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Statement of significance

Determination of significance is based upon both statutory designation and professional judgement, tested against four broad values set out in Historic England's Conservation Principles. These are:

Evidential value: (physical, documentary and scientific). Evidential value derives from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity. It includes physical remains, above and below ground (archaeology) as well as geology, landform, species and habitats. Evidential value relates to the potential to contribute to people's understanding of the past and might take into account date, rarity, condition, and relation to documentary evidence.

Historical value: (including association). Historical value derives from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present. It tends to be illustrative (visual) or associative. The illustrative value of places tends to be greater if they incorporate the first, or only surviving, example of an innovation of consequence, whether related to design, technology or social organisation, for example, if it illustrates a rare or early example, a unique style, complete survival, associated with significant people or events, association with other important assets or literature, art, music or film. It takes account of completeness and ability to illustrate connections, use and management.

Aesthetic value: (landscape and architecture; design and artistic value). Aesthetic value derives from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place. It is related to periods of culture; quality of design, innovation, influence, role of architect and artist / craftsman, design in accordance with landscape theories (such as the Picturesque or Modern Movement); composition (form, proportions, massing, silhouette, views and vistas, circulation); materials and planting; sources and expression of concepts. Strong indicators of importance are quality of design and execution, and innovation, particularly if influential.

Communal value: (commemorative and symbolic values and social value). Communal value derives from the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective

experience or memory. Communal values are closely bound up with historical (particularly associative) and aesthetic values, and with educational, social or economic values.

Summary of significance

Kearsney Court / Russell Gardens is a nationally important site recognised by its inclusion on the Historic England Register of Parks and Gardens of Specific Historical Interest. It is the work of one of the most famous English landscape designers of his era, Thomas Mawson, and the first landscape designer to use the term "landscape architect".

Kearsney Abbey is a regionally and locally important site for its picturesque designed landscape. The designs were not laid out by a noted landscape designer, but evolved under the instructions of the Fector family; nevertheless, they were notable in the region and attracted visitors from the mid-C19 while still in private ownership.

The industrial archaeological legacy of the parks, particularly Kearsney Abbey, is also important, with remnants of two mills and their associated systems harnessing water power still clearly apparent.

Ecologically, the Drellingore and Dour are chalk streams and as such are nationally and internationally rare habitats, home to a number of protected species. The intervention of the designed landscapes has changed aspects of its flow and altered the riverine ecology but they remain of international importance.

Together, Kearsney Abbey Park and Russel Gardens both conserve surviving elements representative of their respective periods of development; and in combination with Kearsney Manor, which is now in private ownership, they represent the survival of the once much more extensive, and ancient, estate of Kearsney Manor.

Significance of Kearsney Abbey Park and Russell Gardens

Levels of significance are attributed to discrete aspects of the parks. The approach to this Statement of Significance, as well as the definition of these levels, are derived from Semple Kerr's 'The Conservation Plan',ⁱ modified to reflect the varied aspects of these particular sites.

- **A: Exceptional:** international and nationally important Grade I and II* sites; features within the site fundamental to the design or to the historic interest of the landscape
- **B: Considerable:** regionally important Grade II sites (south-east England); features forming essential parts or elements specific to the vocabulary of the design
- **C: Some:** locally important (Kent) sites; features of local importance and features which contribute to design complexity
- **D: Little:** sites with little significant value; features not historically significant to landscape design
- **E: Intrusive/damaging:** negative or intrusive features, which detract from the historic character and value of a site, including impact on views

ⁱ Semple Kerr 2013 (7th Ed)

Evidential	Significance
Based on the presence of significant deposits of river sediment a little downstream, the valley bottom below the levels of the present day parks may well contain similar deposits that are of scientific interest and value in understanding the early post-ice age history of the area.	B
Evidence of early human settlement has been found on the hill slopes of Coxhill Mount, consistent with other archaeological finds relating to the Neolithic and Bronze Age in the area; a possible new barrow site on Coxhill Mount is yet to be confirmed.	B
The sites of two old mills, Kearsney Abbey Mill and River Paper Mill, fall within Kearsney Abbey park, and their sites and remains are significant within the context of the River Dour's industrial past which saw a total of 13 mills along the river catchment. They represent the C18 and C19 phases of landscape history.	B-C
Russell Gardens: documentary and site evidence suggest that there may be some archaeological potential deriving from features such as paths, but is thought to be very limited for this site due to the undeveloped nature of the land prior to 1900.	D
Kearsney Abbey: documentary and site evidence suggests that some archaeological potential derives from features relating to the former woodland management regime, such as banks and ditches, and from features relating to garden features such as path and structures such as the boat house, aviary, orangery, eye catcher, footbridges, island fountains.	C
The Drellingore and Dour are both chalk streams and are nationally and internationally rare habitats.	A
Chalk grassland is a declining habitat and, although well represented in the Dover area, is nevertheless of national importance; that which survives at the top of Coxhill Mount is in the process of rapidly being lost to scrub, while that on the hill sides has already been overtaken by secondary woodland. Both areas have the potential to be restored with scrub and woodland clearance and instigation of appropriate management.	B-C

Other habitats within both parks comprise woodland, scrub grassland, flint and brick walls, and are of local significance. The woodland on the southern slope of Coxhill Mount that abuts Frandham Wood (designated ancient woodland and a Site of Special Scientific Interest) may improve over time with the invasion of ancient woodland ground flora and invertebrates.	C
Historical	Significance
Russell Gardens today comprises a large part of the terraced Arts and Craft garden, designed by Mawson in c.1900 to complement the house, Kearsney Court, of the same date. Despite the fact that the original extent of the gardens is now fragmented by divided ownership, the surviving garden is still of national importance. The whole of the designed landscape (Russell Gardens and those parts of the original garden that are now in private ownership) has been recognised as Grade II on Historic England's Register of Parks and Gardens of Historic Interest. If coordinated restoration was realised through a co-ordinated, over-arching, approach to conservation, then there may be potential to re-visit and uprate this grading.	B
Russell Gardens: much of the planting in Russel Gardens has developed over the last 100 years and therefore post-dates Mawson's work. Some ash, sycamore and beech confined to the edges of the site are considerably older and were clearly worked into the 1901 design. Conifers, particularly yew, cypress and cedar, were planted formally along the terraces and many of these have survived. Copper beech provided distinctive 'punctuation marks' in Mawson's tree plantings and can be picked out still in views back towards the site from hill slopes opposite.	C
Exotic ornamental and coniferous trees have been added to the gardens over time, some of them now making good specimens.	C
Kearsney Abbey Gardens: The most significant ornamental specimen trees are species commonly found in parks and gardens of the period, but form a fine ensemble. They include several fine copper beech, cedars, tulip trees, trees of heaven,	C

and maples.	
Two avenues, predominantly lime, dominate the southern parkland, but there are also a number of fine specimen trees such as horse chestnut and turkey oak.	C
Aesthetic	Significance
Russell Gardens: The Palladian bridges and the boathouse pavilion are Listed Grade II.	B
Kearsney Abbey Gardens: the lake bridge; flint and brick boundary walls and gateways (north and east boundaries); remnants of the old Kearsney Abbey Mill, including the pump house and the adjacent bridge; castellated red brick arch and footings of the eye catcher; are all Listed Grade II. (NB ice house is not listed)	B
The billiard room, which is now the park café and which is the only surviving structure from Kearsney Abbey mansion, is also listed Grade II.	B
Russell Gardens comprises a large part of the garden designed by Mawson for Kearsney Court, containing key features and much of the surviving layout of this nationally and regionally important Arts and Crafts garden.	B
The canal is the most unusual element of Mawson's overall scheme and one that he considered to be a success.	A
The bridges, which create such a strong feature at each end of the ornamental canal, derive from the Palladian style as interpreted through the English C18 landscape movement, and create an unusual symmetrical composition which emphasises the formal context and the length of the canal	A
The boathouse, with its pavilion approached by steps above the boat chamber, was inspired by Paxton's design for the boathouse at Birkenhead Park.	A
The sports terrace, with lawn courts for tennis and croquet located either side of a lily pond axis, is typical of Mawson's work and also of the period of the Edwardian country house	B
The orchard terrace (above the sports terrace and below the bastion) is a typical Arts and Crafts period feature and integral to Mawson's design	B

Kearsney Abbey Gardens is an example of a regionally and locally important Picturesque landscape, laid out in the C19 by the owners, the Fector family, as a private garden and with some quirky, domestic, elements not normally found within grander parks.	C
Kearsney Abbey lake is the most significant surviving feature of Abbey grounds layout, including weirs, central bridge and lake islands. Surviving culverts and leats from previous mill use, and the mill pond to the east, are also features of local historical and archaeological importance.	C
Communal	Significance
The involvement of Thomas Mawson at Kearsney Court, one of the foremost designers of his generation, makes the association of national, if not international, importance.	A-B
There are several interesting individuals associated with the parks. Peter Fector, the first owner of Kearsney Abbey, was also the owner of the Minet and Fector Bank, later the National Westminster Bank. John Minet Fector II was MP for Dover, and lived at Kearsney Abbey until he became disaffected by politics and moved to London. Edward Percy Barlow, who commissioned Mawson to design the gardens at Kearsney Court, owned the paper producers Wiggins Teape, known nationally for its <i>Conqueror</i> paper.	A-B
The design of Kearsney Abbey Gardens by members of the Fector family, and their importance both locally and nationally, lends local significance to this site.	C