AND ROAD MARKINGS
Eliminate visual clutter and minimise impact on landscape character and park setting.
- Keep signs and road markings to a minimum and use only when they convey essential information
- Use the least number of signs/road markings permissible
- The smallest variant and simplest format of each sign/road marking used
- Locate signs on railings, walls, existing posts and lamp columns, rather than additional posts
- Co-ordinate designs and colours
- Ensure backs of signs are painted black or invisible green so that they are less intrusive

GROUND SURFACES
Use appropriate materials for their setting and intensity of use.
- Invest in quality, both in materials and workmanship
- Align and join materials in a harmonious way
- Minimize the number of different materials used
- Maintain and restore historic paving
- Specify materials that are robust and restored after construction works

PARK FURNITURE
Use only items that make a positive contribution to the Park.
- Choose park furniture that is well designed and appropriate for the locality
- Coordinate design and colours and position them thoughtfully
- Use historically accurate furniture and materials in preference to heritage style
- Remove or relocate superfluous or redundant items
- Keep Park furniture to a minimum
- Source materials, such as timber elements, from sustainable sources with the appropriate chain of custody

Traditional timber signage, Hyde Park
PLANTING SCHEMES
Designs are in keeping with their setting and maintained to a high standard.
- Bedding displays are designed to demonstrate horticultural excellence, the elimination of peat and reduced use of water and energy
- Herbaceous planting should be chosen for best effect in a park environment and to demonstrate best practice
- Shrub species and the designs of planting are chosen for their aesthetic and ecological value
- The position and species of planted trees should be chosen with a purpose

LANDSCAPE DESIGN
Designs are high quality, in keeping with their setting and functional as well as aesthetically pleasing.
- Materials are chosen that are appropriate in their appearance and fit for purpose
- Designs are checked and implemented with attention to detail and high-quality finish
- Designs have a holistic and innovative approach
- Total anticipated costs associated with fixed assets/park furniture during their estimated useful life, including routine maintenance, normal wear and tear, and replacement of minor or major components costs.
ELEMENTS OF DESIGN

Design elements have been categorised to make it easy to find the relevant specification in the data sheet section. Examples of elements have been collected from research undertaken by Land Use Consultants for the Parks and the Artefact Surveys in the early 1980s. The elements have also been categorised based on materials and character locations. Ideally, each element existing within the park should be mapped. Benches are an important element, particularly as many have been sponsored. The Royal Parks Bench Audit (2006) contains detailed information regarding condition, location, dedications and style.

BENCHES

The styles of benches vary from Park to Park. Generally styles are grouped within distinct areas of each Park and thus they contribute to the landscape setting, as well as providing important resting points to enjoy the Parks. Benches are often located in popular or congregational areas, to appreciate views or to allow visitors to rest. For this reason, benches are an important feature for making Parks welcoming and accessible.

Bench styles fall into two main categories: timber or cast iron with timber. There are very few benches that cannot be categorised in this way. Most of the bench styles relate back to historical designs, such as the O’Brien Thomas replicas. Many of the designs can be found in the Artefact Schedules produced by Land Use Consultants in the early 1980s. Some of the styles have been phased out and replaced to create a standardised approach.

The aim is to provide a palette of benches that are appropriate for most park settings. For specific projects, a departure from this palette using alternative benches would be considered if a good reason can be demonstrated. This could be, for example, historical precedence or to create a specific sense of place.

Where possible, benches and their settings will be upgraded to improve surface quality and drainage and to reduce areas of conflict. Where painted benches are being replaced, exposed timber benches should be selected because they require less maintenance.

BENCH PALETTE

The bench palette has been condensed to the types below, though in particular circumstances bespoke benches may be appropriate to create a sense of place. For general use in the Parks the following are recommended:

- The O’Brien Thomas Replica bench
- The Hyde Park bench
- The Brompton bench
- The Rustic Slat bench (3, 4 or 5 slats)
- The Isabella
- The Solid backless bench

Where possible, benches and their settings will be upgraded to improve surface quality and drainage and to reduce areas of conflict. Where painted benches are being replaced, exposed timber benches should be selected because they require less maintenance.
Litter bins are another important element of park furniture due to their number and concentration in popular areas. The capacity, location and appearance of bins have an impact on the Park setting and have maintenance implications, such as manual handling, for example.

There are four categories of bin:
- Fixed and permanent litter bins (made of various materials);
- Additional temporary wire bins – that are used for events and ceremonies
- Dog waste bins
- Recycling bins

Dog bins are also used in the Parks. The Royal Parks cast iron dog bin was designed specifically for the Parks and the Parks retain the copyright. Changes in the waste handling regulations have reduced the need for separate bins for dog waste. However, it is considered that the bins are a visual reminder to dog walkers that they need to pick up after their charges.

Carpenter bins are made by The Royal Parks and are usually constructed from locally-sourced sustainable timber in Richmond Park or Bushy Park. They are usually for general litter, though some are marked with dog waste signage.
RECYCLING

Recycling is an important part of The Royal Parks’ ISO14001 sustainability accreditation targets. Work has been carried out to deal with event, domestic and catering recycling. The Royal Parks wishes to encourage visitors to ‘Recycle on the Go’ (This is a government initiative to encourage people to recycle while they are out and about in addition to doorstep recycling). A bespoke bin is being produced for the Parks which is designed for flexibility, ease of management/maintenance and to complement existing park furniture particularly the timber and steel catering kiosks.

The main management issues with recycling in the Parks are collecting the different waste streams and minimising contamination. The bin design takes into account collection methods and capacity because we want to minimise the number of vehicle movements and the risks to staff of handling waste.

LITTER BINS

The cast iron Victorian-style bin is found in most of the Parks. Of these, the octagonal and square-closed bins are the most popular designs.

Litter bin designs chosen for their quality of design and durability in the Parks are as follows:
- Cast Iron bin
- Contemporary timber or mixed media bins
- Carpenter bin

There are design issues with different types of bins. For example, open top bins allow the contents to get wet, making it heavier and more difficult to empty. Bins that narrow towards the bottom, such as Tulip Bins, can be over filled with bulky items such as pizza cartons thus not using their full capacity. Other bins cause a security risk and designs, in some cases, need to be easy for the police to inspect, remove or seal.
BOLLARDS
Good quality, well-designed bollards keep visitors safe without reducing their enjoyment of the Parks. Poorly-positioned bollards get in the way of people in wheelchairs or pushing prams. They also create visual clutter and an ‘urbanised’ atmosphere.

Bollards have been installed in The Royal Parks to control traffic, including pedestrians. This is particularly noticeable by the Queen Victoria Memorial and The Mall in St James’s Park. Here, there are bespoke bollards in key locations to help keep visitors safe during busy times, such as Changing of the Guard at Buckingham Palace. Security bollards are also deployed to prevent access to secure areas, such as Horse Guards Parade.

Many of the bollards in the Parks were designed specifically for their location, particularly the cast iron bollards which can be replicated using original moulds or taking castings from existing pieces.
Generally, bollards fall into several categories depending on location and purpose. They are usually Royal Parks’ Invisible Green or black in colour if they are cast iron, painted steel or polyurethane. Timber bollards are untreated or painted Royal Parks Green or White. Illuminated bollards are being replaced where appropriate with an updated version.

Bollard styles include:

- Timber bollards
- Cast iron bollards
- Steel bollards
- Polyurethane bollards
- Retractable/removable bollards
- Lighting bollards
- Temporary bollards
- Traffic island bollards

Hanchurch bollard, Hyde Park

Retro-reflective flexible bollard

St. James's Park, The Mall - Cycle route bollard
ROAD AND PATH SURFACES
The Parks are treasured for their green appearance. Grassy areas are important for visitors and, therefore, hard surfaces are kept to a minimum. However, hard surfaces are recommended for areas that are used intensively, such as paths and places where people gather.

These paths and large areas of hard surfacing are designed to take account of use, long-term maintenance, cost and aesthetics.

A limited palette of surfaces has been chosen that can work in harmony with one another.

Surface types include:
- Tarmac with golden gravel top dressing (tar spray and chip)
- Hot rolled asphalt/tarmac
- Coxwell gravel
- Craig sand for horse-rides
- Stone paving
- Loose gravel or bark chips
- Granite setts/cobbles
- Resin-bound gravel/aggregate
- Mortared pebble features

FENCING
The main form of boundary treatment in the Parks is fencing (usually metal or timber). Fencing has several functions, including restricting visitors, protecting planting, managing deer and reducing wear and tear. Metal fencing is usually highSpecification galvanised steel with a polyester powder coated finish or high specification paint (Invisible Green BS 14 C 40 or Black).

Fencing types include:
- Hoop topped
- Interlaced hoop top
- Arrow head
- Spear head
- Timber
- Post and rail
- Bollard and rail
- Ornate bespoke
- Temporary chestnut pale fencing

The Palace Walk shared use route, Kensington Gardens
LIGHTING

The Royal Parks are some of the few locations in London that are not illuminated at night thus lighting has to be considered carefully due to the impact on wildlife and ecology. Lighting has several purposes and forms whether it be for features, security, routes/roads, facilities or building illuminations; providing aesthetic and functional roles. It is essential to enable visitors to navigate safely and use facilities when the Parks are open after dark.

For its historical value it is important to retain gas lighting on heritage routes, such as Rotten Row and where lighting columns are listed features. When lighting levels need to be more consistent, reliable and of a particular brightness for health and safety reasons, lamps are converted to use electricity.

As with bollards and benches, lighting design creates a sense of place and contributes to the quality of the visitor experience. Additional lighting is avoided but where it is necessary the light output is designed to minimise negative impacts. Affect on behaviour and perceptions of safety are considered. Replacement lighting columns are often created from original moulds or cast from existing columns. Heritage style designs are avoided. Contemporary designs are used where appropriate often in relation to building(s) such as The Regent’s Park Hub Sports pavilion.

Lighting types include:
• Victorian gas lighting columns
• Victorian replica gas columns
• Victorian replica or refurbished electric lighting columns
• Electric lighting columns
• Flood lighting
• Bollard lighting

Victorian gas lamp converted to electricity, Hyde Park

Flood lit Albert Memorial, Kensington Gardens
Raised Planters and container types include:
- Timber
- Concrete
- Cast iron
- Masonry
- Tubs
- Hanging baskets
- Ceramic/terracotta

Raised beds are particularly good in community garden areas because they are more accessible for less able visitors, allowing them to participate in gardening activities. Larger containers add height to planting areas and can be used in a very formal way to create symmetry.

Planters and containers can be used to introduce planting where it is not possible to plant directly into the ground.

Raised Planters and Containers
There is a wealth of varied containers and raised planters on offer. They are opportunities to create eye-catching features and demonstrate horticultural excellence to delight visitors. It is worth considering larger planters because they can be constructed from thicker, more robust materials, reducing the need for maintenance. The greater volume of growing medium or soil in a larger planter reduces the need for irrigation.

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Edging Detail
The choice of edge detail makes a considerable difference to the overall finish of paths or surfacing. Edging keeps surfacing materials in place, particularly in heavily used areas, and is also an aesthetic feature. In some locations, edging is raised to retain loose material and make maintenance operations easier. In the formal Avenue Gardens in The Regent’s Park, for example, metal edging retains the grass next to gravel dressed paths to create a crisp edge. Timber edging is used in a similar way in other locations. Granite setts are used as edging to mark changes in surfaces, instead of tactile paving, such as blister pavours.

Edging types include:
- Timber
- Metal edge
- Granite sett
- Kerbs
- Plastic
The Royal Parks uses tree guards and grilles only when the need has been determined, so there are very few types of these elements in the Parks. Guards and grilles are mainly used to protect trees from damage by deer. However, in recent years young trees have been damaged by visitors and a lightweight tree guard may be necessary.

Tree supports are used for most newly-planted trees during the establishment period. Traditionally, the two-post system was used for root balled trees. On the advice of our Arboriculturist, this has now been replaced by a three-stake system with rubber ties. A single stake is used for bare rooted trees.

Tree support, guard and grille types include:
- Timber staked (triple and single)
- Metal
- Timber crates

Water body details include:
- Edge treatment
- Conservation planting

The Royal Parks aims to provide the best possible water quality and habitat for wildlife in the water bodies.

WATER BODIES
There are several water bodies within the Parks with different characters and nature conservation values. Each of these has different construction and edge treatment. For example, the lake in St. James’s Park is a shallow concrete dish with a central channel, whereas parts of the Long Water in Kensington Gardens has a natural base. The Serpentine in Hyde Park is used for leisure activities (swimming and boating) while the water bodies in Bushy Park are used for fishing.

Elements
Tree Support, Guards And Grilles
Water Bodies
CyCle PaRking

All the Royal Parks provide cycle parking. A feasibility study was carried out identifying, through observation and local knowledge, the need for and location of cycle parking throughout the Parks. For the central Parks, the Sheffield and Red Route stands are used to match the design in Westminster. The tough coating and understated appearance fits well with existing Park furniture. Locations should be chosen carefully. They should fulfil a need for parking and be visible and secure without being visually obtrusive.

Richmond Park and Bushy Park have the most comprehensive provision of cycle parking in the Royal Parks, with Harrogate stands found in all the car parking areas. Bespoke sheep fencing stands have been produced for Bushy Park.

The aim is to install additional parking within the Parks for visitors and staff. Existing and suitable examples of cycle parking are shown.

Cycle Parking details include:
- Sheffield stand
- Red Route stand with tapping bar
- Harrogate stand
- Cycle shelter
- Sheep fencing cycle stand
- Temporary scaffolding cycle stand

Temporary cycling parking is also used in the Parks for large scale events, such as the Tour de France, Camden Green Fair and the Mayor of London’s Skyride. There is Transport for London guidance for temporary event cycle parking, though the scaffolding cycle stand has been successfully used at several events.
SIGNAGE AND MARKINGS
Signage and markings contribute to the overall presentation of the Parks. Signage is required for traffic and pedestrian management and should conform to health and safety requirements and, in many cases, highways standards. Signs help to guide visitors through the Parks to places of interest and to facilities, such as cafes, toilets and Park Offices. Map boards and finger posts are used at key locations to give visitors extra help with navigation.

Other notices, such as warning or advisory signs, are kept to a minimum and made visible while being discreet and in keeping with the Park furniture. Some signage departs from standards because of the Park’s heritage or aesthetic value. In these cases, a risk assessment is undertaken to ensure the safety of visitors is also considered.

Signs and markings need to be accurate and accessible. Often highway signs and iconography are used as they are easily recognisable. In many locations, signs have been created that suit the message and sense of place. The Royal Parks aims to use traditional materials wherever possible, such as timber and enamel. These choices balance maintenance implications, flexibility and visibility. Where possible, additional posts for signs are avoided and existing structures such as fencing are used. Backs of signs are painted black or invisible green to reduce their visual intrusion. White line markings and coloured surfaces are kept to a minimum where it is safe to do so.

Park information types include:
- Map boards
- Notice boards
- Interpretation panels
- Warning signs
- Advisory signs
- Finger posts
- Directional signage

Elements
Signage and Markings
Each of the eight Royal Parks has its own character and sense of place. Each Park is also sub-divided into character areas, based on an assessment of the visual environment. The opportunities and problems related to each area are explored in more detail in the Landscape Management Plans and Operations Plans.

**ACTIVITIES**
The range of park activities also have an impact on the variety of materials or park furniture used.

- Park activities include:
  - Necessary activities (rather than leisure activities e.g. travelling from a to b)
  - Passive recreation
  - Resting
  - Socializing
  - Planned activities (picnics, parties etc.)
  - Physical activity
  - Play
  - Events

Activities may occupy the same space but at different times of the year or day. The aim is to provide excellent facilities without creating clutter or spoiling the appearance of the Parks.

**ELEMENTS**
All the elements of design covered in the Landscape Design Guide contribute to the visual appearance of the Parks and the sense of quality. Elements are not considered in isolation but on how they work and complement one another. Any collection of elements will contribute to the sense of place. The guide sets out the palette that carries The Royal Parks quality brand with elements that can be subtly selected to create a unique or particular setting.

**VISUAL ENVIRONMENT**

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS**

**ACTIVITIES**

**ELEMENTS**
BEST PRACTICE

PROJECTS AND MANAGEMENT
The Royal Parks continues to make improvements to and replace elements within the landscape. This design guide helps to share best practice within the organisation, improve efficiency and ensure best value through procurement.

PARTNERSHIPS
The Royal Parks works closely with other organisations on projects and management of the Parks and aim to share best practice where possible. This guide enables The Royal Parks to set out the standards and principles which can be shared with others, including local authorities and organisations such as Transport for London, the GLA and international park authorities. The guide sets out the approach and the robust processes that have been adopted for many years and helps ensure the quality standard is maintained for years to come.

STAKEHOLDERS AND INTEREST GROUPS
This design guide also catalogues some of the elements of historical interest to others, with reference back to the Artefact Schedules. It also demonstrates the approach to features in the landscape as part of the management and maintenance of the Parks. Other organisations, such as English Heritage, Friends Groups and Natural England, can be advised in the restoration of heritage or horticultural features based on the principles and policies contained in the guide.
REVIEW

QUALITY CONTROL

The Royal Parks is keen to ensure that the quality of the materials and park furniture is kept to the high standard expected by visitors and stakeholders. This design guide aims to ensure that there is a process for procurement and that design standards are met. An integral part of this is a review of the guide and processes. Key elements that need to be considered at each review are:

- Procurement guidelines
- Sustainability
- Environment
- Visual impact
- Durability
- Usability
- Maintenance liability
- Disability discrimination
- Other legislation