

Guidance on Development Plans and Planning Applications affecting the Royal Parks

Prepared by LUC and the Royal Parks Estates Team
December 2025



Contents

Chapter 1: Background and purpose of this guidance	3
The Royal Parks	3
The Royal Parks' charitable purposes	4
Purpose of this Planning Guidance	5
Who is the Guidance for?	5
Structure of the Guidance	5
Chapter 2: The value of the Royal Parks	6
Extent and reputation	6
Which Royal Parks are designated for heritage or ecological value?	6
Metropolitan Open Land	8
Challenges	8
Chapter 3: Potential planning considerations	9
Guidance on the potential planning considerations	9
Chapter 4: Engaging with The Royal Parks on development plans and planning applications	17
Opportunities	17
Development plans	17
Planning applications	18
Monitoring and evaluation	18

Chapter 1: Background and purpose of this guidance

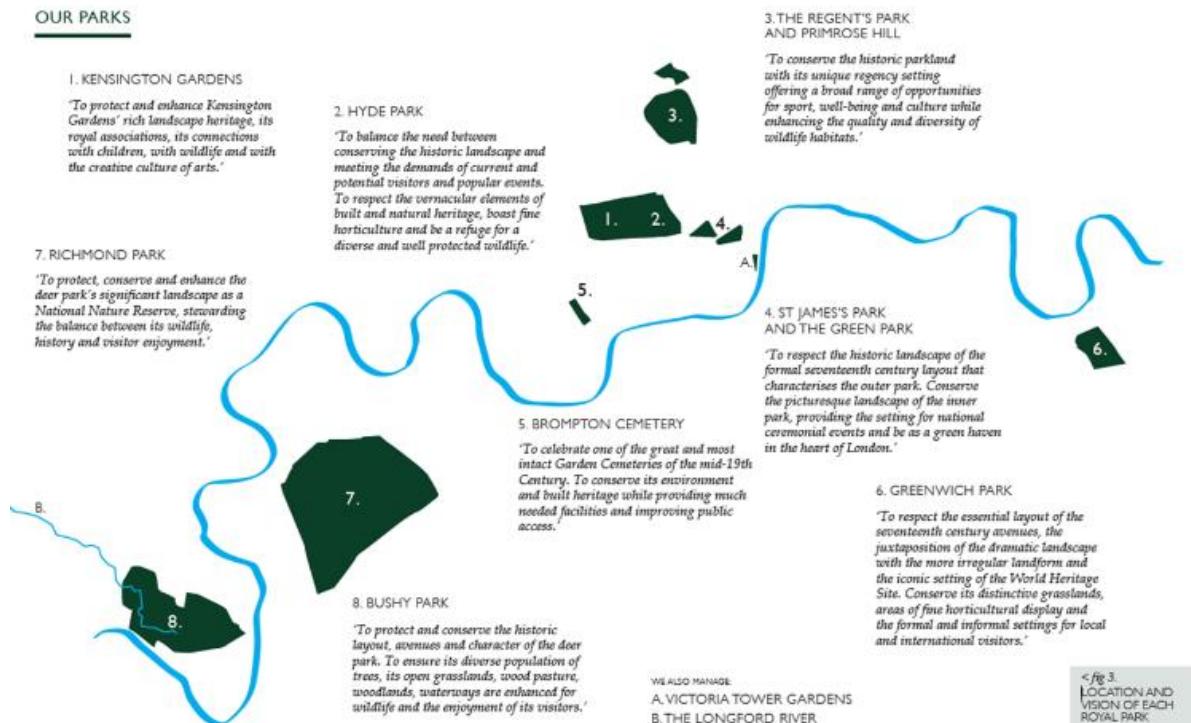
The Royal Parks

The Royal Parks Charity ('TRP') manages the Royal Parks on behalf of the Government. As shown in Table 1.1 and Figure 1, there are currently eight Royal Parks formally described by this name. Covering almost 2,000 hectares, they represent a significant portion of London's total public green space.

Table 1.1: Royal Parks in London

Park	Hectares
Bushy Park	450 hectares
The Green Park	19 hectares
Greenwich Park	75 hectares
Hyde Park	140 hectares
Kensington Gardens	98 hectares
The Regent's Park and Primrose Hill	191 hectares
Richmond Park	955 hectares
St. James's Park	23 hectares

Figure 1.1: The Royal Parks



TRP also manages certain other open spaces in London. These include Brompton Cemetery, Canning Green and Victoria Tower Gardens.

In addition, TRP manages the Longford River (and its freebords) in west London. Constructed in 1638-39, the Longford River is a man-made 19km distributary of the River Colne that diverts water to Bushy Park and a further 11km of distributaries to Hampton Court Palace and the Thames.

For ease of reference, the term 'Royal Parks' is used in this Guidance to describe all the land managed by TRP.

The Royal Parks' charitable purposes

The Royal Parks are owned by the Crown, with statutory responsibility for their care resting with the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. TRP, the charity, was created in 2017 to manage the Royal Parks on behalf of the government. The Freehold of Victoria Tower Gardens, Brompton Cemetery, Canning Green and Poet's Corner is owned by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport; these green spaces are not Crown land. TRP's charitable objects set out the main purpose of the charity and what it aims to achieve. They are:

- To protect, conserve, maintain and care for the Royal Parks, including their natural and designed landscapes and built environment, to a high standard consistent with their historical, horticultural, environmental and architectural importance
- To promote the use and enjoyment of the Royal Parks for public recreation, health and wellbeing, including through the provision of sporting and cultural activities and events which effectively advance the objects
- To maintain and develop the biodiversity of the Royal Parks, including the protection of their wildlife and natural environment, together with promoting sustainability in the management and use of the Royal Parks
- To support the advancement of education by promoting public understanding of the history, culture, heritage and natural environment of the Royal Parks and (by way of comparison) elsewhere
- To promote national heritage including by hosting and facilitating ceremonies of state or of national importance within and in the vicinity of the Royal Parks

TRP's Corporate Strategy (2022-2027) translates this into a core purpose: The Royal Parks is the charity which manages, protects and improves the parks in an exemplary and sustainable manner, so that everyone, now and in the future, can enjoy their natural and historic environments.

TRP, on behalf of the Crown as landowner, also has a responsibility to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the Royal Parks. The estate includes important international conservation designations, sites of special scientific interest, listed landscapes, rare habitats, historic buildings, unique features and vistas.

Purpose of this Planning Guidance

This Planning Guidance seeks to influence development plans and planning applications that may affect the Royal Parks. It seeks to ensure that TRP's charitable objects and purposes are understood, not compromised, and where possible enhanced, and that proposals avoid detrimental impacts on the parks, their boundaries and settings.

Where appropriate, engagement with the planning system can also provide an opportunity to generate income for TRP, through the Community Infrastructure Levy and Planning Agreements which seek to mitigate or compensate for adverse impacts of development on the estate.

The Guidance sets out the key planning considerations related to development outside the Royal Parks and the wider estate and how these should be addressed through development plans and development management.

It represents 'standing advice', to which TRP will refer in responding to consultations on development plans and planning applications, thereby reducing the time needed for day-to-day case work. However, the advice may be supplemented by specific responses as appropriate.

Who is the Guidance for?

The Guidance is intended to be used by:

- Developers and other planning applicants - to help them shape their proposals to take account of TRP's concerns
- Local planning authorities whose administrative areas include the Royal Parks and/or TRP's wider estate - to help them understand and respond to TRP's concerns
- TRP's staff when responding to consultation on development plans and planning applications
- 'Friends of' the Parks groups - to enable greater consistency between groups and with TRP itself

The Planning Guidance updates any existing planning guidance contained in the Management Plans for the individual Royal Parks.

Structure of the Guidance

The Guidance is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 describes the value of the Royal Parks
- Chapter 3 identifies the main challenges facing the Royal Parks and the opportunities that planning and development around the Parks present
- Chapter 4 sets out TRP's approach to engaging with development plans and planning applications, and future opportunities

Chapter 2: **The value of the Royal Parks**

This chapter describes the value and importance of the Royal Parks with reference to their:

- Extent and reputation
- Designations for heritage and ecological value

It also sets out how these values are reflected in planning designations and informs the planning considerations set out in Chapter 3.

Extent and reputation

Covering 1.4% of Greater London's overall area, the Royal Parks represent a significant portion of London's total public green space. The Royal Parks' importance and influence extend well beyond their size; they are an important component of the nation's heritage, used by visitors, workers and residents, with tens of millions of visitors per year.

Which Royal Parks are designated for heritage or ecological value?

TRP's estate is made up of the eight parks, all of which are Grade I listed Registered Parks and Gardens except for The Green Park which is Grade II* and Primrose Hill which is Grade II. Poet's Corner is included within the boundary of the Palace of Westminster and Westminster Abbey including Saint Margaret's Church, which is part of the World Heritage Site.

The Royal Parks are also designated for a range of other values. These designations include Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), National Nature Reserves (NNR), a Conservation Area (CA), a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and a World Heritage Site (WHS).

The designations applying to each of the Royal Parks are set out in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4: Royal Parks designations

Park & Local Authority (L/A)	Registered Park & Garden	Site of Special Scientific Interest	National Nature Reserve	Conservation Area	Special Area of Conservation	World Heritage Site
Hyde Park (Westminster)	✓ Grade 1			✓		
Richmond Park (Richmond upon Thames)	✓ Grade I	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Greenwich Park (Greenwich)	✓ Grade I			✓		✓
The Regent's Park and Primrose Hill (Westminster and Camden)	✓ Grade I (Primrose Hill Grade II)			✓		
Bushy Park (Richmond upon Thames)	✓ Grade I	✓		✓		
St James's Park (Westminster)	✓ Grade I			✓		
The Green Park (Westminster)	✓ Grade II*			✓		
Kensington Gardens (Westminster / Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea)	✓ Grade I			✓		

Metropolitan Open Land

In addition to these designations, all the Royal Parks are designated Metropolitan Open Land (MOL). MOL originated in public open space policy and was formally introduced in the Greater London Development Plan (1976) as a protective designation for strategically important open land in London.

The current London Plan affords MOL the same level of protection as the Metropolitan Green Belt, although functionally it is a more positive designation, focussing on landscape, recreation and nature conservation.

Policy 7.17 of the London Plan states that: The Mayor strongly supports the current extent of Metropolitan Open Land (MOL), its extension in appropriate circumstances and its protection from development having an adverse impact on the openness of MOL.

Challenges

As set out in Chapter 3, development and change of use of land outside the parks can affect the value, character and identity of the parks in many ways. This includes direct effects on views from the parks and the biodiversity value of the land, and indirect effects as a result of increased 'people pressure'.

Visitor numbers in the Royal Parks are increasing due to a range of factors. One of those factors is new developments close to Royal Parks, which can increase pressure on the parks, especially where alternative open space provision is limited. This, in turn, can increase the need for management and maintenance of the parks.

Chapter 3: **Potential planning considerations**

This chapter forms the core of the Guidance. It sets out the potential planning considerations associated with development affecting TRP's estate.

They are 'potential considerations' because they don't necessarily all apply to all types of development and each case is different. However, they are most likely to apply to:

- Proposed tall buildings, and those that would be visible from the Royal Parks or affect the settings of important cultural heritage assets within the parks
- Developments that may adversely affect the amenity value of the parks and wider estate, for example in terms of noise impact
- Developments that are likely to increase the use of the estate, particularly in areas that are otherwise deficient in open space

The potential planning considerations are:

- Impact on the openness of the parks
- Overshadowing effects of tall buildings
- Impact on the open sky space around the parks
- Implications of the London View Management Framework
- Impacts on the cultural heritage value of the parks
- Impact on the tranquillity of the parks
- Impacts on the biodiversity value of the parks (including dark night skies)
- Impacts of increased footfall

Guidance on the potential planning considerations

Table 4.1 addresses each planning consideration and sets out:

- Potential impacts on the parks
- Relevant legislation and guidance, to which reference should be made by all interested parties
- The evidence that may be required to support development plans and planning applications

Table 4.1: Guidance on potential planning considerations

Planning considerations	Potential impacts on the Royal Parks	Relevant legislation and policy	Evidence that may be required to support planning applications
Impact on the openness of the Royal Parks	<p>Visual and spatial openness are key features of the Royal Parks as designated Metropolitan Open Land (MOL). Their openness distinguishes the parks from the surrounding built up areas.</p> <p>Concerns about impacts on openness normally relate to developments within designated MOL. However, the visual openness of the parks can be affected by development at the edge of designated areas, particularly tall buildings.</p>	<p>London Plan Policy 7.7 on Location and design of tall and large buildings indicates that:</p> <p>The impact of tall buildings proposed in sensitive locations should be given particular consideration. Such areas might include the edge of the Green Belt or Metropolitan Open Land, London Plan Policy 7.17 on Metropolitan Open Land indicates that:</p> <p><i>The Mayor strongly supports the current extent of Metropolitan Open Land (MOL), its extension in appropriate circumstances and its protection from development having an adverse impact on the openness of MOL.</i></p>	TRP will request an assessment of the impact of proposed tall buildings at the edge of the Royal Parks on the openness of the parks, as designated MOL. This can include the impact on visual openness and degree of activity around the building, which can affect the sense of openness.
Overshadowing effects of tall buildings	Overshadowing refers to the shadow cast by a building or a property on nearby properties,	An overshadowing assessment calculates the impact the proposed development will have on neighbouring private and public amenity spaces, such as gardens, parks and play areas. The Building Research Establishment (BRE) recommends that	TRP will request such an assessment where overshadowing from a tall building may

	including parks and open spaces.	50% of any qualifying amenity area should be able to receive at least 2 hours of direct sunlight on 21 March.	adversely affect people's enjoyment of the Parks.
Impact of development on the open sky space around the Royal Parks	The general principle is that new developments that change the skyline from viewpoints within the Royal Parks have the potential to adversely affect the amenity and setting of the parks. This applies particularly to tall buildings that rise above the surrounding tree line, where this exists.	There is no legislation or specific national or London Plan policy relating to the protection of open sky space around the parks. However, the Colvin and Moggridge report on 'Sky Space around London's Inner Parks' (2001) identified areas of high sensitivity to intrusion by distant tall buildings - typically these were areas where a rural character provided a contrast to the surrounding metropolis, or where a landscape and its views had been specifically designed - then mapped the sky space needed to safeguard these areas from building intrusion.	Where TRP considers that change to the skyline from viewpoints within the Royal Parks resulting from proposed tall buildings may have the potential to adversely affect the amenity and setting of the Parks, it will request an assessment using interactive 3D modelling and digital twin software tools, such as VU.CITY.
Implications of the London View Management Framework	Development around the Royal Parks could impact on designated strategic views. It is the Mayor's responsibility, together with the boroughs, to protect the strategic views (see next column). However, some of the strategic views are from Royal Parks, or extend across them. As custodian of the Royal Parks and as a consultee on more significant planning applications,	<p>London Plan Policy 7.11 London View Management Framework includes a list of strategic views (Table 7.1) that the Mayor will keep under review. These views are seen from places that are publicly accessible and well used.</p> <p>The views represent at least one of the following categories: panoramas across substantial parts of London; views from an urban space of a building or group of buildings within a townscape setting; or broad prospects along the river Thames.</p> <p>The strategic views that include the Royal Parks, or which extend across them are:</p> <p>London Panoramas</p> <p>1 Alexandra Palace to Central London</p> <p>2 Parliament Hill to Central London</p>	Where TRP considers that a proposed development may impact a strategic view, either from or across the Royal Parks, it will recommend that an assessment is undertaken of the significance of the impact.

	<p>TRP wishes to support the Mayor and the boroughs in protecting and managing the views, wherever possible.</p> <p>3 Kenwood to Central London 4 Primrose Hill to Central London 5 Greenwich Park to Central London 6 Blackheath Point to Central London</p> <p>Linear Views</p> <p>7 The Mall to Buckingham Palace 9 King Henry VIII's Mound, Richmond to St Paul's Cathedral</p> <p>River Prospects</p> <p>17 Golden Jubilee/Hungerford Footbridges 18 Westminster Bridge 19 Lambeth Bridge 20 Victoria Embankment between Waterloo and Westminster Bridges 22 Albert Embankment between Westminster and Lambeth Bridges along Thames Path near St Thomas' Hospital</p> <p>Townscape Views</p> <p>23 Bridge over the Serpentine, Hyde Park to Westminster 24 Island Gardens, Isle of Dogs to Royal Naval College 26 St James' Park to Horse Guards Road 27 Parliament Square to Palace of Westminster</p> <p>London Plan Policy 7.1 indicates that development will be assessed for its impact on the designated view if it falls within the foreground, middle ground or background of that view.</p>	
--	---	--

		<p>The Mayor has prepared supplementary guidance (SPG) on the management of views designated in the London Plan. The SPG identifies viewing places within which viewing locations can be identified. It also specifies individual assessment points from which management guidance and assessment should be derived.</p>	
Impacts on the cultural heritage value of the Royal Parks	<p>Development around the Royal Parks can affect their historic assets, including listed buildings, conservation areas, and their settings (the surroundings that contribute to their significance).</p> <p>It is Historic England's responsibility, together with the boroughs, to protect these historic assets (see next column). However, as custodian of the Royal Parks and a consultee on more significant planning applications, TRP wishes to support Historic England and the boroughs in protecting the parks' historic assets.</p>	<p>All the Royal Parks are recorded in Historic England's Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. In addition, Brompton Cemetery is a Grade I entry on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. Victoria Tower Gardens is Grade II Listed.</p> <p>Scheduled Monuments are located within Bushy Park, Greenwich Park and Kensington Gardens. At Bushy Park, the Old Brew House is a Scheduled Monument. Kensington Gardens contains the Scheduled Monument of Kensington Palace. Greenwich Park contains three Scheduled Monuments; the Anglo-Saxon cemetery, Greenwich Observatory and the Romano-Celtic Temple.</p> <p>Greenwich Park is within the Greenwich Maritime World Heritage Site. Poets' Corner is within the Palace of Westminster, Westminster Abbey and St. Margaret's Church World Heritage Site, and Victoria Tower Gardens is adjacent to it.</p> <p>Under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 Conservation of historic buildings and monuments (updated July 2022), TRP is obligated to put in place measures to protect and conserve its buildings, monuments, sites and landscapes of historic interest and to regulate operations or activities affecting them.</p>	<p>Where TRP considers that a proposed development may adversely affect the Royal Parks' historic assets, it will recommend that an assessment is undertaken of the significance of the impact, with reference to:</p> <p>Conservation Area Statements</p> <p>Conservation Management Plans for individual parks</p> <p>Assessment of significance will be prepared to supplement information in Listing, Conservation Area Statement etc.</p> <p>The Royal Parks Archaeological</p>

			Management Strategy (2018)
Impact on tranquillity	Impact of noisy development, both during and post construction, on people's enjoyment of the parks. This applies particularly to Brompton Cemetery, which is sensitive to noise impacts.	<p>Noise abatement legislation in the UK includes the Noise Abatement Act 1960, the Environmental Protection Act 1990, and the Control of Pollution Act 1974:</p> <p>Noise Abatement Act 1960: this act defines noise or vibration that is a nuisance as a statutory nuisance. It also includes restrictions on loudspeakers, such as prohibiting their use between 9 PM and 8 AM.</p> <p>Environmental Protection Act 1990: Section 80 of this act allows councils to serve abatement notices to stop or reduce noise. These notices can require the responsible party to take specific actions, such as stopping the noise or limiting it to certain times. Breaches of an abatement notice can result in a fine.</p> <p>Control of Pollution Act 1974: Part III of this act covers noise.</p>	Where TRP considers that noise from a proposed development may adversely affect people's enjoyment of the Parks, it will request that an assessment is undertaken of the significance of the impact.
Protecting and enhancing the biodiversity value of the Parks (including dark night skies)	<p>Development around the Royal Parks can decrease their biodiversity value by fragmenting habitats, increasing disturbance and increasing noise and light pollution.</p> <p>The Royal Parks provide important dark spaces at night, from and around which darker skies can be observed. Dark spaces</p>	<p>The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 Part 3, S.40: "Public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity."</p> <p>Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) law became mandatory under the Environment Act 2021 and was introduced in England on February 12, 2024</p> <p>London Plan Policy G6 – Biodiversity and Access to Nature: Sites of Important Nature for Conservation (SINCs) should be protected. London Boroughs should identify SINCs and eco corridors and support their protection and conservation whilst seeking opportunities to create other habitats. New</p>	TRP will seek to ensure that potential adverse impacts on the biodiversity value of the parks are considered and addressed through good design and management. In most cases this will involve provision of appropriate green infrastructure and/or urban greening measures.

	<p>are also important for bats which depend on natural darkness for their survival.</p> <p>Unless carefully designed, artificial lighting in/on buildings and on streets and pavements around the parks can reduce the darkness of the parks at night, and therefore affect bat habitats.</p>	<p>developments should manage the impacts on biodiversity and to secure biodiversity net gain.</p> <p>The Greater London Authority (GLA) is preparing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for London (a requirement of the Environment Act 2021); the aims of this are to identify areas where nature recovery should be prioritised.</p> <p>London Plan Policy G7 - Trees and Woodland: London Boroughs should retain, protect and enhance London's urban forest and woodlands. Any need to remove existing trees must be replaced, and green infrastructure strategies should help identify where trees can be placed to contribute to the Mayor's goal of increasing the tree canopy cover by 10% by 2050.</p> <p>The Institution of Lighting Professionals (ILP) has produced a Guidance Note (2023) which raises awareness of the impacts of artificial lighting on bats but also the potential solutions to avoid and reduce this harm.</p>	<p>TRP will pay particular attention to the introduction of artificial lighting, which could affect the darkness of the parks at night and have consequential effects on bats. Where appropriate, TRP will require an assessment of the impacts, taking account of the ILP Guidance Note (2023).</p>
<p>Increased footfall within the Parks</p>	<p>New development or change of use of buildings within the vicinity of the parks can increase footfall, especially where alternative open space provision is limited. This in turn increases management and maintenance requirements of park infrastructure and open</p>	<p>London Plan para. 8.4.1 notes that:</p> <p>Open spaces – particularly those planned, designed and managed as green infrastructure – provide a wide range of social, health and environmental benefits, and are a vital component of London's infrastructure. All types of open space, regardless of their function, are valuable in their ability to connect Londoners to open spaces at the neighbourhood level. Connectivity across the network of open spaces is particularly important as this provides opportunities for walking and cycling. Green spaces are especially important for improving wildlife corridors.</p> <p>London Plan Policy G4 Open Space states that</p>	<p>Where development around the parks is likely to increase footfall within the parks, TRP will require an open space assessment to be undertaken. This should identify any existing deficiency in open space provision, having regard to any open space studies published by the Local Planning Authority.</p>

	<p>spaces, the cost of which falls to TRP.</p>	<p>A. Development Plans should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) undertake a needs assessment of all open space to inform policy. Assessments should identify areas of public open space deficiency, using the categorisation set out in Table 8.1 as a benchmark for the different types required. Assessments should take into account the quality, quantity and accessibility of open space 2) include appropriate designations and policies for the protection of open space to meet needs and address deficiencies 3) promote the creation of new areas of publicly accessible open space, particularly green space, ensuring that future open space needs are planned for, especially in areas with the potential for substantial change 4) ensure that open space, particularly green space, included as part of development remains publicly accessible. <p>B. Development proposals should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) not result in the loss of protected open space 2) where possible create areas of publicly accessible open space, particularly in areas of deficiency. 	<p>Where the development would result in a significant increase in visitor numbers to the Parks, TRP will wish to engage in early discussions around S106 planning contributions for the management and maintenance of the parks.</p>
--	--	---	---

Chapter 4: **Engaging with The Royal Parks on development plans and planning applications**

As noted in Chapter 1, this Guidance is intended to be used by:

- Developers and other planning applicants – to help them shape their proposals to take account of TRP's concerns
- Local planning authorities whose administrative areas include the parks and/or TRP's wider estate – to help them understand and respond to TRP's concerns
- TRP's staff when responding to consultation on development plans and planning applications
- 'Friends of' the Parks groups – to enable greater consistency between groups and with TRP itself

The planning considerations set out in Chapter 3, together with the relevant policies and evidence, provide guidance and a resource for all parties when considering development and land use change around the parks.

The following paragraphs set out TRP's specific requirements with regard to development plans and planning applications.

Opportunities

Greater engagement with planning and development around the Parks will help to address the challenges identified within this guidance.

The Management Plans¹ for the individual parks set out a wide range of policies and projects that seek to enhance the parks.

As well as posing a threat, development around the parks creates a significant opportunity to generate an income for TRP.

Section 106 (S106) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 provides a legislative basis for planning obligations aimed at ensuring that new development results in appropriate social and environmental provision. S106 agreements, therefore, require developers to contribute towards the infrastructure and services that the new development, or local community, will need. This can include the provision of and improvements to parks and green spaces.

Chapter 3 of this Guidance describes how the planning system provides opportunities to capture some of the development value in the vicinity of the parks.

Development plans

The boroughs' Local Plans and Supplementary Planning Documents should play a key role in protecting and enhancing the Royal Parks. Specifically, they should include:

¹ <https://www.royalparks.org.uk/park-management/management-plans>

- Policies for protection and enhancement of open spaces, including the Royal Parks
- Policies for onsite provision of new public open space in new developments, proportionate to the size of the proposal and the number of intended occupiers/users
- Policies for new public open space or improvements to existing public open space, where onsite provision is not feasible or sufficient
- Reference to the role of developer contributions, where appropriate, for new public open space or improvements to existing public open space (including the Royal Parks), using Section 106 agreements

The boroughs should also consider the use of funds generated from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for improvements to existing parks and green spaces, or for the creation of new ones. TRP is intending to take a more proactive role in seeking to secure funding from CIL as the parks are important green infrastructure in many boroughs.

Planning applications

Applicants for development in the vicinity of the Royal Parks should consider this Guidance and provide evidence in support of their planning applications that addresses the relevant planning considerations. TRP is open to pre-application discussions, which may be subject to fees.

Similarly, the boroughs should take account of the guidance when determining planning applications. They should ensure that TRP is consulted on planning applications that affect the planning considerations set out in Chapter 3 of this Guidance.

Monitoring and evaluation

This Planning Guidance will be reviewed as required to ensure that it reflects changes to national and London planning policy and in light of experience of specific cases.