



PURCELL

LEONARDSLEE LAKES AND GARDENS
DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT
JULY 2025



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PREAMBLE

Purcell are Architects, Masterplanners and Heritage Consultants with extensive experience delivering award-winning design and conservation projects to the world’s most significant listed buildings and historic places, including cultural visitor attractions, historic houses, luxury hotels and country estates.

We were delighted to be commissioned by Leonardslee Ltd in August 2023 to work creatively and collaboratively with them and their team of consultants to envisage, evolve and establish a new and inspiring proposition for Leonardslee Gardens, which puts visitor experience at its core.

The following document outlines a new vision for the Estate, including analysis of the existing buildings, spaces, functions and visitor experience to the Gardens, and proposes a series of sensitive interventions informed by the rich and diverse history of Leonardslee.

The Conservation Management Plans have been used as a roadmap for the designs, and the team has worked closely with the Client, Head Gardener and LUC as Landscape Consultant to ensure that the latest addendum for the Garden Conservation Management Plan is aligned with the Masterplan proposals.

The client and wider design team is formed by the following consultants:

Client	Leonardslee Ltd
Architect	Purcell
Heritage Consultant	Purcell
Ecologist	Temple
Arboriculturalist	Temple
Transport Consultant	GTA Civils
Planning Consultant	Walsingham Planning
Planting Concept & Design	LUC
Water Neutrality Consultant	EAS Ltd



 **LEONARDSLEE**
LAKES & GARDENS

 **PURCELL**

LUC temple

Environmental Assessment Services Ltd
 **eas**

 **WALSINGHAM PLANNING**

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I.0 INTRODUCTION

I.1 A NEW CHAPTER FOR LEONARDSLEE

Following an initial period of investment, reinstating the gardens and opening them back up to the public, the current custodians of Leonardslee Gardens have worked to create a new, holistic vision for the Estate's future.

This vision has been a collaborative effort, with key stakeholders to the gardens consulted, to ensure that the long term future of Leonardslee is secured.

The key principles of this vision are:

- 1. Enhancing accessibility across the site, through the use of signage and wayfinding, and reviewing pathways into the site;
- 2. Remaining attractive to a new generation of visitor to keep the estate relevant for years to come;
- 3. Embedding Leonardslee within the heart of the local community with continued dialogue and volunteer programme;
- 4. Creating a series of distinctive individual food and beverage (F+B) offerings which can be enjoyed throughout the year to reduce economic reliance on seasonal demand and stand alone events;
- 5. Ensuring a coherent entrance sequence for visitors to the gardens, restaurant and hotel; respecting historic usage patterns;
- 6. Prioritising the re-use and conservation of existing structures within the gardens over the creation new buildings;
- 7. Balancing uses across the site following the recent completion of key back of house infrastructure;
- 8. Building economic resilience via sustainable income streams, with a focus on increasing visitor spend as opposed to visitor numbers;
- 9. Implement the recommendations of the Conservation Management Plan (CMP) and Garden Conservation Management Plan (GCMP) including recent addendum policies.

This Estate Masterplan for Leonardslee Gardens and subsequent proposals supports the further definition and achievement of that vision by:

- Appraising and exploring the existing buildings in and around the Leonardslee Gardens Estate.
- Identifying the best future use of each area in line with the Conservation Management Plan (CMP) and Garden Conservation Management Plan (GCMP).
- Developing a suite of design proposals to establish that use within the buildings and areas, while considering the listed and curtilage nature of the buildings, gardens and surrounding parkland.
- Bringing this together to create one coherent masterplan.

Together, the design proposals outlined within this Design and Access Statement (DAS) comprise the improved proposition at Leonardslee which will secure the long term sustainable future of the estate for generations to come.



Leonardslee House viewed from the South



Engine Pond

2.0 UNDERSTANDING THE SITE



2.1 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

2.1 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT AND CHARACTERISTICS

It is essential to understand the historic development of the main estate and how it has evolved over time and become what it is today. Leonardslee Gardens, has seen a substantial amount of change. The heritage impact assessment (HIA) prepared by Purcell contains a full history of the site and discusses the impact of the proposals in heritage terms.

There is limited evidence relating to the prehistory of the land later to become the Leonardslee Estate. However, a couple of stray finds have been identified. A Neolithic flint arrowhead (HER number: MWS629) was ploughed up at Leonardslee in the former parkland and current car park and a Bronze Age axe head (HER number: MWS641) to the south of Crabtree, in an area formerly part of the estate.

From the late 16th century, the valley to the east and south-east of the current Leonardslee House contained a series of hammer ponds, excavated to support the Wealden iron industry. The ponds, which served Gosden Furnace operated by Roger Gratwick, stored water, which provided the power for hammers and other machinery.

In the late 17th century, King Charles II gifted St Leonard's Forest, later to become the Leonardslee Estate, to his physician, Sir Edward Greaves. St Leonard's Lodge was built on the site in 1801 for Charles George Beauclerk to the designs of John Johnson (shown in blue on the adjacent overlay map). Beauclerk began to lay out gardens in c.1810. Some of the oldest plants in the garden date to this period, including in the American garden, now the Upper Dell.

In 1852, the St Leonard's Forest Estate, which comprised 1,919 acres, was sold at auction. Accompanying sales particulars include a map, which show the earlier arrangement of buildings and landscape prior to the construction of the current house and the development of the grounds. Whilst it has previously been assumed that the former lodge building was on the site of the current Leonardslee House, the map shows the former lodge to the south-west of the current site with a number of outbuildings to the west. St Leonards Lodge sat within the densely wooded setting of St Leonard's Forest, with parkland laid out between the house and the main road.

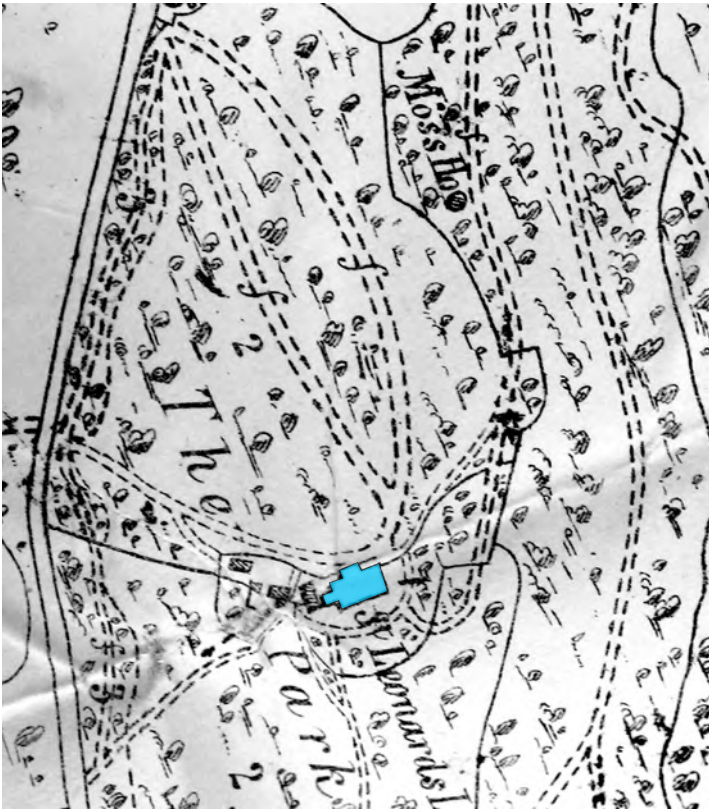
The main approach to St Leonards Lodge was to the north-west of the park via the gate lodge or now known as the Round House, with additional approaches further to the south along the main road. A further drive accessed the house via the walled garden to the south. A number of paths and walkways were laid out connecting the house with its gardens, with key landscape features including the Moss House and the American Gardens to the north. The latter survives today. New Pond, a former Hammer Pond, was shown in place to the south-east of the house, whilst none of the other ponds later created to the north were yet laid out.

The estate was bought by William Egerton Hubbard who built the present Leonardslee House, replacing the earlier stone St Leonard's Lodge. The new house, designed by T. L. Donaldson, in the Italianate style was constructed from 1853 to 1855.

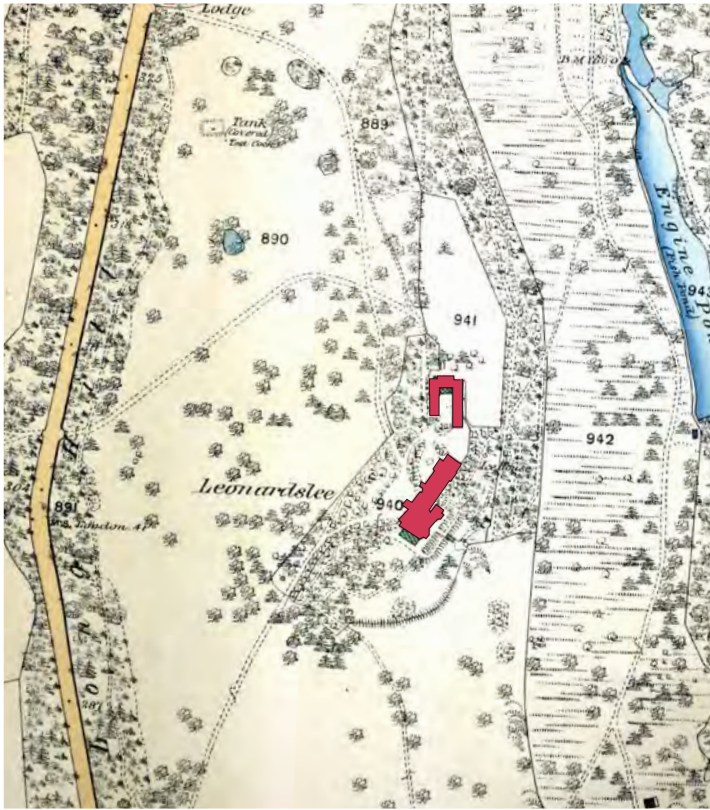
The Carriage House and Stables surmounted by a clock tower were built in 1856. The Engine Pond, sluice weir and adjacent brick building known today as the Engine House, which housed pumps to deliver water to the main house were constructed in the period intervening 1852 and 1896.

The new Leonardslee House and outbuildings are shown on the OS map of 1874. The house is shown positioned to the north-east of the former St Leonard's Lodge, with outbuildings to the north rather than to the west. The main drive still approached via the Round House, but on a more circuitous, arcing alignment. The other drives to the south were also shown on different alignments to those shown in 1852.

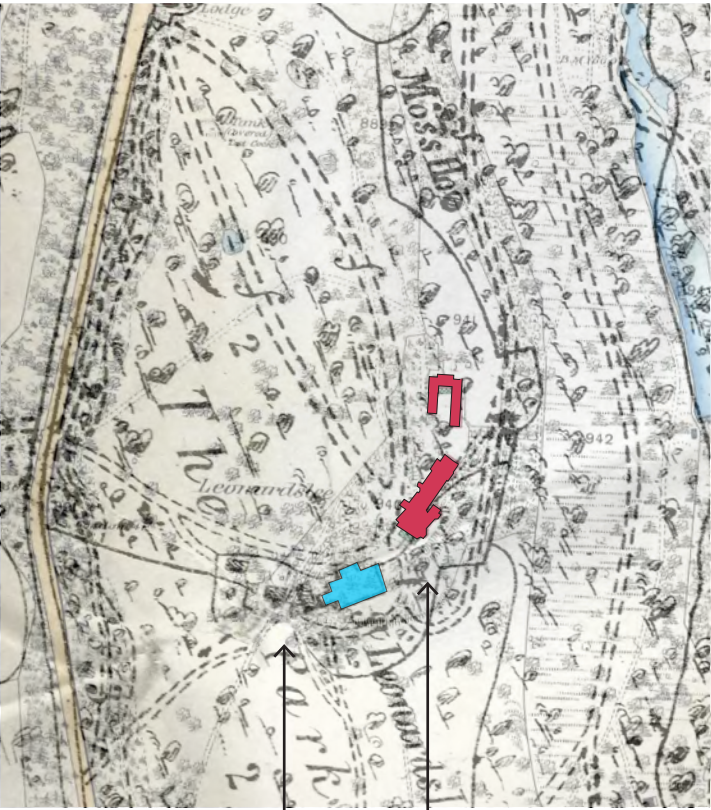
In 1888, the estate was sold to Hubbard's future son-in-law, Sir Edmund Loder; under whose keen attention the gardens developed and were shaped into the landscape that largely remains today.



1852 Sales particulars map



1874 OS Map of Leonardslee (West Sussex Record Office)



Overlay Map

The current house at Leonardslee

Location of former St Leonard's Lodge, to the south-west of the current building

2.1 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

2.1 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT AND CHARACTERISTICS

Sir Edmund Loder came from a long line of passionate horticulturists who had a big impact on the surrounding gardens throughout Sussex. He developed woodland gardens of a type popular in the late 19th century.

Sir Edmund Loder planted rhododendrons, hybrids, and specimen trees in the valley east of Leonardslee House, integrating natural features and existing forest trees. He also designed the valley's three upper lakes in the late 19th century.

As a horticulturists, Loder developed the Loderi rhododendron hybrids in 1901, earning the Royal Horticultural Society's Award of Garden Merit. He was part of a key group of hybridizers, including his brother Gerald and Lionel de Rothschild, who worked together on rhododendron development, such as the 1926 Dame Nellie Melba hybrid.

Loder also collected rare and exotic animals from the early 1890s including Indian antelope and other unusual species of deer, kangaroos, wallabies from Tasmania and later, American coypys, caprbara, beavers, emu and prairie dogs.

The animals adapted and acclimatised very well. Descendants of the deer and wallabies remain at Leonardslee Gardens today. Whilst the introduction of exotic species on country estates was relatively unusual, it had been pioneered by Walter Rothschild, who introduced herds of kangaroos and wallabies into the grounds of the museum at Tring Park in Hertfordshire in 1885.

Sir Edmund re-landscaped and expanded the formal gardens, creating an ornamental rock garden for alpine plants and ferns in 1890. Built by James Pulham and Sons, the garden featured two central mounds surrounded by conifers for shelter. A Pulhamite enclosure for goats was also introduced, similar to features at Waddesdon Manor in Buckinghamshire created for the Rothschilds.



Capybaras or 'Canadian rats' at Leonardslee (Horsham Museum)



Kangaroos at Leonardslee (Horsham Museum)



Historic undated [20th century] photograph of the rock garden showing more modest size shrubs, ferns and alpine plants (Horsham Museum)



Historic photograph of the rock garden or 'alpine garden', 1908 (Leonardslee Estate)

2.1 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

2.1 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT AND CHARACTERISTICS

Progression between the 1870 OS map and the 1896 edition show a new group of buildings to the west of the stables. During this time Sir Edmund Loder introduced electricity to the estate with the generators thought to have been housed within this new group of buildings, today known as the Generator Block. From the turn of the 20th century at least, the Generator Block also accommodated Sir Edmund's collection of hunting trophies, including animal heads, skins and antlers.

Photographs from the turn of the century and early to mid- 20th century show the main house in relationship to the woodland landscape to the east. These images show considerably less grown up valley slopes, with the house visible from the woodland walks and from the lakes. Intervisibility between the house and the woodland walks and lakes is more limited today, owing to the mature tree canopies and dense shrubbery plantings.

An aerial photograph taken in 1949 shows the house, Stable Complex, Generator Block, and southern lawn in 1949. This image shows the extent of the house prior to the demolition of the service wing and Billiard room in the 1960s, visible to the right of the main core of the house. It also shows the mature tree coverage across the estate, however with comparatively less dense vegetation to the east of the house than today.

In 1981, Robin Loder inherited the estate and the family moved out, selling the house and retaining the gardens. In 1984, the house was converted into office accommodation for Eurotherm International, at which time the gardens were registered as a Grade I Registered Park and Garden. In 1986, Robin Loder built the Red House within the gardens as a family home, with a tearoom incorporated for visitors to the gardens.

The gardens were sold by the Loder family to the Leonardslee Estate Ltd in 2010, and the gardens were left to grow wild until 2017, when the estate was sold to Penny Streeter OBE, who began the restoration and reunification of the house and garden. The house was converted into a restaurant at ground level in 2018, with the first floor converted into a hotel in 2020. During this period, the ancillary buildings were also iteratively converted into visitor facilities; the Engine House into a café, parts of the Stable into a café and restaurant, and the late 20th century extension to the Generator Block into an additional café. In 2019, the gardens were re-opened to the public.



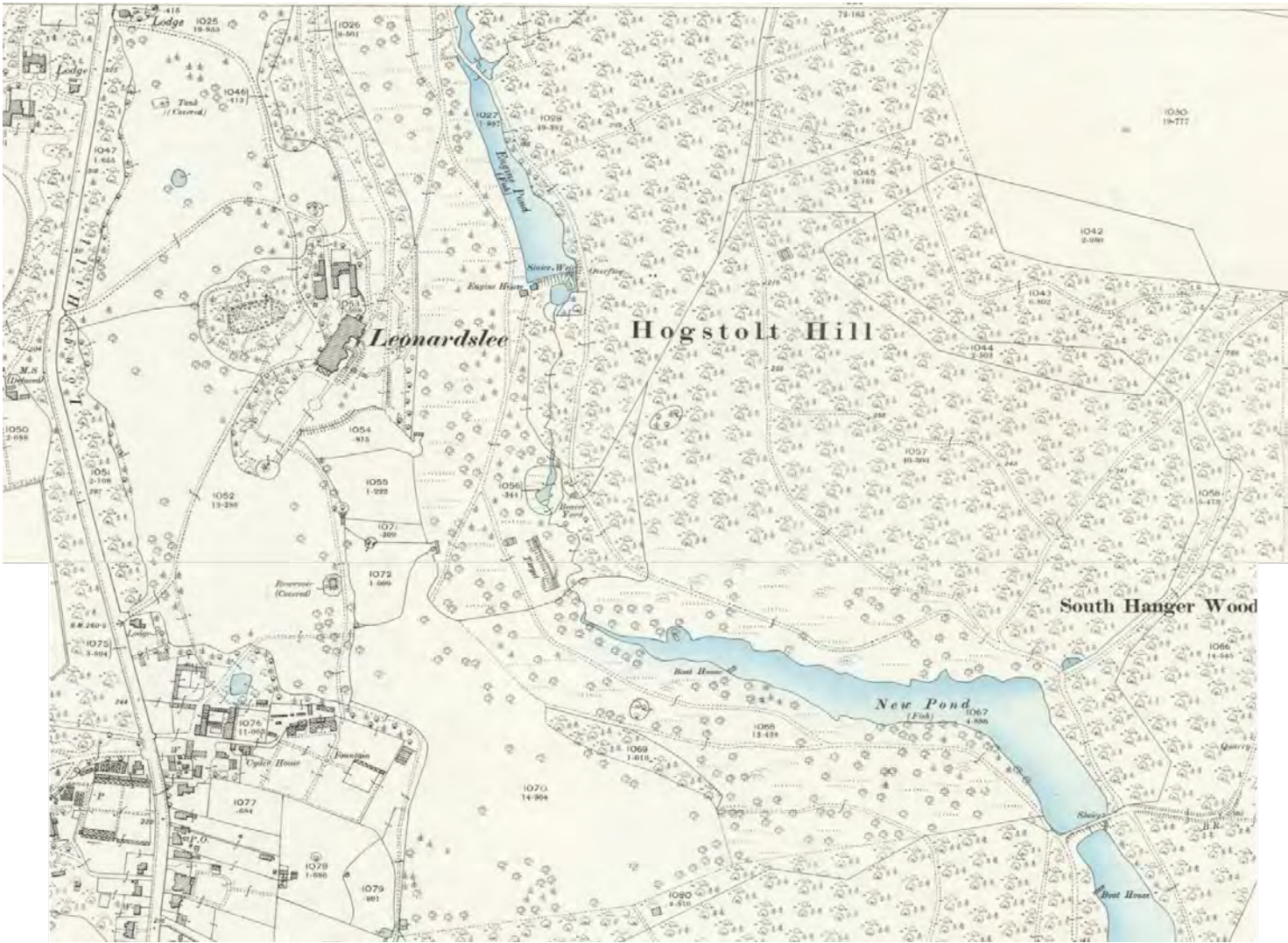
Historic England, Aerial photo 1949



Historic photograph, 1906, showing clear views of the house from the lakes



Undated 20th century photograph showing Leonardslee House from the woodland gardens



1896 OS Map. National Library of Scotland (National Library of Scotland)

2.2 THE ESTATE TODAY

2.2.1 SUMMARY OF KEY HERITAGE ASSETS

The Lakes and Garden

The ornamental gardens lie largely on the east- and west-facing slopes of the valley, to the north, east and south-east of Leonardslee House and with further smaller areas to its immediate west and south-west. On the east side, the garden front of the mansion opens onto a series of steep, grassed terraces with a central flight of steps leading down to a lower lawn, enclosed on its south-east side by shrubbery and along its south side by a ha-ha (the line of which is shown on historic maps).

The Rock Garden

Constructed in approximately 1900 by Messrs Pulham and roughly oval in shape, it is laid out as a series of stratified, rocky outcrops which combine natural sandstone with artificial Pulhamite rock and which are intensively planted with hummocks of azaleas, dwarf rhododendrons and dwarf conifers. Paths weave around the outcrops and set within them on the west side end of the garden is a small pool, adjacent to which is the site of a former Fernery (Garden Hist 1989), now demolished.

Leonardslee House

Leonardslee House is the principle building within the Estate, and is Grade II listed. It sits on a natural terrace above the steep west side of the valley, commanding extensive views east and south over the gardens to Hogstolt Hill and to the South Downs some 15-25km distant.

The two-storey Italianate house, built in ashlar with a slate roof, sash windows and an entrance porch supported on four rusticated Tuscan columns, was designed and built from 1853 to 1855 by T L Donaldson. It replaced an earlier, stone-built house on the same site, designed by John Johnson c 1801 for Charles Beauclerk and known as St Leonards Lodge, the name soon being changed to Leonardslee with Donaldson's new house. The present house was reduced in size c 1971 and then renovated and converted to office accommodation in 1984.

The house was converted to restaurant use on the ground floor in 2018, whilst the first floor was converted to hotel accommodation in 2020.



Leonardslee House



Rhododendron at Leonardslee Gardens



Pulhamite Rock Garden

2.2 THE ESTATE TODAY

The Stable Block and Courtyard

The U-shaped range of the carriage house and stables surmounted by a clock tower, built during the 1850s and converted to a restaurant in 1988. The extended stable building also contains a redundant office, plus a cottage and flat for estate staff use. The Stable Block is deemed curtilage listed.

The Former Generator Halls

To the west of the Stable Block is a brick outbuilding, formerly housing generators for the electrical supply to the house, contained a bonsai collection and a collection of Victorian motor cars. The main former generator hall is now roofless and is used for overflow cafe seating, whilst the lean to building has recently been refurbished with a new insulated roof. This building is also considered curtilage listed.

The Alpine House

The Alpine House is a modern glass house structure built and opened in 1992 to replicate Alpine conditions for growing plants. The structure with plastic transparent panels is still used today as a greenhouse with a dog friendly covered seating area. The Alpine House in not listed.

The Engine House

Situated south of the Mossy Ghyll Pond is the Engine Pond, the Engine House was formerly a pumping station, and previously housed pumps to supply the estate's water, as seen on maps in 1896. The structure now contains a small cafe and a modest terrace and is deemed as curtilage listed.

The Red House

Private residential use with a wing used as staff welfare and now vacant offices. Constructed as a dwelling to and a cafe, the 20th Century building is not listed.



The Stable Block and Courtyard



The Engine House



The Alpine House



The Former Generator Hall



The Red House

2.2 THE ESTATE TODAY

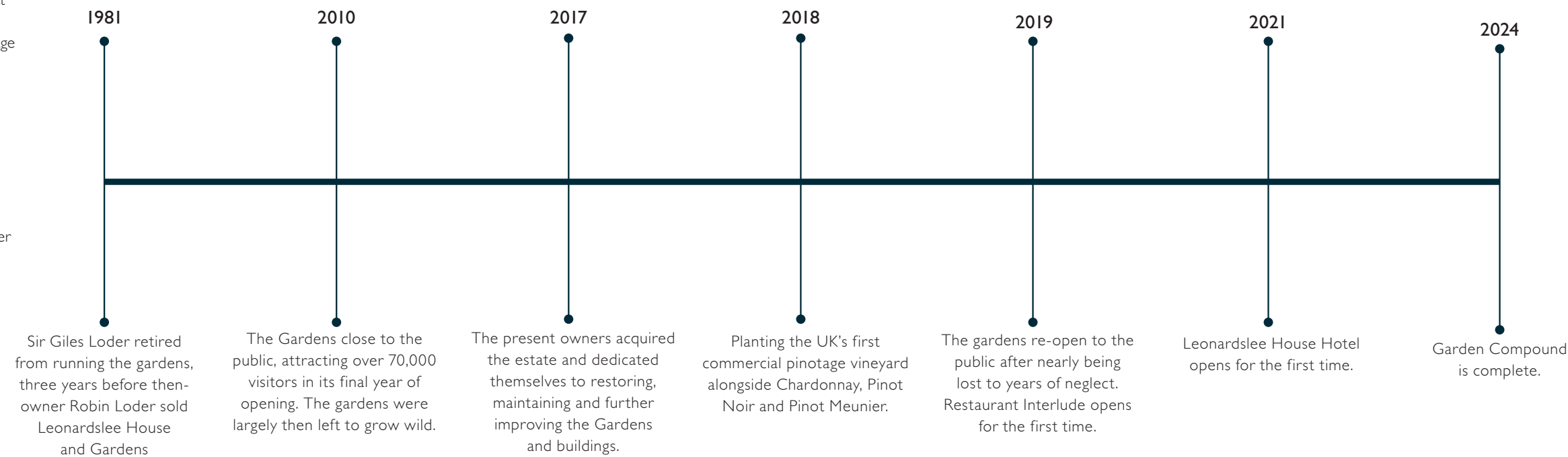
2.2.2 MODERN OWNERSHIP

In 1981, Robin Loder inherited the estate, and the family moved out, selling the house but keeping the gardens. In 1984, the house was converted into office space for Eurotherm International, while the gardens were officially registered as a Grade I Registered Park and Garden.

In 2010 the Loder family sold the gardens to a private individual, the estate was closed to the public and the gardens were left to grow wild. It wasn't until 2017, when Penny Streeter OBE purchased the estate, that restoration efforts began, aiming to restore the house and gardens. In 2018 Leonardslee's vineyard was planted, becoming the UK's first pinotage vineyard.

As part of the refurbishment, Restaurant Interlude opened within the ground floor of the House in 2019. Leonardslee House Hotel, encompassing ten hotel rooms opened in 2021.

As the Lakes and Gardens continued to flourish and attract a number of visitors with events such as the Open Air Cinema and Leonardslee Illuminated, new infrastructure was required to support this. In summer 2024 a new compound was built to the east of the site to house areas for staff offices and welfare.



The restored Gardens



Leonardslee House and pinotage vineyard



Leonardslee House Hotel bedroom interior

2.2 THE ESTATE TODAY

2.2.3 KEY SITE CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS

The key challenges of the site are summarised below:

- The garden visitor entrance experience is poor, with vast amounts of unsympathetic hard landscaping and confusing wayfinding to the gardens from the initial entry point.
- Retaining the legibility of the Main House within the gardens, given the it operates as an independent hotel and restaurant.
- Accessibility to the gardens; Stepped access as primary entrance points, poorly defined route into the gardens and a challenge will be to keep the magic of exploration throughout gardens whilst improving access and legibility.
- The existing food and beverage offering to the site is small in comparison to comparable gardens, with not enough indoor or covered seats to service the existing demand.
- Poor quality cafe overspill offerings are harder to maintain staff and cater for visitors.
- Leonardslee has historically struggled to appeal to different generations of visitors and needs to be encouraged to slowly transition from a traditionally older target audience. The introduction of the play area has attracted attract a younger audience.
- Finding sustainable uses for existing buildings which require ongoing maintenance and are situated in the heart of the site, which currently are underutilised and in desperate need of repair.
- There is a limited choice of on site accommodation for visitors and the price point of Leonardslee House Hotel remains a barrier for many visitors.
- Lack of larger indoor spaces which could house groups such as schools, community groups, and visitor groups arriving by coach.



Unsympathetic hard landscaping to the front of the Main House



Limited seating at the Engine House



Existing condition of the Former Generator Block Courtyard



Steep access steps to the Gardens

2.3 THE FUTURE OF LEONARDSLEE

2.3.1 EXISTING VISITOR PATTERNS

Figure 1 illustrates the visitor numbers throughout the year to Leonardslee Gardens. These figures were taken from August 2023 to August 2024 and shows the numbers for the event visitor and for garden visitors. The data highlights Leonardslee's reliance on events, namely the winter illuminations and summer events. These events account for substantial revenue which helps conserve and maintain the Gardens and buildings, and introduce the Gardens to a younger audience. The events do however add additional strain on the Garden infrastructure which needs to be carefully managed.

General Garden visitors have a more even distribution, with highest numbers recorded in April and May for the rhododendron blooming and lower numbers through September to February.

In order to reduce the reliance on events, the existing infrastructure associated with the Gardens is in need of upgrading to both cope with existing demand at peak periods and to draw visitors in at off peak months, to allow Leonardslee to reduce the amount of larger events held.

2.3.2 TARGET VISITOR PATTERNS

Figure 2 illustrates the anticipated visitor numbers throughout the year at Leonardslee Gardens. These figures were based on the existing visitor numbers with a 5% increase of Garden visitors during the summer months, 10% increase during the winter months and a 5% decrease of event visitors, across a 5 year period.

The intention is to increase visitor numbers during the winter months, allowing the Garden to be experienced during different seasons. Anticipated low and shoulder season visitor numbers will still be lower than the current peak seasons which the Gardens can comfortably manage.

Figure 1 - Existing Visitor Numbers
August 2023 - August 2024

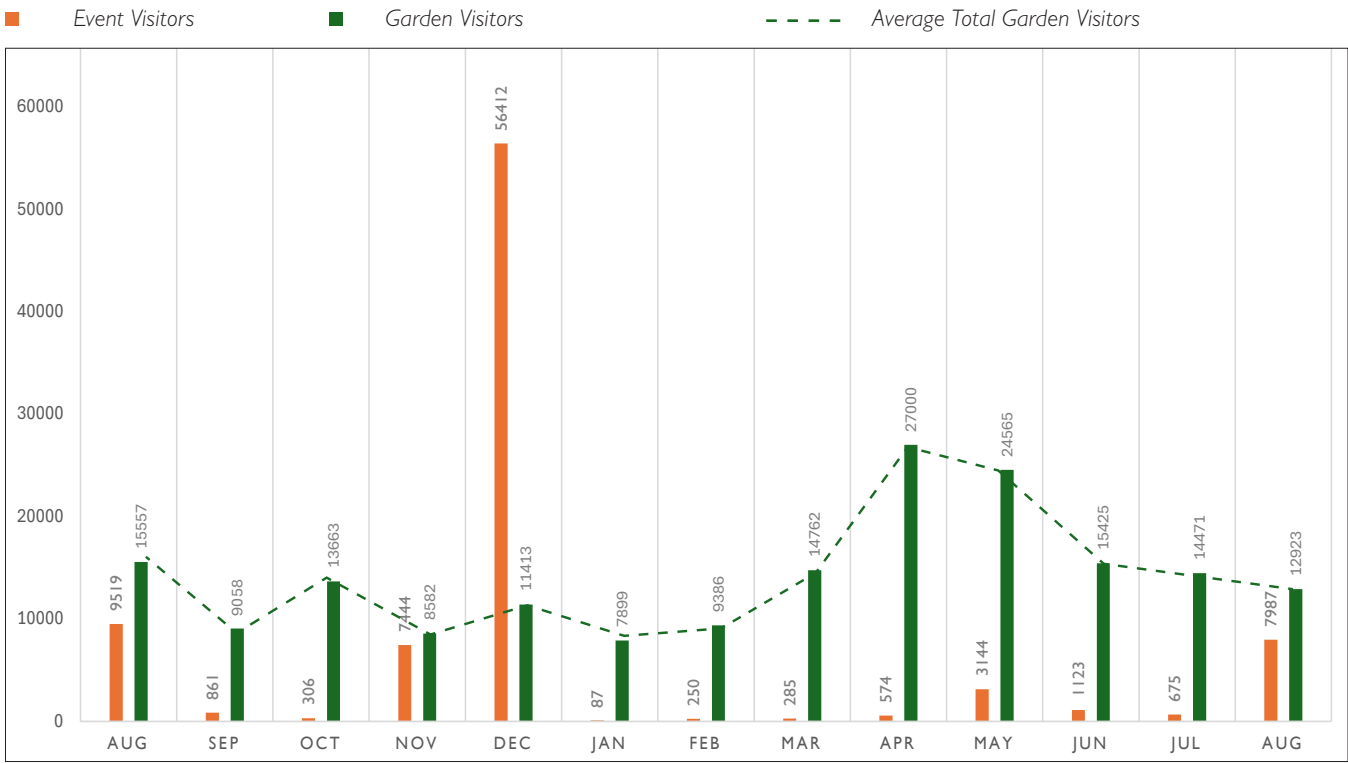
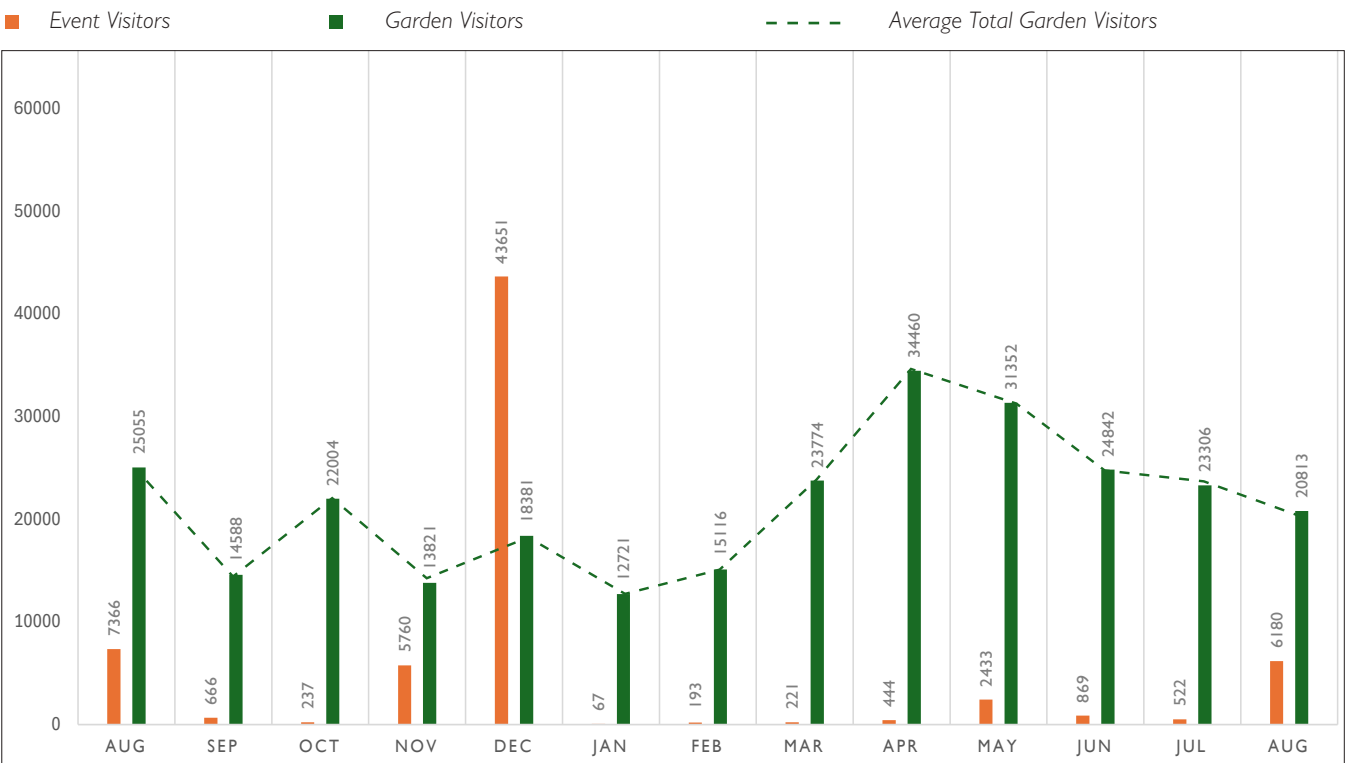


Figure 2 - Target Visitor Numbers in Five Years Time
Anticipated August 2028 - August 2029



2.3 THE FUTURE OF LEONARDSLEE

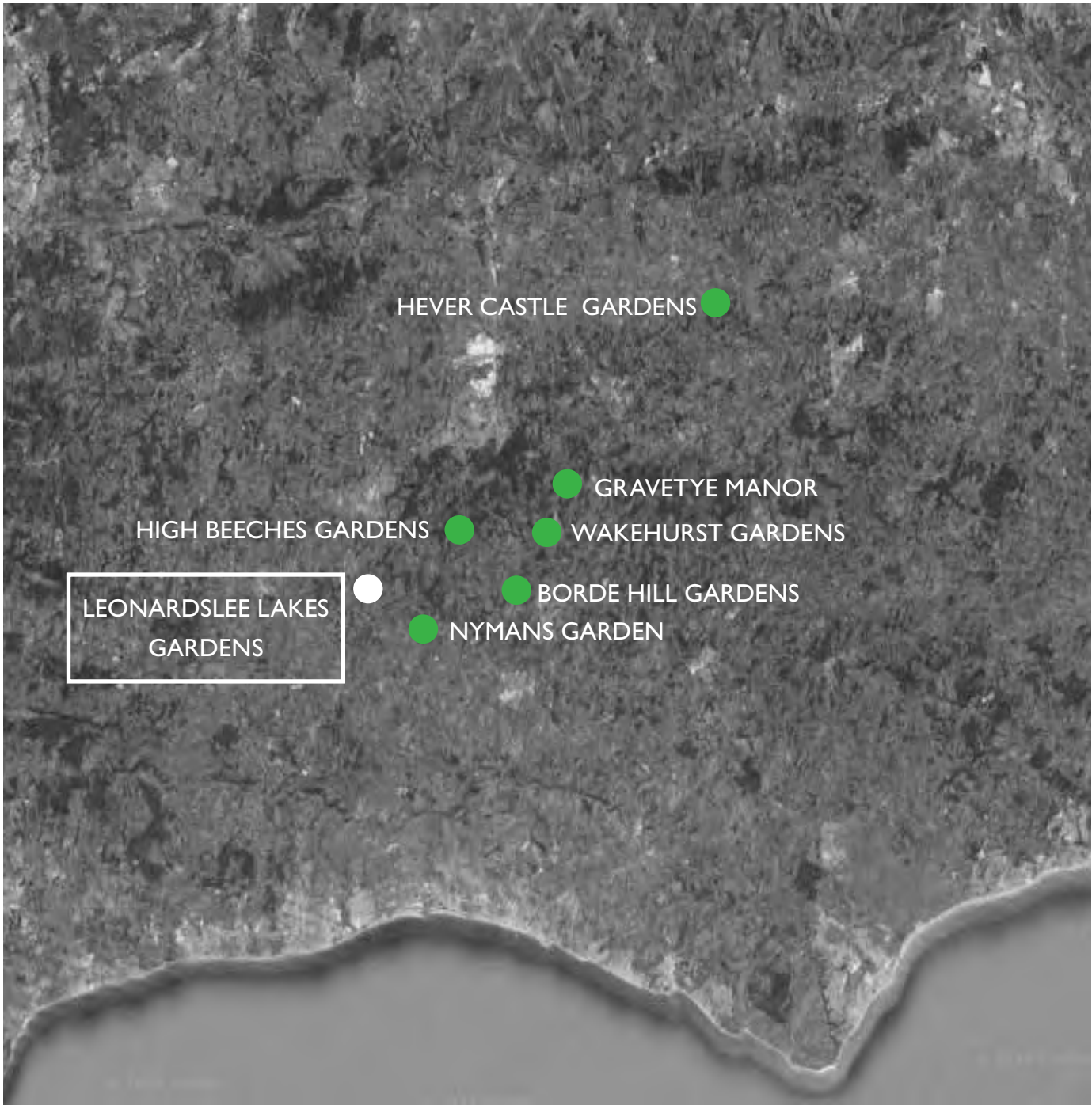
2.3.3 COMPARABLE GARDENS IN SUSSEX

The Leonardslee Estate is fortunate to sit amongst some of the highest quality gardens in the country. An analysis has been made with neighbouring gardens which have comparable significance and existing visitor infrastructure to that proposed at Leonardslee, notably a welcome cafe and a cafe in the gardens.

Furthermore, Leonardslee Gardens has associative value with various members of the Loder family throughout the generations and other Loder connected gardens nearby, reflecting the family’s strong horticultural dynasty.

The Loder family were notably involved with a number of other successful gardens across Sussex. Many of which also form part of a wider group of High Weald plantman’s gardens laid out from the late 19th to the early 20th century. Their collective significance stems from their shared design principles, characteristics, horticultural and botanical values. The location of these gardens in relation to Leonardslee is highlighted on the adjacent map.

The following pages describe the history of each garden along with their facilities.



Map of Sussex illustrating location of Leonardslee in relation to other notable gardens

2.3 THE FUTURE OF LEONARDSLEE



WAKEHURST GARDENS

Edmund Loder's brother, Gerald Loder, past president of the Royal Horticultural Society, owned Wakehurst Place (Grade II* RPG). Gerald Loder was a keen gardener and collector who sponsored plant hunting expeditions abroad and transformed the grounds into a botanic collection of rhododendrons at the turn of the 20th century. Wakehurst is now part of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and, combined with Kew, forms the most important conservation collection in a botanic garden in the world.

FACILITIES

Opening:
All year
10:00 - 16:00

Manor House, Grade II* Listed

Stables Kitchen, Stables Pantry, Seeds Cafe'

Visitor Centre with Shop and Plant Centre

Parking

Organised events



Stables Kitchen Restaurant at Wakehurst



HIGH BEECHES GARDEN

Sir Robert Loder, Sir Edmund's Father, owned High Beeches (where Edmund was born) (Grade II*), and developed outstanding early 20th century woodland gardens, gathering specimens from around the world during plant hunting expeditions.

FACILITIES

Opening:
April - November
13:00 - 17:00
Approx visitor numbers in 2024:

No manor house

Cafe'

Parking

Organised events



Tea Rooms at High Beeches



BORDE HILL GARDENS

This gardens forms part of a wider group of other, non-Loder, High Weald plantsman's gardens and this Grade II* RPG at Borde Hill was laid out by Colonel Ralph Stevenson Clarke.

Much like Leonardslee, the garden was contributed to by three generations of the Stephenson Clarke's family.

FACILITIES

Opening:
Feb - November (Cafe / Restaurant All Year Round)

Manor House, Grade II Listed

Two Cafes, Restaurant and third Cafe opening 2025

Planning permission for rooms within the Stables Eco-lodge

Visitor Centre with Shop Plant Centre

Parking

Organised events



Former stable block at Borde Hill - soon to become a new Restaurant

2.3 THE FUTURE OF LEONARDSLEE



NYMANS GARDENS

This garden forms part of a wider group of other, non-Loder, High Weald plantsman’s gardens and this Grade II* RPG at Nymans was laid out by Ludwig Messel.

Much like Leonardslee, the garden was contributed to by three generations of the Messel family.

FACILITIES

Opening:
All year
10:00 - 16:00

Manor House, Grade II Listed

Welcome Cafe’, Tea Garden Kiosk, Riding House Tearoom, Horsebox

Shop, Book Shop, Plant Shop

Parking

Organised events including Open Air Theatre and exhibitions



Welcome Cafe at Nymans



GRAVETYE MANOR

This garden forms part of a wider group of other, non-Loder, High Weald plantsman’s gardens and this Grade II* RPG at Gravetye was laid out by William Morrison.

FACILITIES

Opening:
All year

Manor House (Grade I Listed) with Hotel Michelin Restaurant

Parking

Organised events including weddings



The Dining Room at Gravetye



HEVER CASTLE GARDENS

This garden forms part of a wider group of other, non-Loder, High Weald plantsman’s gardens and this Grade I RPG at Hever Castle was laid out by Joseph Cheal and Son under the direction of William Waldorf Astor.

FACILITIES

Opening:
March - November
15:00 - 16:30

Castle with Hotel, Grade I Listed

Cafe’, Kiosks, BBQ Kiosk, Picnics, Pavilion, Afternoon Tea and Golf Club

Shop

Parking

Organised events including golf and weddings



Golf Club at Hever

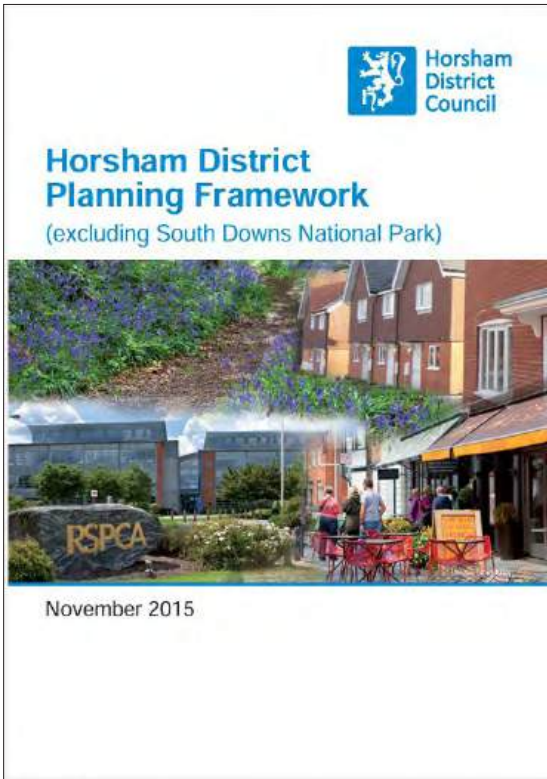


3.1 LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

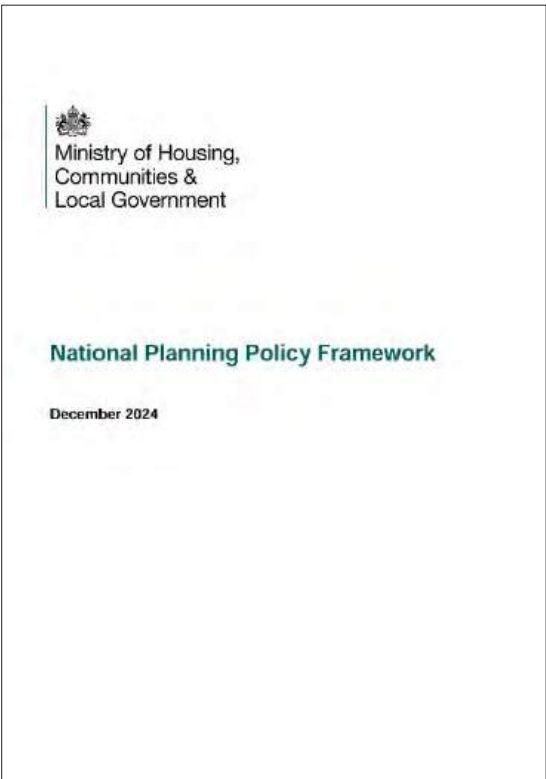
3.1 LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

The design proposals presented in this document have been developed in conjunction with the following specific policies:

- The Horsham District Planning Framework [HDPF], adopted in November 2015. In particular:
 - Policy 7 - Strategic Policy: Economic Growth
 - Policy 11 - Tourism and Cultural Facilities
 - Policy 25 - Strategic Policy: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character
 - Policy 34 - Cultural and Heritage Assets
- Lower Beeding Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2031
- Submission Plan (Dec 2020). In Particular:
 - Policy 2: Landscape Character
 - Policy 12: Design
- The Horsham District Local Plan 2023 - 2040 (Reg 19). In Particular:
 - Strategic Policy 1: Sustainable Development
 - Strategic Policy 21: Heritage Assets and Managing Change within the Historic Environment
- High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029
 - Character Component - Dark Skies
- National Planning Policy Framework 2024. In particular:
 - Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment
 - Achieving Well-Designed Places
 - Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment



Front cover of HDPF



Front cover of NPPF



Front cover of High Weald AONB Management Plan

3.2 DESIGNATION AND CMPs

3.2.1 DESIGNATIONS

There are three entries to the Historic England List at Leonardslee:

- 1027010 Grade II listed Leonardslee House
- 1027011 Grade II listed lodge to the north west of Leonardslee
- 1000159 Grade I registered Park and Garden

The historic map from 1874 shows the entrance lodge and House as constructed by T.L. Donaldson between 1853 and 1855 for William Hubbard.

It was not until 1888 that Sir Edmund Loder purchased the house from his father in law and began to develop the gardens and the wider estate.

Today, whilst the main house acts as a centrepiece for the Estate due to its central location within the site and visual prominence, the park and gardens which attract a Grade I listing is identified as the most significant feature of the site and is subject to its own Garden Conservation Management Plan (GCMP).

3.2.2 CMP OVERVIEW

The current owners of the Leonardslee Estate commissioned Donald Insall Architects to prepare a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for the House and Estate Buildings to support their ongoing development of the site. It was part of this analysis that led to the separate Garden GCMP to be developed and adopted by the estate team to ensure that specific policies could be identified which would directly preserve the gardens.

The 2023 CMP document contains the following:

- A description and history of the House and Gardens.
- An assessment of the significance of the site, with regards to Architectural and Artistic Interest, Historical Interest and Archaeological Interest, noting also the overall designs, the known designers/architects, and the occupants of the site.
- An assessment of the Issues and Opportunities which the site faces, to prevent loss of significance through decay or neglect, enhance it through measured change and improve understanding of significance via presentation and interpretation.
- Policies to address the Issues and Opportunities, which will ensure a consistent framework for the management and conservation of the site and accord with current best-practice for conservation
- Agreed statements for the Implementation of the Policies contained in the CMP.
- A Gazetteer for the House, estate buildings and gardens.

The 2023 Garden GCMP document contains the following:

- A description and history of the Gardens.
- An assessment of the significance of the site, with regards to Historical, Architectural/Aesthetic, and Archaeological considerations, noting also the overall designs, the designers/architects, and the occupants of the site.
- An assessment of the Issues and Opportunities which the site faces, to prevent loss of significance through decay or neglect, enhance it through measured change and improve understanding of significance via presentation and interpretation.
- Policies to address the Issues and Opportunities, which will ensure a constant framework for the management and conservation of the site and accord with current best-practice for conservation.
- Agreed statements for the Implementation of the Policies contained in the CMP. These are not included in the first draft, as they were developed through consultation over the first draft with the stakeholders
- A Gazetteer for the gardens and parkland, divided up into character areas.



Leonardslee Gardens Conservation Management Plan



Leonardslee House Conservation Management Plan

3.2 DESIGNATION AND CMPs

3.2.3 SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

The historical significance of the gardens stems mostly from the plant collection which was developed over many years thanks to the horticultural skills of the Loder family. The below summary from the GCMP describes the levels of significance that can be found across the site. From outstanding levels of significance, the highest level describing an asset which is of national importance, to detrimental significance, which are elements with no historic interest and actually detract from the wider Leonardslee Estate. As is illustrated on the adjacent map, a large portion of the Gardens, including the Lakes and Pulham Rock Gardens are of highest significance, whereas the car park to the front of the Main House actively detracts from the overall site.

The following assessment Leonardslee House and Gardens refers to a hierarchy of significance that can be summarised as follows:

Outstanding Significance: elements whose value is recognised in a national and international context – most notably the vistas and contents of the gardens, and that are of higher significance than those elements identified as of:

Highest Significance: which is generally warranted for those elements which contribute to the exceptional interest of the House and Gardens. Other parts of Leonardslee House and the Grade-I registered Park and Gardens are noted to be of:

High Significance: which applies to elements with values which, on their own, still justify statutory protection through listing.

Moderate Significance: is applied to those elements whose values make a positive contribution to the way the House and Gardens are understood and perceived, primarily in a local context.

Neutral Significance: is assigned to elements which neither add to, nor detract from, the significance of the House and Gardens. Lastly:

Detrimental Significance: is assigned to elements of no historic interest or aesthetic or architectural merit that detract from the appearance of Leonardslee House and Gardens, or mask the understanding of significant elements.

Leonardslee House is a Grade II-listed building set within a Grade I-listed Registered Park. It was built to the designs of Thomas Leverton Donaldson in 1856 and includes within its listing the curtilage structures of the Stables (same date) and Museum Block, constructed in stages from the late nineteenth up to the late 20th century. The establishment of the gardens pre-dates the construction of the present house, and the design, construction and continuing use of the buildings must be seen in the context of the gardens.

The comparative importance of the Gardens and the House are summarised as far back as 1900:

Of all country places there is perhaps none that is more calculated to arouse in the heart of the averagely well-disposed man the feelings of covetousness and envy. It is not that the house is remarkably beautiful – that indeed cannot be truly averred, though it is of ample size and exceeding comfort, but it is not a “show house” in virtue of any charm or historical association. It is solid, modern, comfortable, prosaic. ... The glory of the house is in its situation, at the head of a great glen which stretches away down south before the windows, widening as it goes, forming itself into a funnel for the focusing of sunbeams, deeply wooded on either side, with sylvan glades intersecting, and in the bottom a stream and lakes, most glorious.

The garden surrounds of the house are of the highest significance, being a key part of the history and development of the site. Their fashioning by the resident Loder family, several whom held Royal Horticultural Society positions and awards, partially predate the construction of the house itself, and the development of their associated buildings well illustrate the changing use of the gardens over the centuries.



CMP Significance summary - section 3.1, page 24

CMP Site wide significance plan - section 3.2, page 29

3.3 PLANNING APPLICATION HISTORY

3.3 RELEVANT PLANNING APPLICATION HISTORY

Since 1991 there have been a large volume of planning applications submitted and approved on the Estate at Leonardslee. A full list can be found as an appendix to this document.

Most recently approvals for the Car Park and Gardener's Compound have been granted to provide valuable infrastructure to secure the long term future of the gardens.

The most relevant past permission to the proposals submitted within this document is the approved October 2012 application (DC/12/1892) which included the following relevant interventions:

- Remodelled the Stables Complex to form a B&B facility with additional storey of accommodation on the eastern wing with a fully enclosed glazed courtyard roof and infill structure.
- Conversion of the Museum block to house two restaurants with new kitchen and WC facilities.
- New ticket and food kiosk to the North of the site.

Whilst the context of the application has developed over time, there has been little alterations to the ancillary working buildings on the site.

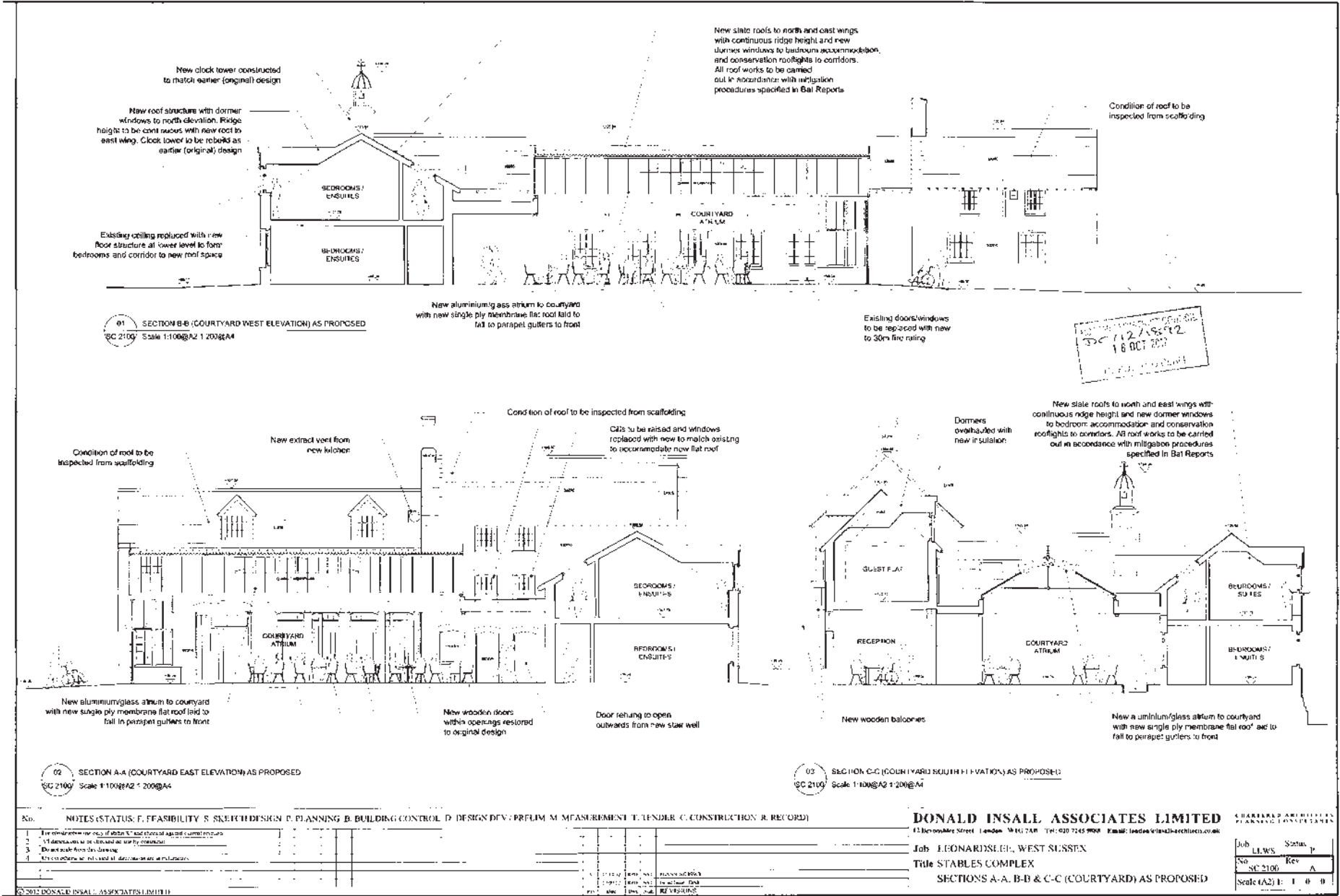
Before any work is carried out to the buildings or landscape at Leonardslee Park and Gardens advice should be sought on the necessary consents required, and these consents should then be properly obtained from Horsham District Council to facilitate the lawful development of the site.

Early, pre-application, consultation with the Conservation Officer at Horsham District Council and where applicable with the regional Inspector of Historic Buildings at Historic England, regarding proposals that require listed building consent and/or planning permission is strongly recommended.

Extract from the CMP in relation to planning permissions

Date and Location	Reference and Decision Status	Description
Mon 28 Nov 2022 Leonardslee Gardens	DC/22/2229 Application Permitted	Construction of enlarged and rationalised existing car park and grassed enclosure for overflow car parking, with tree planting. Installation of new children's play area. Relocation of chicken enclosure. Amendments to road layout within the site, with associated enlarged and enhanced landscape buffer and reinstatement of hedge to A281 boundary. (Part-retrospective).
Fri 17 May 2019 Leonardslee House	DC/19/1067 Application Permitted	Construction of a new gardener's barn and Victorian style greenhouse (Full Application)
Tue 09 Oct 2012 Leonardslee Gardens	DC/12/1892 Application Permitted	Works to provide new car parking, new and adjusted access to A281 and B2110, alterations to the Red House, stables complex, museum block and engine house and 4 new timber structures associated with opening Leonardslee Gardens to the public (Full Planning)

Summary of relevant past planning permissions



Sections of the Stable Block from the 2012 application which approved a second storey of accommodation to two wings of the Stables - Drawings by Donald Insall Associates Ltd

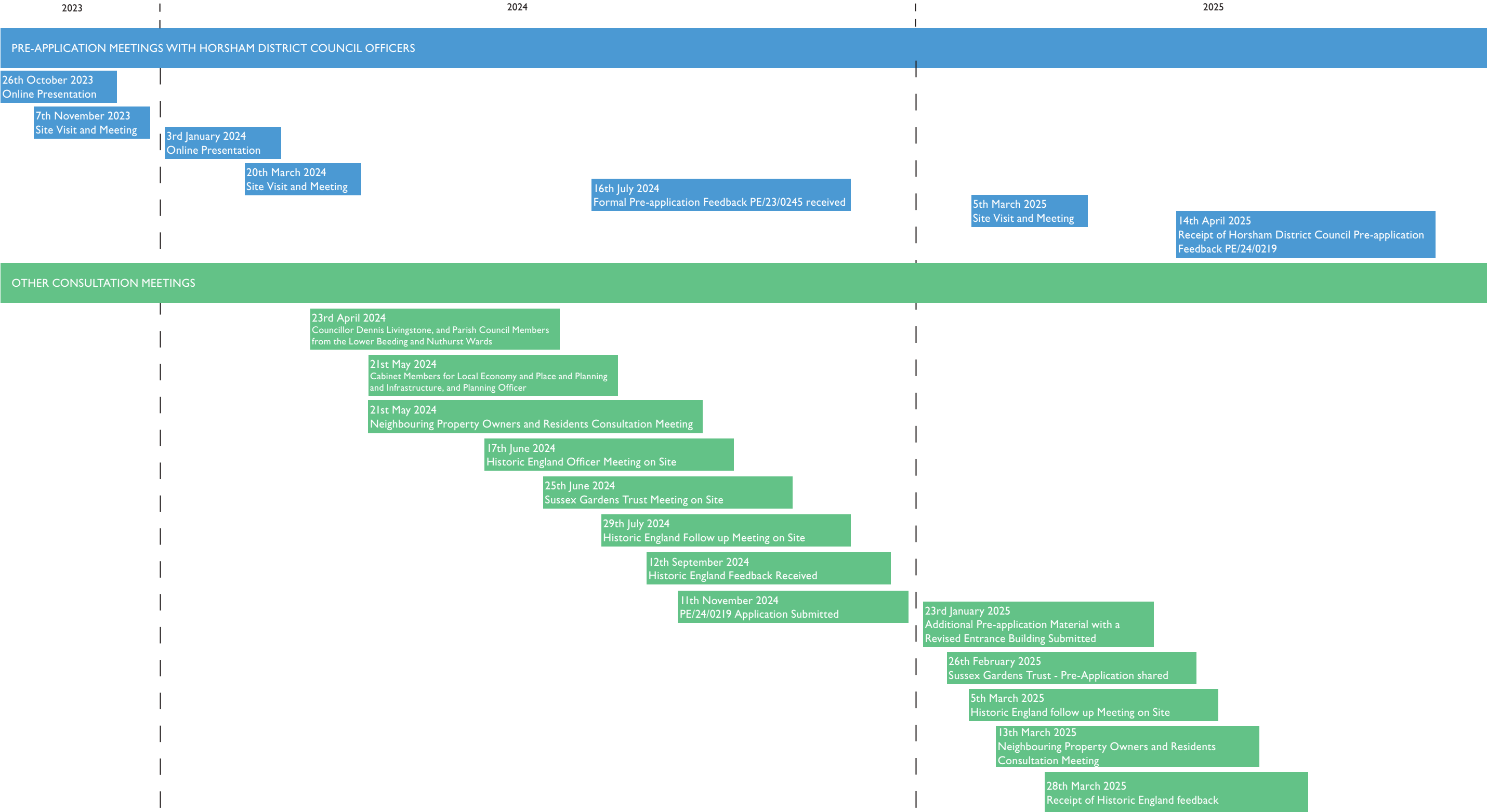
3.4 PRE-APPLICATION AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

3.4.1 OVERVIEW OF CONSULTATION

Proposals set out in this document have been developed in conjunction with the Local Planning Authority Horsham District Council (HDC), Historic England (HE) and other key stakeholders over the last 12 months.

The following diagram sets out time lines for meetings and events which have been held to discuss proposals to date.

A number of changes to the design have been made in response to pre-application and stakeholder feedback which are set out in detail in the following sections.



3.4 PRE-APPLICATION AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

3.4.2 DESIGN DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CONSULTATION PROCESS

Initial proposals submitted to HDC and HE outlined the aspiration of the current owners to:

- Move the paid entry point into the gardens to within the historic centre of the site and create a new ticket kiosk.
- Create additional indoor seating for larger groups by replacing the Alpine House with a large indoor cafe.
- Rationalising access into the gardens with additional accessible paths.

Through further consultation with Historic England, the significance of the Rock Garden and its connection to the wider gardens has been highlighted and the proposals have been amended to reflect this, with the pay barrier remaining in the visitor entrance building in a modest extension to the existing 20th Century structure.

The design team have also looked at reducing the visitor density to the historic centre of the site and distributing visitor facilities across the site. This has led to a reduction in food and beverage offerings generally and better distribution of amenities around the site.



View of the previously proposed replacement cafe to the former Alpine House



View of the previously proposed ticket kiosk



Initially proposed pay barrier as submitted for pre-application in March 2024. The red boundary line indicates a free to access areas further into the site, with the green line defining the extent of the gardens which can be accessed by the public.

3.4 PRE-APPLICATION AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

3.4.2 STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Throughout the project there have been two neighbour consultation meetings which took place on the following dates:

- 21st May 2024 at Mannings Heath Golf Club
- 13th March 2025 at Mannings Heath Golf Club

Within these meetings the proposals were presented to local residents to the Leonardslee Estate. This has provided an opportunity for the local community to understand and comment on the proposed scheme for the site. Holding the two meetings ten months apart allowed the team to clearly demonstrate how the design has progressed and why certain decisions have been made.

The proposal received a positive backing from the local residents and the two main discussion points were as follows:

- Concern around additional light and noise were raised. In response to this, it was explained that a phased construction plan will reduce the impact of these by phasing the project build across the next two years, and that additional light and noise pollution caused by the proposals will be limited due to their central location within the site.
- Attendees felt positively about the increased use/reuse of indoor space and therefore the decrease of reliance on outdoor events such as Leonardslee Illuminated and the outdoor cinema which currently cause a great deal of disturbance to local residents.

In addition, four A1 presentation boards have been displayed in the shop since April 2025 designed to inform and engage visitors and members of the Gardens about the proposals being developed at Leonardslee.

LEONARDSLEE
LAKES & GARDENS

Dear Neighbour,

We are writing to update you about our plans for the Leonardslee Gardens Estate.

Since we last invited our neighbours to a consultation 10 months ago in May 2024, we have continued working with specialist Conservation Architects, Heritage Consultants and Landscape Architects, and have undertaken ongoing pre-application advice with the local planning authority and Historic England.

We have continued to develop sensitive proposals to a number of buildings within the Estate, while also improving access and we aim to create a sustainable future for the gardens, with our ambition remaining to respect our incredible heritage assets whilst improving the visitor experience for our members and guests.

As future building works may affect our neighbours, we would like to invite you to attend a second short presentation followed by a Q&A session where we will present our revised proposals which are yet to be submitted for formal planning approval, and answer any questions you may have.

Due to numbers, the event will again be held at Leonardslee's sister venue - Mannings Heath Estate on Thursday 13th March at 5:00pm. The full address is listed below and is a short 8 minute drive from Leonardslee:
Mannings Heath Estate, Hammerpond Road, Mannings Heath, RH13 6PP

We look forward to seeing you there. To confirm numbers, we kindly ask for you to RSVP to: press@leonardsleegardens.co.uk

Your Sincerely,
Adam Streeter & the Team at Leonardslee Gardens

Leonardslee Gardens, Brighton Road, Lower Beeding, Horsham, RH13 6PP

Copy of neighbour consultation invitation

1. A VISION FOR LEONARDSLEE

IMPLEMENTING CHANGE TO PROTECT THE FUTURE OF LEONARDSLEE LAKES AND GARDENS

INTRODUCTION

Leonardslee Gardens is a Grade I Registered Park and Garden, its significance is in being one of the best examples of a plantation garden in Southern England, consisting of a spectacular woodland and water garden within the High Weald National Landscape.

Purcell have been appointed as Architects and Heritage Consultants to prepare a masterplan for the visitor arrival and access experience to the gardens to improve facilities, and to enhance the historic built one of the site working with the estate team and specialist consultants.

We have undertaken 18 months of pre-application and stakeholder engagement to refine the proposals and hope to submit a formal planning application in Spring 2026.

These pages demonstrate our existing vision for Leonardslee Gardens, which has been inspired by the gardens and the history of this incredible estate.

KEY

- Garden Shop Building
- Leonardslee House
- Former Generator Block
- Stable Block
- Engine House
- Red House

HISTORIC RESEARCH

Historic 1886 OS Map of Leonardslee House and Gardens

Black and white photograph of the front of Leonardslee House with people walking in the garden.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Photograph of the front of Leonardslee House with people walking in the garden.

VISION STATEMENT

The key goals for the Gardens moving forwards are to:

- Improve the quality of visitor experience through improved food and beverage facilities and functionality. This naturally increases the spend per visitor, as opposed to attending substantially greater number of visitors.
- Allow existing visitors to have a varied experience throughout the year, allowing the curve of peak demand at spring and autumn periods.
- Ensure Leonardslee remains attractive to a new generation of visitor to keep the estate relevant for years to come, with facilities which match other comparable estates.
- Implement the recommendations of the Conservation Management Plan (CMP) and Garden Conservation Management Plan (GCMP) including recent cordon-off policies.

APPROXIMATE TIMELINE FOR WORKS

Pre-Application Stakeholder Consultations - Summer 2023 to Spring 2025

Ongoing

Car Park

Planning Application Submission

Spring 2025

Autumn 2025

2026

Spring 2026

Summer 2026

Engine House

Stable Block

Red House

LEONARDSLEE LAKES & GARDENS PURCELL LUC temple

2. ACCESSIBLE GARDENS

IMPLEMENTING NEW LANDSCAPING, PATHWAYS AND FACILITIES WHICH MAKE THE GARDENS ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

1. Proposed CGI image of new landscaping and accessible pathways looking towards the Stable Block, former Generator House and Stable Lane.

2. Proposed CGI image of new landscaping, accessible pathways and interpretation looking towards the Engine House.

3. Proposed CGI image of new down Stable Lane with refurbished former Generator Block.

4. Proposed CGI image of new landscaping at the Engine House with rising chimney reinstated and accessible ramp to the entrance for this building.

DESIGN GOALS

To improve the accessibility of the Gardens moving forward we are proposing to:

- Make the site more accessible and friendly for all, in line with the wider vision statement through a series of design choices.
- Create a safe, central area of hard landscaping with clear signage where visitors can get their bearings and orientate themselves to the site, before heading off into the Gardens to explore at their leisure.
- Create a softer more organic, picturesque pattern which integrated a curved interpretation of the site with steps and an accessible ramp to the stable block.
- Create a new accessible pathway into the gardens via Stable Lane.
- Implement accessible WCs across the site including at the Stable Block and the Engine House making the wider site more accessible to all.

LEONARDSLEE LAKES & GARDENS PURCELL LUC temple

3. NEW SPACES WE ARE CREATING

REUSING, REPURPOSING, AND IMPROVING EXISTING BUILDINGS TO CREATE NEW EXPERIENCES

1. Proposed CGI image of the new cafe within the Garden Shop Building.

2. Proposed CGI image of the new function room within the former Generator Block.

3. Proposed CGI image of the refurbished former Generator Block to new view visitors.

4. Proposed image of the proposed wedding garden.

HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHY

Historic photograph of the former Generator Block which used as a wedding reception (currently restored).

Historic photograph of Leonardslee House and gardens.

Historic photograph of the former Generator Block which used as a wedding reception (currently restored).

Historic photograph of the former Generator Block which used as a wedding reception (currently restored).

VISITOR IMPROVEMENTS

To create new spaces and improve the visitor experience across the Gardens we are proposing to:

- Refurbish and extend the Garden Shop building to create a separate ticket desk space, adjacent to this will be a new cafe to allow visitors to pick up food and beverages before entering the gardens.
- Refurbish the former Generator Block to create a new events space, WC facilities and reinstate the Alpine House.
- Introduce a new wedding pavilion to sit on the lawn of Leonardslee House creating a more intimate events space for those wishing to host their special day on the estate.
- Refurbish and extend the Engine House cafe and terrace to increase space for visitors to stop and have refreshments further into the gardens and reinstate the missing chimney stack.

LEONARDSLEE LAKES & GARDENS PURCELL LUC temple

4. A NEW AND IMPROVED CLOCKTOWER CAFE

REFURBISHING AND EXTENDING THE CLOCKTOWER CAFE

1. Proposed CGI image of the exterior of the new visitor garden at the Stable Block.

2. Proposed CGI image of the interior of the new visitor garden at the Stable Block.

3. Proposed CGI image of the new cafe within the Clocktower Cafe with windows.

4. Proposed CGI image of the new terrace of the Stable Block.

HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHY

Historic photograph showing the Stable Block to the right of Leonardslee House in 1886.

KEY GOALS

To improve the visitor experience of the Clocktower Cafe we are proposing to:

- Refurbish the interior of the cafe to create a more welcoming space and a larger kitchen.
- Add a winter garden extension within the courtyard to provide additional seating but also to allow visitors to feel a connection with the outdoors from within, even during the winter months.
- Introduce a new discreet terrace to the rear of the cafe to provide additional outdoor seating and different views across the site from a new vantage point.
- Make internal alterations to provide new and additional WC facilities.
- Repair and replace the historic courtyard cobbles to improve level access and reinstate the existing pattern within the new courtyard and winter garden.

LEONARDSLEE LAKES & GARDENS PURCELL LUC temple

Two of the four community engagement boards displayed in the garden shop