

# West Berkshire HER User Guidance

June 2022

## West Berkshire Historic Environment Record

### Access and Information Terms and Conditions

West Berkshire Council Archaeology



WestBerkshire  
C O U N C I L

## Introduction

This document sets out the purpose and content of the West Berkshire Historic Environment Record, how to access information, the charging structure and conditions of use.

### 1 Purpose and Content

The West Berkshire Historic Environment Record (HER) is the primary source of information about the historic environment of the unitary authority of West Berkshire.

The historic environment is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2)) as “all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora”, and HERs as “information services that seek to provide access to comprehensive and dynamic [i.e. constantly updated] resources...for public benefit and use” (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 2021: 67).

The West Berkshire HER is an index of known buried sites, ancient monuments, historic buildings and landscapes, archaeological investigations, sources and finds within the geographical boundary of the local authority. Records are held of nationally designated sites (Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields) and features of local significance, including those on West Berkshire Council’s Local List of Heritage Assets. The database also contains information on all consultations to the West Berkshire Archaeology team. Linked to the HER are three historic characterisation projects, providing area-based analysis and advice about the District’s evolution and traits.

The Archaeology team also has access to a reference collection of books, articles and unpublished reports, aerial photographs, and copies of historic and modern maps.

There is a national network of HERs, generally based within local authorities ([www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/chr/default.aspx](http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/chr/default.aspx)), and guidance on their standards is provided by Historic England. HERs can be used to:

- advance knowledge and understanding of the historic environment, and improve its protection
- support conservation, management and enhancement of the historic environment
- inform strategic policies and decision-making relating to local plans, neighbourhood plans, spatial planning, development management and countryside management, such as forestry and agricultural land management
- support heritage-led regeneration, environmental improvement, place-making and cultural tourism initiatives
- contribute to research, education and social inclusion
- promote public participation in the exploration, appreciation and enjoyment of local heritage (Historic England 2019, section 2.2)

The West Berkshire HER is managed by the Archaeology team, part of West Berkshire Council’s Development and Regulation Service. Specialist staff compile and interpret the

information contained in the HER in order to ensure development within the District is sustainable, in line with the NPPF. The HER's data is continually updated as archaeological work is undertaken, reports are produced and advice is sought by enquirers.

### At a glance:

#### What information does the West Berkshire HER contain or cross reference?

- Monuments
  - archaeological sites, cropmarks and earthworks, buildings, structures, designed landscapes, battlefields, findspots and artefact scatters
- Events
  - desk-based assessments, evaluations, watching briefs, excavations, building recording, fieldwalking surveys and geophysical surveys
- Sources
  - published and unpublished references, including site reports, academic and local group research
- Finds
  - stray finds and artefacts uncovered during archaeological investigation
- Characterisation data
  - Historic Landscape Characterisation data (HLC), Historic Environment Character Areas (HECAs), Historic Environment Character Zones (HECZs) and the Newbury Historic Character Study
- Reference collection
  - site reports, research reports, selected local archaeological journals, aerial photographs, photographs of historic buildings, sites and monuments, historic and current maps, LiDAR imagery

## 2 Access

The HER serves a broad range of users, both within West Berkshire Council and externally. In accordance with the NPPF (2021, para 192), the HER is a public record for professional and public user groups, and is also part of the evidence base for the local planning authority. Local planning authorities should have up-to-date evidence about the historic environment in their area, which is used to assess the significance of heritage assets and the contribution they make to their environment, as well as to help predict the likelihood of other heritage assets being discovered in the future. Information about the historic environment which is gathered as part of plan making or development management should be made publicly accessible.

## 2.1 Internal Users

HERs (originally called Sites and Monuments Records or SMRs) evolved from records generally held by county planning authorities, and were used primarily as planning and conservation tools. The West Berkshire HER developed in this way from the Berkshire SMR, and still underpins the work of the Archaeology team in development management work, strategic planning and in advising West Berkshire's Planning Officers. Data from the HER is also provided to colleagues in Conservation, Countryside, Environmental Delivery, West Berkshire Museum and many other teams within West Berkshire Council.

## 2.2 External Users

The HER is used by many different categories of enquirers including

- developers, agents and architects
- archaeological contractors and consultants
- statutory undertakers and utility companies
- landowners, their agents and farmers
- Government agencies such as the Environment Agency and the Forestry Commission
- community groups such as those preparing Neighbourhood Plans and Conservation Area Appraisals
- students, teachers, academics and researchers
- media authors
- West Berkshire Heritage Forum's Local Listing Selection Panel
- local societies, local residents and other interested individuals

To request HER data, the online HER Enquiry Form should be completed:

<https://citizen.westberks.gov.uk/article/36726/Make-an-Historic-Environment-Record-HER-Enquiry>.

For complex enquiries, or to discuss suitable mitigation measures for development proposals or land-use changes, you may prefer to contact the Archaeology team initially:

[archaeology@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:archaeology@westberks.gov.uk).

## 2.3 Facilities

The Archaeology team is located in West Berkshire Council's Market Street office in Newbury. Physical access to the HER, its reports and other sources is by enquiry only as no facilities for visitors are currently available. However, the Archaeology team will make every effort to ensure that all users are able to use its publicly available services, in line with the Equality Act 2010 and West Berkshire Council's Public Sector Equality Duty.

Please contact the Archaeology team using the contact details below (see page 9) with details of the material you would like to consult and to discuss your alternative access needs. It is not possible for visitors to browse any items in person. Requested material will be retrieved, where possible, and made available for visitors upon their arrival or in the post. Printouts or photocopies of information, including text and images, can be provided in a variety of fonts, font sizes and colours, or for users to obtain translations of. Thesauri of technical terms can also be provided. The Council's premises can be accessed by wheelchair users, and lifts and disabled toilets are available.

## 2.4 Response Times

Enquiries to the Archaeology team are acknowledged within the Council's service standard of three days and some customers may receive replies to their questions at the same time. If an immediate answer cannot be given, the Archaeology team aims to respond to most categories of enquirers within 15 working days. This standard is monitored as an Archaeology team Key Performance Indicator, with 90% as a target rate for achievement.

When data is urgently required within a shorter timeframe, efforts will be made to meet users' needs, but cannot be guaranteed. A priority service is not available, but if your enquiry is urgent this should be indicated on the online HER Enquiry Form (see section 2.2, above).

## 2.5 Data Access

Access to the information held in the HER is available under the provision of Section 141 (1) of the 1972 Local Government Act, the Environmental Information Regulations (EIRs) 2004 and the Equality Act 2010. In compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018 (<https://info.westberks.gov.uk/dataprotection>), the Archaeology team's data protection privacy statement on how enquirers' details are collected and stored can be found here: <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/privacynotices>.

Data may be withheld:

- if dealing with the enquiry would impose an unreasonable burden on the Archaeology team and the information is already easily accessible within the public domain. For example, a request for non-commercial purposes for extensive parts of the HER because of a large area of geographical interest or an unstructured enquiry
- if there is reasonable cause to believe that the disclosure of the information would have an adverse effect on the historic environment, such as leading to nighthawking or the deliberate damaging of sites
- if it is exempt from disclosure, such as data of a confidential or sensitive nature that cannot easily be redacted

Requests for the provision of very large quantities of data over long periods of time may require a licence and should be discussed with the Archaeology team.

All users are asked to indicate their acceptance of the Terms and Conditions of Data Provision (see section 4, below).

## 2.6 Feedback and Complaints

Feedback or complaints about the service you have received from the Archaeology team can be provided to the team directly via the contact details below (see page 9). Alternatively, feedback can be provided via the Council's online feedback form: [www.westberks.gov.uk/howdidwedo](http://www.westberks.gov.uk/howdidwedo) and complaints can be made via the Council's online complaint form: [www.westberks.gov.uk/complaintform](http://www.westberks.gov.uk/complaintform).

## 3 Charging

Charges for searches are dependent on the nature of the enquiry, whether it is for a commercial or non-commercial purpose. Additional costs may also be incurred for printing and photocopying.

### 3.1 Non-Commercial Searches

There will be no charge for using the HER for

- reasonable enquiries from the public and local societies which fulfil an educational or community service, and promote a better understanding of the historic environment and the work of the West Berkshire Archaeology team
- academic research enquiries aiming to improve understanding of the local, regional or national historic environment
- media enquiries with an educational benefit in interpreting West Berkshire's historic environment

It is recommended that researchers and other non-commercial users consult the sources listed below (see section 3.1.1-3) in the first instance. If further detail is required, the HER may be consulted with no charge.

Particularly large and complex searches of a non-commercial nature may, however, incur a fee and should be discussed with the Archaeology team.

Photocopying and printing charges are outlined below (see section 3.3).

#### 3.1.1 Heritage Gateway

Limited elements of the West Berkshire HER database are freely available online via Historic England's portal, the Heritage Gateway: [www.heritagegateway.org.uk](http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk). A step by step guide on how to use this point of access to many different historic environment datasets, including a large part of West Berkshire HER's Monument data (see page 3, above, for a definition of Monuments), is available online: <http://info.westberks.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=36550&p=0> or from the Archaeology team. It is emphasised that the Heritage Gateway is not suitable for enquiries associated with development, planning and land-use changes because it does not comprise West Berkshire HER's complete or current dataset, and National Grid References are only displayed to show sites to the nearest 100 metres. As such, to refer only to the datasets available on the Heritage Gateway for those purposes does not meet the requirements of paragraph 194 of the NPPF (2021: 56). However, this remote access is provided for anyone with a general interest in the historic buildings, sites and monuments of the District.

#### 3.1.2 West Berkshire Online Map

In line with the Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community Regulations (INSPIRE) 2009, layers showing a selection of West Berkshire's Monuments (see page 3, above, for a definition of Monuments) are available on the West Berkshire Online Map: <https://gis2.westberks.gov.uk/webapps/OnlineMap/?vln=HISTORIC%20ENVIRONMENT%20RECORD>. As with data available on the Heritage Gateway (see above), this spatial data is not appropriate reference material for enquiries related to development, planning or land-use changes.

#### 3.1.3 Historic Characterisation Projects

Three historic characterisation projects have been carried out in West Berkshire. Information on the Newbury Historic Character Study, Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) and Historic Environment Character Zoning (HECZ) is accessible online at: <http://info.westberks.gov.uk/historicenvironmentprojects> or via the HER. HLC and HECZ information can also be added to the Online Map (see section 3.1.2, above).

### 3.2 Commercial Searches

Paragraph 194 of the NPPF (2021: 56) requires developers, those submitting planning applications or their agents, as a minimum, to consult the relevant Historic Environment Record, if any heritage assets will be affected by the development proposal. Heritage assets are defined as buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of their heritage interest (NPPF 2021: 67). They include designated heritage assets (see section 1, above) and assets identified by the local planning authority, including Local Listing.

In line with Regulation 8(1) of the EIRs and Regulation 15 of the Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2015, there will be a charge for staff time to extract the relevant HER information and to make it available for re-use in a suitable format for

- commercial enquiries relating to the prospective purchase or development of land or other property, including land-use changes
- enquiries where data is being collected for commercial or profit-making use, such as a commercial publication

The Archaeology team's charges for 2022-23 are based on an hourly rate, plus VAT, as agreed at a meeting of West Berkshire Council on 3 March 2022.

Users will be advised of charges and provided with a quote before their enquiry is processed. Invoices will usually be raised at the end of the month after the information is supplied and will be due for immediate payment.

#### Scale of charges (plus VAT)

- Minimum charge of £75 for the first 30 minutes
- £125 for 60 minutes
- £62.50 per additional 30 minutes thereafter

Photocopying and printing charges are outlined below (see section 3.3).

Nationally agreed charges apply for providing historic environment information and advice for Countryside Stewardship applications, and this is administered separately through the Rural Payments Agency ([www.gov.uk/government/collections/countryside-stewardship-get-paid-for-environmental-land-management](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/countryside-stewardship-get-paid-for-environmental-land-management)).

Forestry Commission England Woodland Creation Offer (EWCO: [www.gov.uk/guidance/england-woodland-creation-offer](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/england-woodland-creation-offer)) applications will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

### 3.3 Additional Costs

#### Computer printouts or photocopying

- 20p per A4 b/w sheet
- 30p per A3 b/w sheet
- 60p per A4 colour sheet
- £1 per A3 colour sheet

## 4 Conditions of Data Provision

- It is expected that users of the HER will inform staff of the purpose of their enquiry and the use to which the requested information will be put. The HER data should not be used for purposes which damage the historic environment.
- Data is provided for the purpose specified and should not be reused for any other purpose without the prior consent of the West Berkshire Archaeology team. Data should not be stored beyond the life of the project for which it was required.
- The HER is constantly changing as new discoveries are made. Information supplied can be considered to be current for no longer than six months.
- Whilst every effort is made to check the accuracy of the HER, no liability can be accepted for errors, omissions or inaccuracies in the data, or for advice based on that data. Users who identify inaccuracies or omissions in the HER data supplied should notify the Archaeology team.
- The absence of data in certain areas should not be taken as an absence of archaeological features or other heritage assets. Similarly, omission from the HER does not mean that a feature is not a heritage asset. The HER cannot be assumed to have identified all relevant heritage assets within a study area.
- Inclusion in the HER is not in itself a recognition of the value and significance of a heritage asset, which will always be subject to further assessment through the planning process.
- Although the HER is a public record, the inclusion of a site does not imply public access to that location. Many historic buildings, sites and monuments are on privately owned land.
- The data, maps, computer records and other material that comprise the HER are copyrighted and cannot be copied or used for any other purpose other than that for which it has been provided without the written permission of West Berkshire Archaeology team. They should also not be given to a third party without written permission from the Archaeology team.

It is a condition of the provision of data that copies of any resulting research, reports, publications, leaflets or deposit models, for example, shall be provided to the Historic Environment Record.

Users are also requested to inform and to make their research available to the Archaeology team when new archaeological sites or data are discovered as a result of their work.

When information is submitted to the HER, ideally:

- reports will be in a digital format, such as a PDF file or Word document. They should include embedded photographs and map extracts. PDF files should be searchable using Optical Character Recognition (OCR)
- photographs will be jpeg or tiff files
- GIS layer files or shapefiles will be ArcGIS files
- where there is an agreement to supply digital database records to the HER, these will be in Microsoft Access databases or Excel spreadsheets



## Contact Details

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Market Street  
Newbury, RG14 5LD

Tel: 01635 519534

Email: [archaeology@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:archaeology@westberks.gov.uk)

Web: <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/archaeology>

## References

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 2021. *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF): [www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2).

Historic England, 2019. *A Guide to Historic Environment Records (HERs) in England*: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/guide-to-historic-environment-records-england>

## Links

Heritage Gateway: [www.heritagegateway.org.uk](http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk)

Both a portal to national and local historic environment data, and the central register of contact details for English HERs.

Historic England, Historic Environment Records (HERs):

<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/information-management/hers>

Historic England, What is Designation?

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/what-is-designation>

Informing the Future of the Past: Guidelines for Historic Environment Records:

<https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/ifp>

West Berkshire HER enquiry form: <https://citizen.westberks.gov.uk/article/36726/Make-an-Historic-Environment-Record-HER-Enquiry>

West Berkshire historic environment projects:

<https://info.westberks.gov.uk/historicenvironmentprojects>

West Berkshire Council's Local List of Heritage Assets: <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/locallist>

West Berkshire Council's Online Map: <https://gis2.westberks.gov.uk/webapps/OnlineMap>

Neighbourhood and Community Planning: <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/communityplanning>

West Berkshire Council Conservation Areas: <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/conservationareas>