

5.0 LANDSCAPE INTERVENTIONS



5.1 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

5.1 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT AND CHARACTERISTICS

In 1888, the estate was sold to William Hubbard's future son-in-law, Sir Edmund Loder, under whose keen attention the gardens and estate flourished. Loder came from a family of plantsmen. Sir Edmund's father Sir Robert Loder, owned nearby High Beeches, where he developed woodland gardens. Gerald Loder, 1st Baron Wakehurst, Sir Edmund's brother, owned Wakehurst Place, where he developed a considerable collection of rhododendrons. Like his father and brother, Sir Edmund developed woodland gardens of a type popular in the late 19th century, as advocated in the writings of landscape gardeners and designers such as Gertrude Jekyll and William Robinson.

Loder planted rhododendron species, cultivars and hybrids, as well as specimen trees in the valley to the east of the house. He exploited the natural features of the valley, streams, rock outcrops and absorbed the existing native forest trees and North American conifers (Redwoods and Wellingtonias), introduced by Beauclerk, into his planting schemes. Sir Edmund Loder laid out the three upper lakes in the valley in the late 19th century. Only New Pond, the southernmost pond and former hammer pond, was shown on the Sale Particulars plan of 1852.

As a keen plant breeder, Loder developed hybrid rhododendrons, including, in 1901, the Loderi Rhododendron hybrids (later named in his honour). Three of his rhododendron hybrids received the Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. Loder was one of a small group of key figures developing and hybridising rhododendrons in the late 19th and early 20th century, including his brother Gerald Loder at Wakehurst, Lionel de Rothschild at Exbury, Hampshire, J.C. Williams of Caerhays Castle and the Aberconways at Bodnant. These men created a Rhododendron Society, competed in competitions and sometimes worked together. In 1926, for example, the Dame Nellie Melba hybrid was hybridised by Sir Edmund Loder at Leonardslee but named and distributed by Lionel de Rothschild in 1926.

Sir Edmund re-landscaped and extended the formal gardens within the curtilage of the House. He created an ornamental rock garden for his collection of alpine plants and ferns. This was constructed in 1890 by James Pulham and Sons (by the second James Pulham), who excavated the site, leaving two high mounds in the centre and planted a ring of conifers around the top to create a more sheltered environment.

The death of Sir Edmund in 1920 led to a period of neglect for the Gardens, until his grandson Sir Giles Loder regained control over the estate in 1947, following the departure of Canadian Troops billeted to Leonardslee House during WWII. Sir Giles, also a keen horticulturist, restored and continued the expansion of the gardens.

A large greenhouse was added to the former parkland to the west of the house in 1970. This remains today and forms the entrance to the gardens and has been modified as a shop recently.

Overall, the significance and special interest of the Leonardslee site lies primarily in its extensive and historic gardens and is recognised by its status as a Grade I Registered Park and Garden. This places the landscape within the top 10% of Registered Parks and Gardens and reflects its exceptional significance.



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



Historic photograph of Loder brothers (Leonardslee Estate)

5.2 EXISTING CONDITION

5.2 INTRODUCTION TO EXISTING CONDITION

The landscape at the Leonardslee Estate is divided on a North - South axis on Leonardslee House, separating the densely planted, steeper valley gardens and lakes to the East, from open, parkland landscape to the West.

The gardens to the east have been well restored by the current owners, however the landscape to the west has been much altered over time, to reflect the phased development of Leonardslee House.

The front of Leonardslee House has been tarmaced to create a car park when the house was converted into commercial office space. This is highlighted as detrimental in the Garden Conservation Management Plan.

Condition

This area is in a good condition generally. Unfortunately the expanse of tarmac is not in keeping with the other surfaces in the Gardens, nor with the character of the House, and a revised hard landscaping plan is desirable.

Significance

Detrimental due to the expanse of hard surface.

GCMP notes on Leonardslee House Frontage - section 6.8, page 61

Generally the hard landscaping around the site has been gradually altered over time with numerous unsympathetic alterations, which lead to a confusing, incoherent visitor experience within the historic core of the site: a stark contrast to the experience within the wider grounds of the estate.



Entrance to the Former Generator Block



Picnic benches informally scattered around the site



View to the car park from Leonardslee House



View of Leonardslee House from the car park



View of Leonardslee House from the car park



View of Leonardslee House from the car park



A view towards the Main House past the Stable Block



Back of house yard to the rear of the Stable Block



Entrance to the Stable Block

5.3 OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

5.3.1 CMP REFERENCES

The character of Leonardslee Gardens is represented by its historic landscape design. The man made lakes are important in understanding the site's early development and are still significant in the broader quality of the estate today. The renowned rhododendrons contribute to the garden's seasonal narrative, reinforcing its botanical diversity and historic planting schemes.

The Pulhamite structures within the Rock Garden and Wallaby enclosures are made from artificial stone which exemplify Victorian era landscaping, and offer today's visitors an understanding of these unique structures favoured during that period (seen in the photo to the right).

Additionally, the vistas afforded from key vantage points throughout the estate provide carefully framed views that link the garden to its wider context, further elevating the estate's significance. Examples of these vistas are illustrated in the adjacent watercolour from 1855 and photographs from 1993 where the landscape has been designed to frame the house from various positions around the estate.

As noted within the GCMP the landscaping to the forecourt of the Main House is currently detracting and detrimental to the overall significance of the Gardens. The large expanse of tarmac in particular is harmful to the overall appreciation to that area of the estate. A further issue is the lack of accessibility, and supporting facilities, to the wider Gardens as noted within the CMP notes.

As a result the forecourt to Leonardslee House is being re-landscaped in a soft style to introduce new planting with a focus on visitor experience. This will also create a level of screening between the Gardens and House which will include new interpretation boards. Furthermore, in line with the accessibility issues highlighted a new accessible path is being signposted within the Gardens and works to the Engine House include a proposed extension which will be an accessible WC.



Leonardslee House Watercolour - Miss Hubbard, 1855



The Wallaby enclosure in 2024



Pulhamite Rock Structure - Leonardslee Gardens Book, 1993



Vista view up to Leonardslee House - Leonardslee Gardens Book, 1993

1. The special character of the gardens at Leonardslee should be carefully managed to ensure any proposed developments will not detract from the significance of the designated heritage asset.
2. Each individual character area has significance in its own right as well as part of the overall gardens and these areas should be looked at as part of the whole estate when identifying new uses for each area.
3. Garden Infrastructure The location of proposed new infrastructure, including children's play area, and other large structures, within the gardens needs to be carefully considered. The clustering of new infrastructure within one area of the gardens should be discouraged so as to not permanently change the character of any one area. New infrastructure and buildings should be carefully considered as to the most appropriate location based on the appearance and scale. There is potential to encourage visitors to the outer reaches of the parkland with new visitor infrastructure in these locations. This will encourage more of a spread of visitors across the site rather than staying within the paths close to the lake and house, minimising any potential harm caused.

CMP policy on the Use of the Gardens - section 4.2.4, page 37

MPL7. The car park is lacking in planting through. The new mature specimen trees are due to be planted where the previous ones did not survive the car park works. However it would be beneficial if there was more low level planting, with a possible opportunity between the rows are car parking, where there is currently post and rope designation. This would assist in making the expanse of car park look more in keeping with the surrounding landscape.

CGMP policy on Planting - section 4.3, page 31

PE3. Interpretation Boards: The scale of some of the newer interpretation boards within the gardens are out of proportion of the locations they are describing. Due to this they have been located in slightly different locations which is affecting the usefulness of the information being presented. The scale of future interpretation boards and the appropriateness for the location needs to be reviewed more carefully to allow the visitor to fully engage with them.

CGMP policy on Presentation - section 4.7, page 37

The Park and Gardens

By nature of its setting within rolling hills and valleys, much of the extensive gardens and parkland is hard to access for less able walkers, and impossible for wheelchair users and parents with buggies. This is mitigated by the availability of regular buggies to transport visitors to various locations in the grounds, and some signage marking difficult terrain.

The lack of WC facilities deeper within the park is of concern, as visitors to the lakes and beyond must navigate a steep upward slope to access those in the Museum and Stable blocks. An obvious solution to this would be to install WCs in the Engine House, which would in turn better promote its use as a summer café.

CMP notes on Accessibility and Wayfinding - section 4.8, page 50

Condition

This area is in a good condition generally. Unfortunately the expanse of tarmac is not in keeping with the other surfaces in the Gardens, nor with the character of the House, and a revised hard landscaping plan is desirable.

Significance

Detrimental due to the expanse of hard surface.

CGMP notes on Leonardslee House Frontage - section 6.8, page 60

Vistas

The views onto this area are from the hotel rooms on the first floor of Leonardslee House, these could possibly be improved with some additional planting to soften the large expanse of tarmac.

CGMP notes on Leonardslee House Frontage - section 6.8, page 60

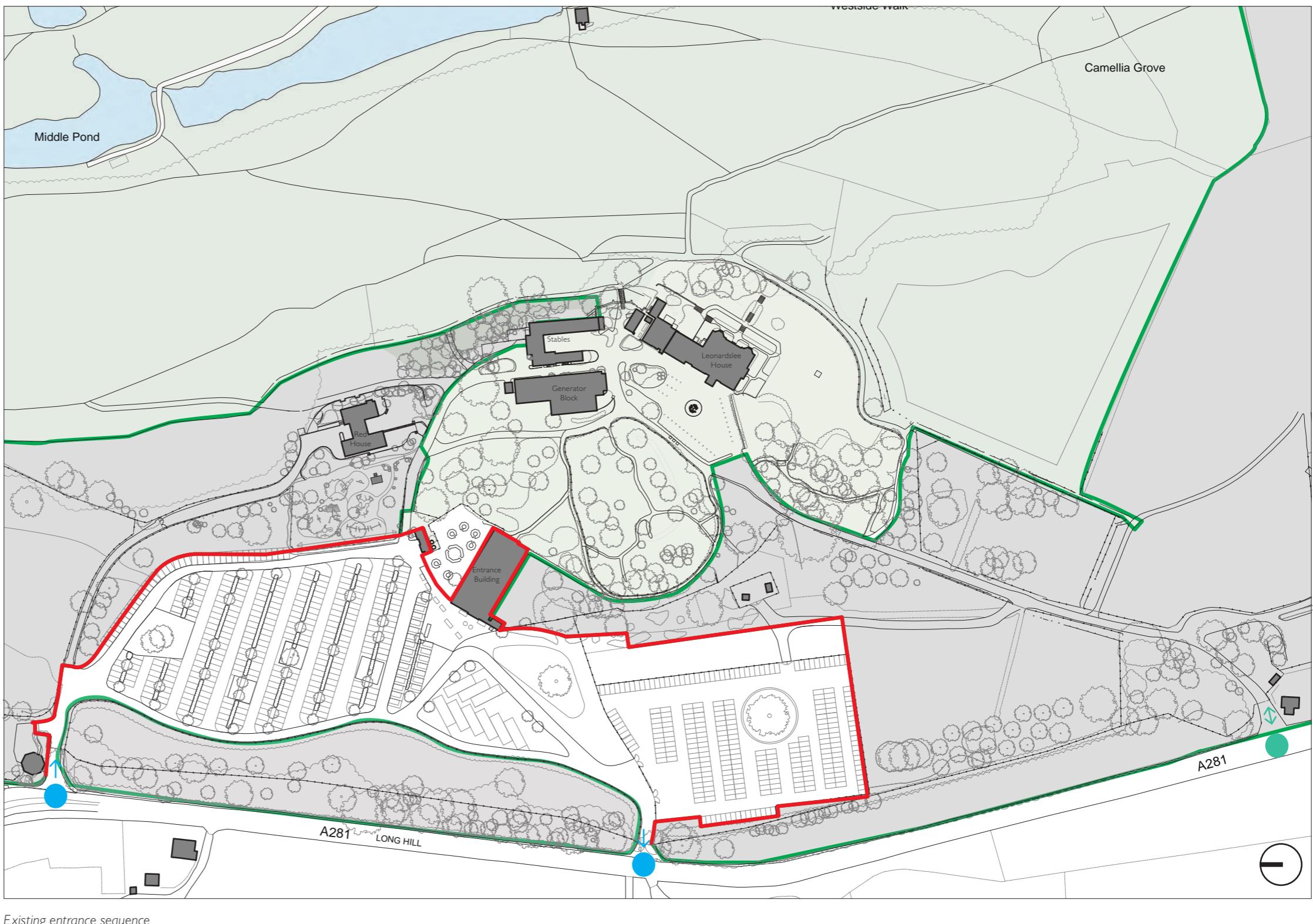
5.3 OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

5.3.2 EXISTING ENTRANCE SEQUENCE

There are two entrances to the Leonardslee Estate from the A218. To the north lies the garden entrance to the Gardens, passing the Round House, where the majority of visitors arrive. The recently refurbished 1920s former greenhouse serves as a shop and will form the new entrance route to the Gardens, and is successful in defining the natural entrance to the site.

To access to the Hotel and restaurant Interlude there is a separate entrance to the south of the estate, which enables visitors to park in front of Leonardslee House. This is only available for visitors with a booking for the restaurant, or to stay in the Hotel. Guests automatically gain access to the wider Gardens and ticketed facilities.

The car park WC facilities and the retail entrance building are freely available to visitors, with free parking for members and for visitors up to 45minutes.



5.3 OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

5.3.3 PROPOSED VISITOR ARRIVAL

The historic entrances and routes from the road are still visible in the roads and paths that exist today, and all three historic entry points to the estate remain utilised. The southern route "C" is still used by visitors to Leonardslee House Hotel and Restaurant Interlude, albeit visitors have to turn around in front of Leonardslee House whereas in the past they would have stored the carriages in the stables or exited through "A". Access points "A" and "B" are still utilised today, however visitors to the Gardens park in the car park and enter through the Entrance Building.

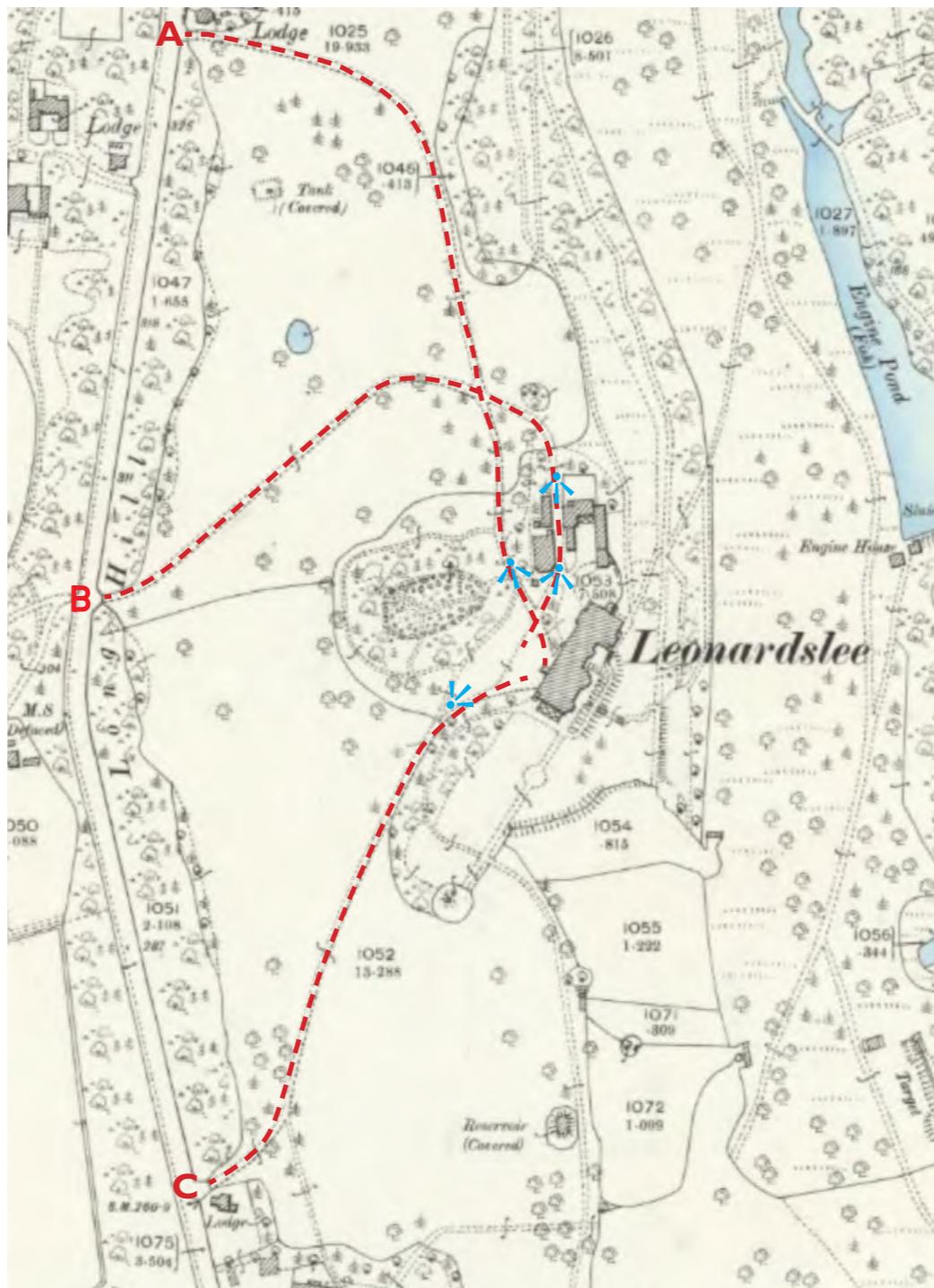
Upon entering the site for the Gardens or the Hotel, each visitor has sight of one of the Lodges to the north or south, and arrives via winding driveways, with views of the parkland and estate much like visitors experienced during the historic heydays of Leonardslee House.

The subsequent surprise view of the House is part of every visitor's journey before they travel onto their next destination. Whether that's choosing which pathway to take into the gardens or visiting the Hotel and Restaurant Interlude.

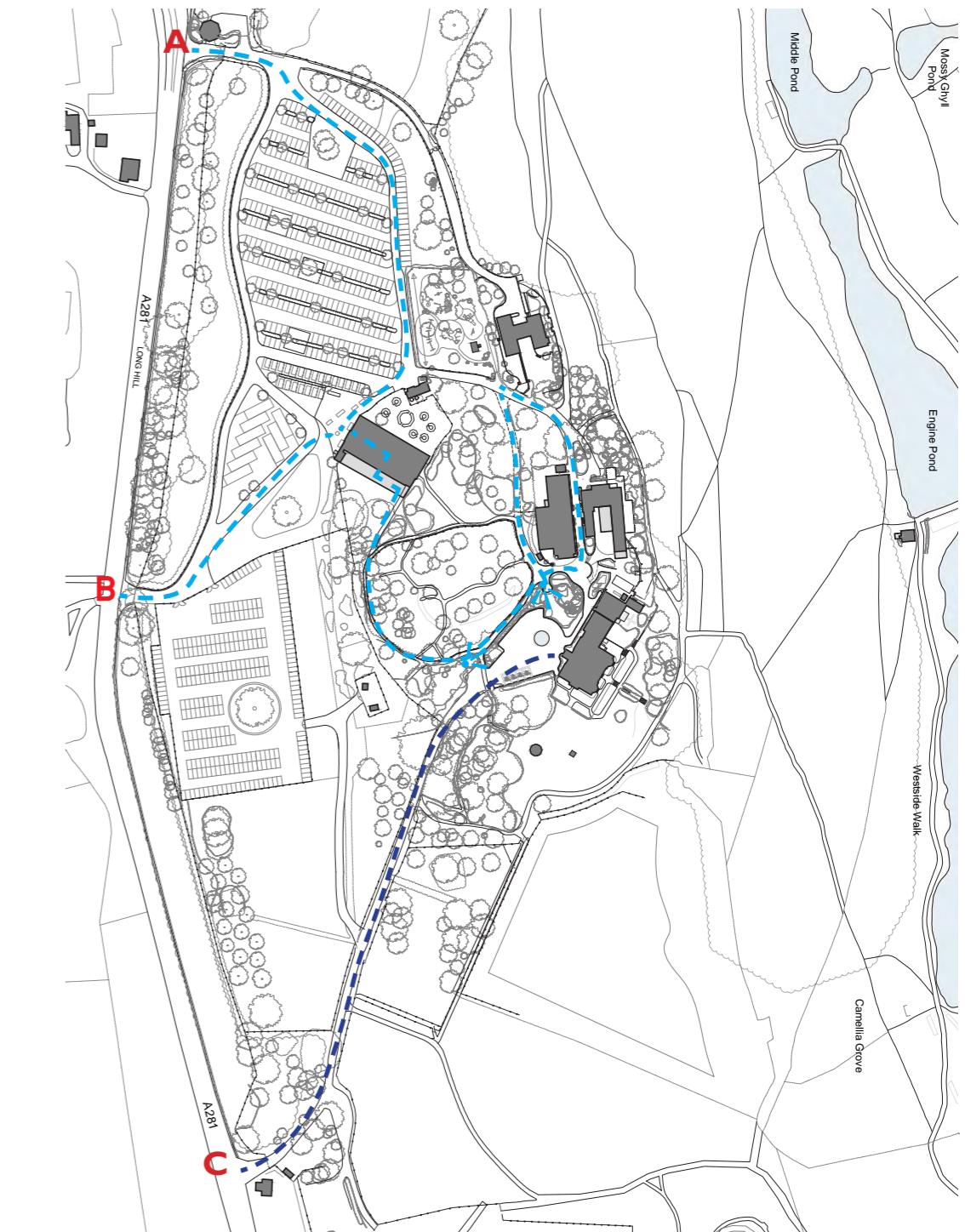
All entrance views of house are preserved and visitors will still be able to understand the hierarchy of Leonardslee House in comparison to the surrounding Gardens and landscape. All visitors will get the south view upon arrival and explore the other views from the Garden.

Key:

- Historic entrance routes to the Gardens
- Visitor flow to the Gardens
- Visitor flow to the Hotel & Restaurant Interlude
- ✗ Entrances and exits to estate
- Key historic views



Historic Map from 1879



Proposed Site Plan

5.3 OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

5.3.4 PROPOSED ZONING

The architectural centrepiece of the estate will continue to be Leonardslee House, however a discreet natural threshold will be introduced to define the forecourt to allow the House to be split into its components parts, or hired out as part of an event, thus re-uniting the spaces. This reinstates the historic treatment found on historic maps whereby the stables were effectively screened from the House with planting, which is traditionally the relationship within similar estates.

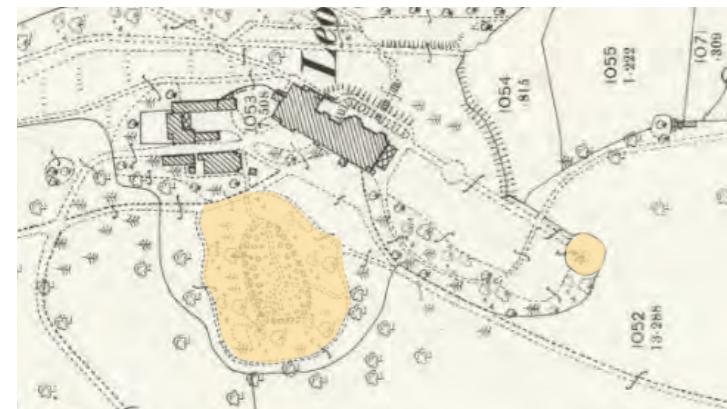
This diagram illustrates the proposed visitor experience to the site for those visiting the Gardens and Lakes, but also for those visiting the Hotel and Interlude Restaurant. It illustrates the different zones across the estate that visitors will experience.

A defined crossing has been added (shown in yellow) to link the two Pulhamite Structures, the location of which has been chosen based on the 1896 OS map which shows a close relationship between the two rockeries which is currently eroded and under-appreciated. The proposed crossing location is slightly above that at a narrow point to minimise time spent on the road.

This will then lead visitors onto paths to the Wallaby Enclosure. The low quality timber post and mesh enclosure structure will be replaced with estate style fencing with a discreet mesh behind to control animal entry and exit to the enclosure. The traditional style will be more in-keeping with the rest of the historic approach.

Key:

- Valley Gardens and Lakes
- Formalised Parklands and Gardens
- Victorian Rockeries
- Leonardslee House and Approach
- - - Section of fencing to be replaced with Estate style fencing



Historic image from 1909 showing the enclosure for the Pulhamite structure



Existing (left) & proposed (right) photograph of showing proposed fencing improvements to the east of the drive (right of image)



5.4 LEONARDSLEE HOUSE FORECOURT

5.4.1 EXISTING LANDSCAPING DESIGN

It is universally accepted that the existing hard landscaping to the front of Leonardslee House is harmful to the setting of the Registered Park and Garden and could easily be improved. The CMP states:

Condition

This area is in a good condition generally. Unfortunately the expanse of tarmac is not in keeping with the other surfaces in the Gardens, nor with the character of the House, and a revised hard landscaping plan is desirable.

Significance

Detrimental due to the expanse of hard surface.

GCMP notes on Leonardslee House Frontage - section 6.8, page 60



1



2

Images of existing car park treatment



5.4 LEONARDSLEE HOUSE FORECOURT

5.3.2 PARKING REQUIREMENTS

There are currently 27 parking spaces to the forecourt which are used to service the hotel and restaurant. The design team have explored the possibility of removing the car parking from the front of Leonardslee House, and utilising the car park to the west.

The following analysis demonstrates the need for a certain amount of parking close to the house.

Requirement for parking to service the hotel and restaurant:

Area	Capacity	Parking Need
Leonardslee House	10 Hotel Rooms (20)	5 Spaces Min.
Restaurant Interlude	32 Guest Capacity	16 Spaces Min.
Overnight Staff	1 - 2	2 Spaces
Non Overnight Staff	15+	13 Spaces
Total	59+	36 Spaces

Following discussions with the management at Leonardslee, it is understood that in peak periods daytime overnight staff can park in the main car park, therefore reducing the parking requirement to a minimum of 23 spaces to adequately service the Leonardslee House hotel and restaurant Interlude. This represents a reduction of 4 spaces.

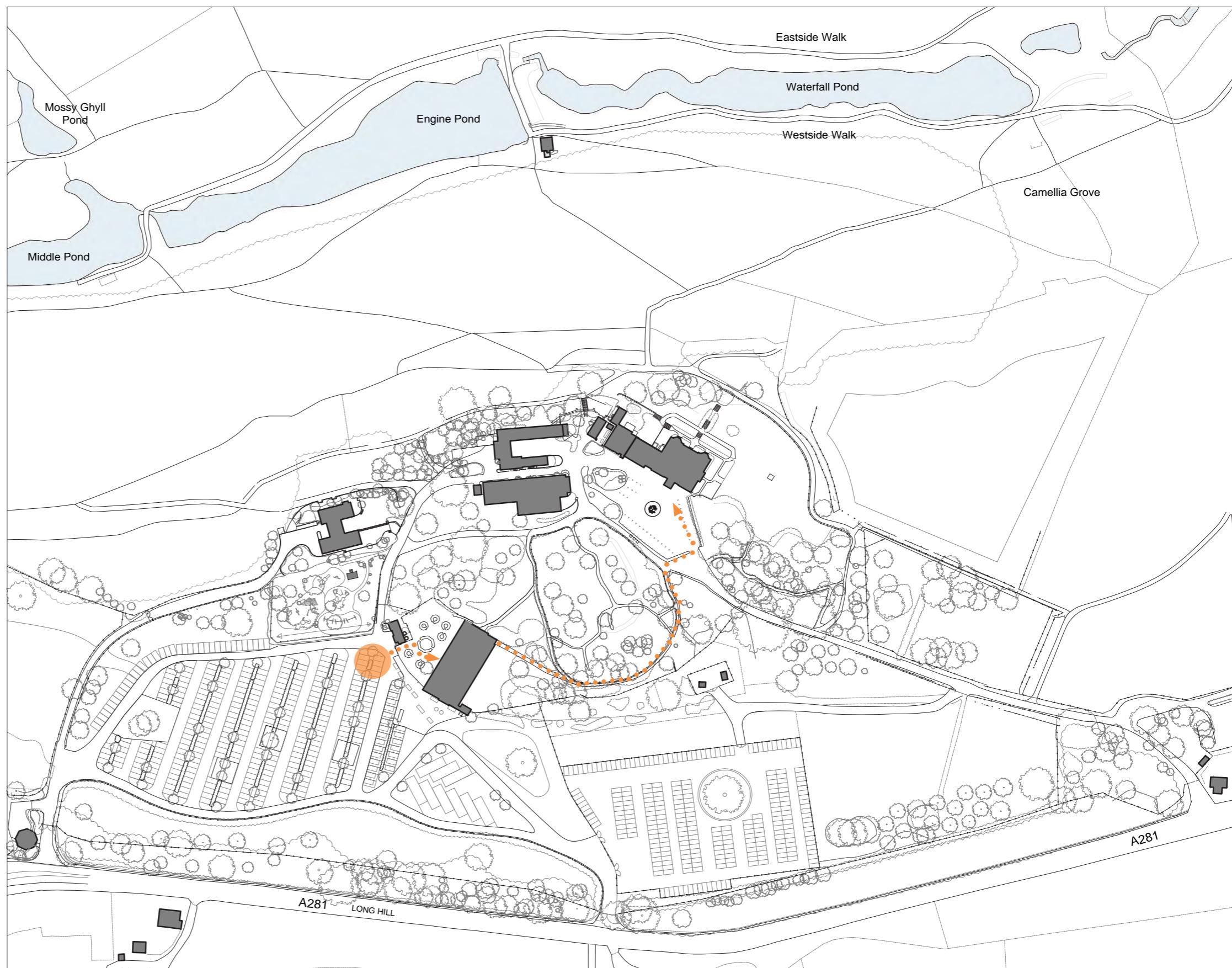
Relocating restaurant and hotel guest parking to the main car park was explored as part of the briefing process. As the gardens have to be secured during the night due to theft and vandalism, visitors must enter through the visitor Entrance Building. Therefore to allow hotel guests to arrive and depart during the night or early in the mornings, the entrance building would have to be permanently staffed which adds an additional running cost.

In addition, it would be a security and health and safety requirement adequately light the route to the car park, and the car park itself during the night to allow the safe use of the car park. This would lead to further light pollution and disturbance to the neighbours which is not desired.

Lastly, the hotel and restaurant interlude are premium offerings, whereby there is a certain expectation from guests that a premium service is delivered. To expect guests to walk from the main car park, through the entrance building would deter visitors from coming, and likely lead to loss of business to the estate and to the wider local economy.

Key:

- Route showing length of visitor journey from main car park through the Entrance Building up to the Main House

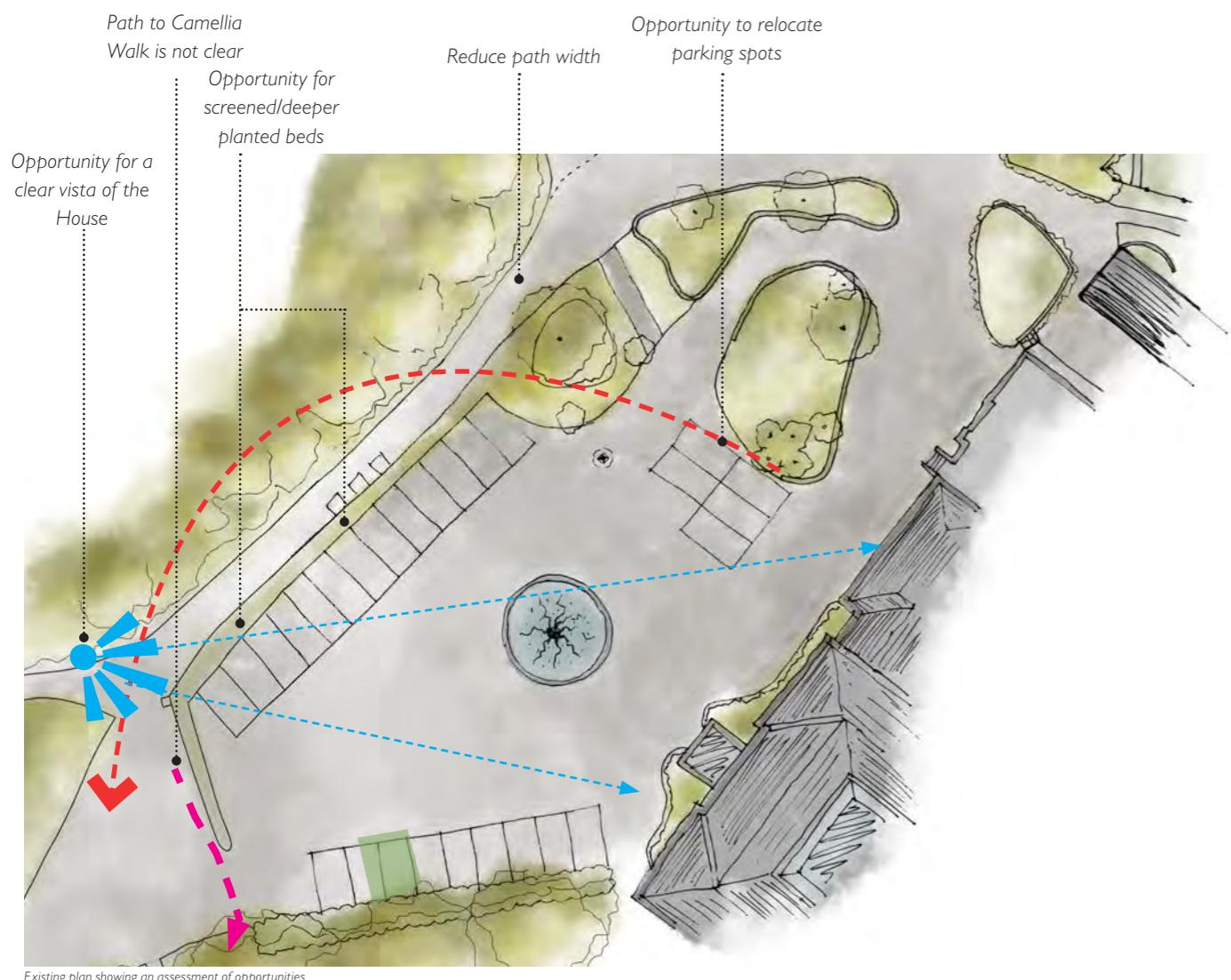


5.4 LEONARDSLEE HOUSE FORECOURT

5.4.3 PROPOSED CAR PARK ALTERATIONS

Given the amount of parking cannot be reduced for functional reasons as described earlier in the document, the design team have focussed on relocating cars from directly in front of the House during day to day operation. This has been achieved by creating a small stretch of overflow bays to the south, which allow the overall capacity to be maintained whilst reducing the visual impact of cars on the front of the house.

In addition to the above, the existing path width will be decreased, and the existing small verge of grass replaced with a deeper bed of plants which can provide a higher screening to the parking. A larger bed has been introduced at the junction between the new path to the working area and Camellia Walk, which means that at this point no cars will be in the immediate foreground when viewing the main house.



5.4 LEONARDSLEE HOUSE FORECOURT

5.4.4 ANALYSING THE EXISTING VISITOR EXPERIENCE

The collection of ancillary buildings at Leonardslee are a pleasant surprise to visitors who enter the gardens. They are well hidden from the entrance views and are an unexpected in their proximity to Leonardslee House. The buildings slowly reveal themselves to visitors, which forms part of the charm of the estate, however with no clear anchor or signage, there is no obvious way to experience the site, with visitors often walking straight across the hotel car park to Leonardslee House, only to be diverted back to the Clocktower Cafe.

The buildings slowly reveal themselves to visitors, which forms part of the charm of the estate, however with no clear anchor or signage, there is no obvious way to experience the site, with visitors often walking straight across the hotel car park to Leonardslee House, only to be diverted back to the Clocktower Cafe.

The lack of clarity of multiple paths and building entrances results in confusion, which although is initially charming, becomes frustrating to the visitor experience. The proposals therefore seek to add a subtle order to the visitor experience whilst retaining the charming quality of the estate.

Key:

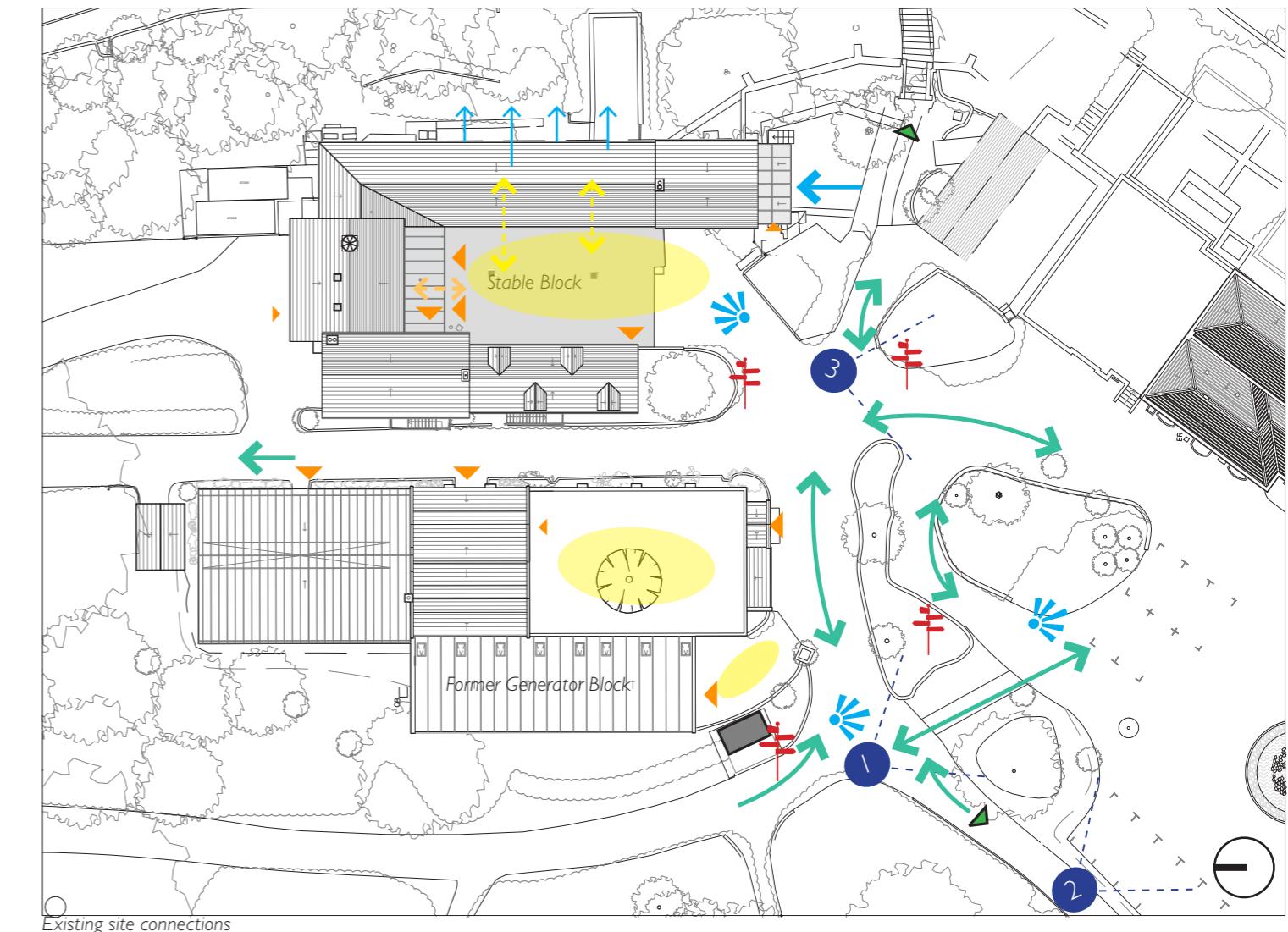
- Building Entry Points
- Long View
- Access Route
- Physical Connection
- Visual Connection
- External Informal Dining Areas
- Signage Point
- Vista / Key View



1 Existing confusing site signage



2 Existing grass verge between the Main House and path causing confusion due to lack of visual boundary between the Lakes and Gardens and the Main House



3 Existing pathway allowing visitors to the Lakes and Gardens access to the front of the Main House causing confusion within the visitor experience

5.4 LEONARDSLEE HOUSE FORECOURT

5.4.5 REINSTATING THE HISTORIC PLANTED SCREEN

Late 19th century maps and early 20th century photographs show that between the main entrance of Leonardslee House and the service wing lies a large planted bed providing some physical and visual separation between the principal part of the House and its ancillary parts. The bed similarly provided screening to the Stables and subsequent Generator Block.

Given the current separate uses of Leonardslee House (Hotel and Restaurant Interlude) and ancillary working buildings (for Garden only visitors), it is proposed to reinstate this historic visual and physical separation with a new planted bed which will also reduce the amount of hard standing in front of the House. A raised planted bed has been chosen in lieu of a low grassed lawn to provide visual screening to the reduced number of car parking to the front of the House.



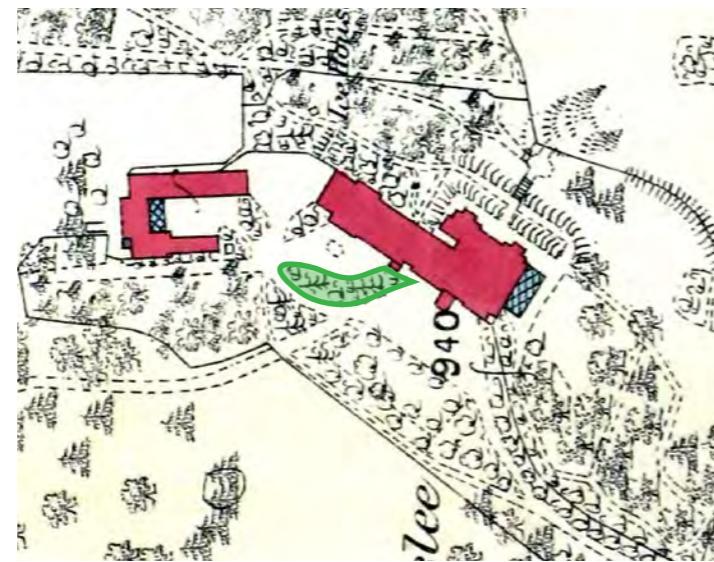
Undated 20th century photograph [mid-20th century] showing the narrow forecourt and lawn opposite with two trees and a rhododendron



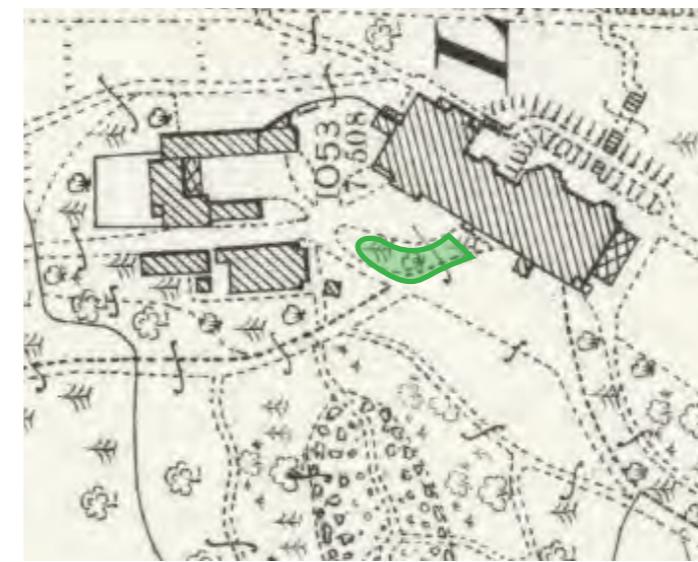
Undated 20th Century photo of Leonardslee House - date unknown - Showing the planted separation of the main house



Images showing the Lawn in May 1979



1879 Ordnance Survey Map with the planted screen shown in green



1896 Ordnance Survey Map with the planted screen shown in green



1957 Ordnance Survey Map with the planted screen shown in green