

4.3 RE-EVALUATION OF STAFF OFFICES AND ACCOMMODATION

4.3.1 STAFF ACCOMMODATION

There are a number of buildings on site used for staff accommodation, which has historically always been their function. At present the following buildings provide on-site staff accommodation:

Red House (Single family home)
Honey Cottage (2 bedroom house share)
Potters Cottage (3 bedrooms house share)
The Round House (Single family home)
Gardener's Cottage (Single family home)

The demand for shared staff accommodation across the site has been dwindling in recent years due to working from home policies and flexible hours reducing the need for full time site presence for all staff. Feedback from staff is that whilst on site shared accommodation is desirable for a short period of time to allow individuals to arrange permanent accommodation in nearby communities, there is no longer a long term desire for shared accommodation on the estate.

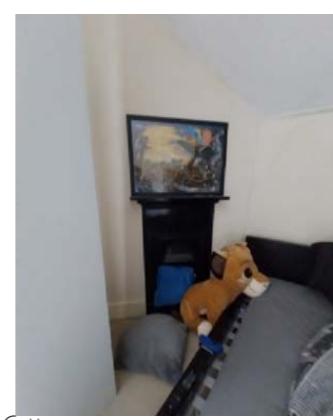
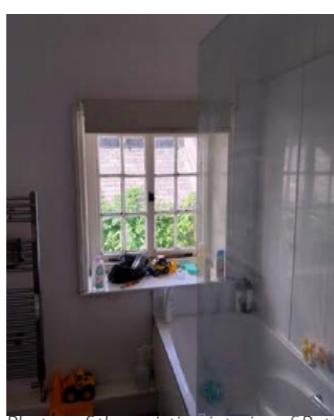
There was also feedback that the location of Honey Cottage and Potters Cottage in the heart of the visitor complex was not preferable, due to the lack of privacy during busy periods and at weekends.

4.3.2 REDUNDANT OFFICE ACCOMMODATION

Changes in working from home policies and flexible working hours have also reduced the on site need for staff office space. Following the completion of the compound to the southern end of the site, there are two redundant office spaces in the Stable Block and the Red House and one redundant staff welfare in the Red House. There is an opportunity to re-purpose these spaces which will be explored as part of the proposals.



Photos of the exterior of Honey Cottage

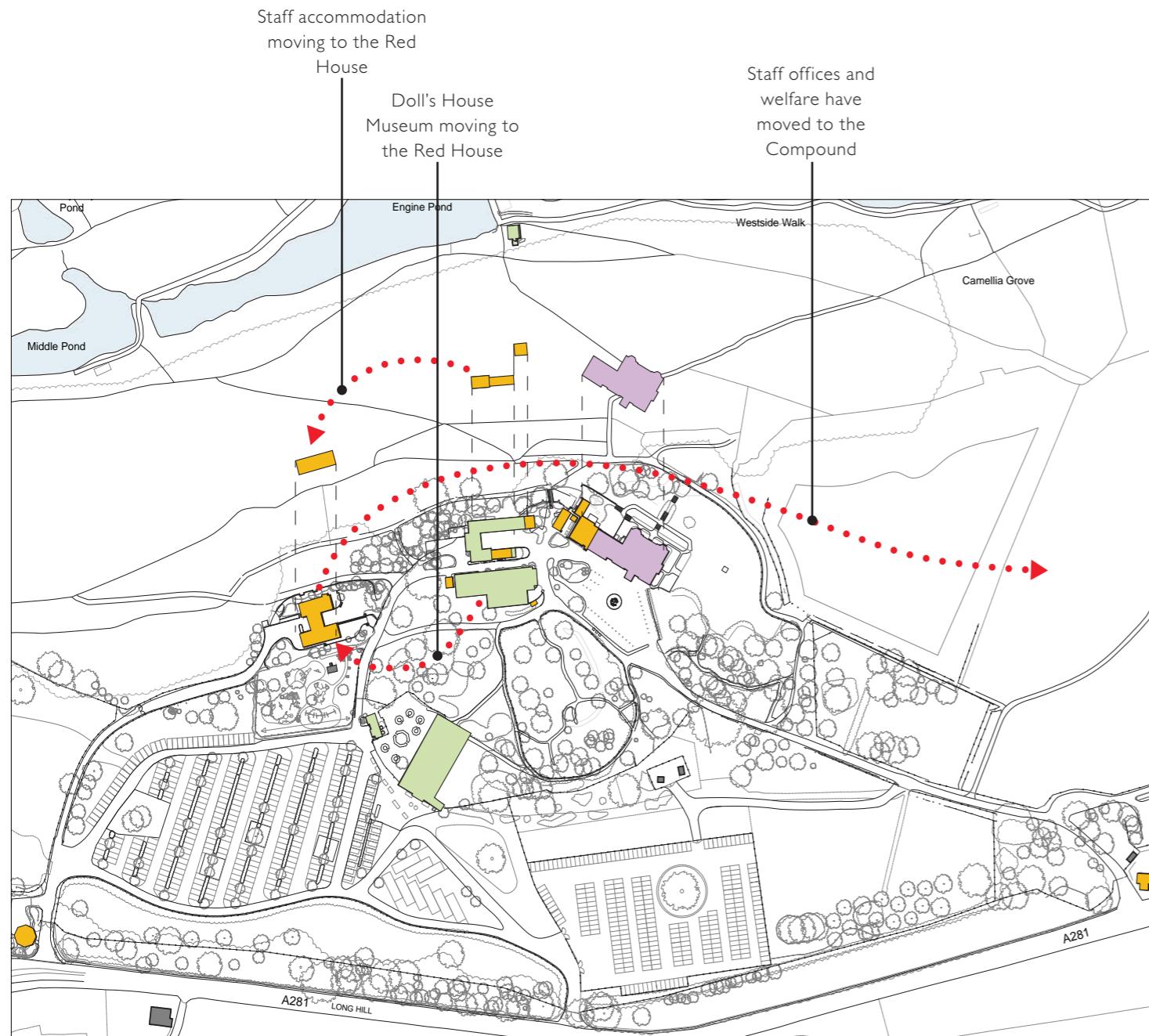


Photos of the existing interior of Potters Cottage

4.4 OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS

4.4.1 EXISTING PUBLIC VS PRIVATE USES

The diagram below indicates that at present public and private spaces are dispersed across the site with no clear separation. The staff accommodation in Honey Cottage and Potters Cottage is accessed from the heart of the visitor experience, which is not ideal for staff on days off or staff seeking privacy. There are a number of empty offices within the heart of the estate which could be better utilised to add to the visitor experience. By reorganising the office and staff accommodation within the heart of the historic core of the site, a clear distinction between public and private can be achieved.



Private v Public Site Plan as Existing

These key moves are:

- Converting the redundant staff offices in the Red House to purpose-built staff accommodation,
- Converting the redundant staff welfare from the Red House to house the Dolls House exhibition, adjacent to the play area,
- Converting the redundant staff offices in the stable block to visitor accommodation,
- Refurbishing the former cottages in the historic core to guest accommodation.

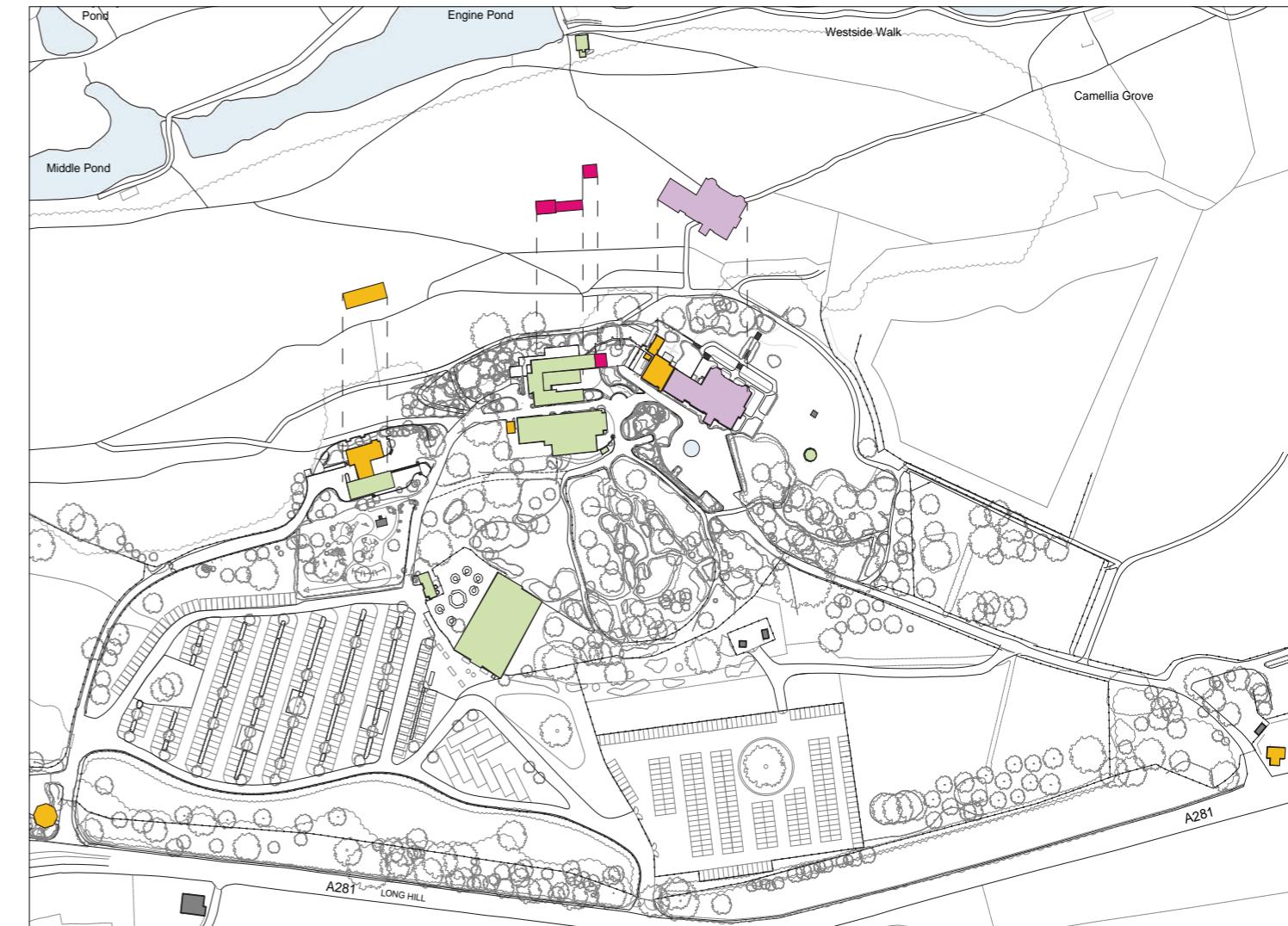
4.4.2 PROPOSED PUBLIC VS PRIVATE USES

The consolidation of spaces within the proposals has now created a clearer division of public versus private spaces across the site. All buildings which are publicly accessible are now in one main artery running the length of the site creating a more sensible journey through the site for visitors.

A large amount of private spaces have already been moved to the Red House and to the Compound on the southern edge of site. Thus, making better use of the on-site building's to serve and support the estate's needs, and necessity for constant maintenance.

Key:

- Publicly accessible buildings by all visitors
- Leonardslee House Hotel and Restaurant Interlude
- New guest accommodation offering
- Staff / Office accommodation



Private v Public Site Plan as Proposed

4.4 OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS

4.4.3 PROPOSALS OVERVIEW

The adjacent plan and the below notes give a brief overview of the proposals, they are discussed in further detail within section 6 of this document.

Key

1 New Ticket Entrance Extension

An extension is proposed to the south elevation of this building creating a new area to house a ticket desk and a welcome cafe.

2 Leonardslee House Forecourt

It is proposed that the existing hard landscaping will be altered to a softer configuration with new interpretation boards to reduce parking to the front of the House, creating a soft division from garden visitors to the car park as per historic precedent.

3 Stable Block

A new winter garden extension is proposed to the Stable Block along with a lightweight terrace to the east. The Clocktower Cafe will be refurbished and back of house spaces consolidated with new WCs introduced. The existing staff accommodation will be refurbished into additional guest accommodation.

4 Former Generator Block

It is proposed that the existing open courtyard will be covered to create a new events space. The Alpine House will be refurbished and the Dolls House Museum will be moved to the Red House to create a limited number of WCs.

5 Red House

It is proposed that the current staff welfare to the ground floor side wing that has been moved to the Compound will house the Dolls House Exhibition to be closer to the play area. The offices at first floor level will be renovated into purpose built staff accommodation with individual living space and kitchens.

6 Engine House

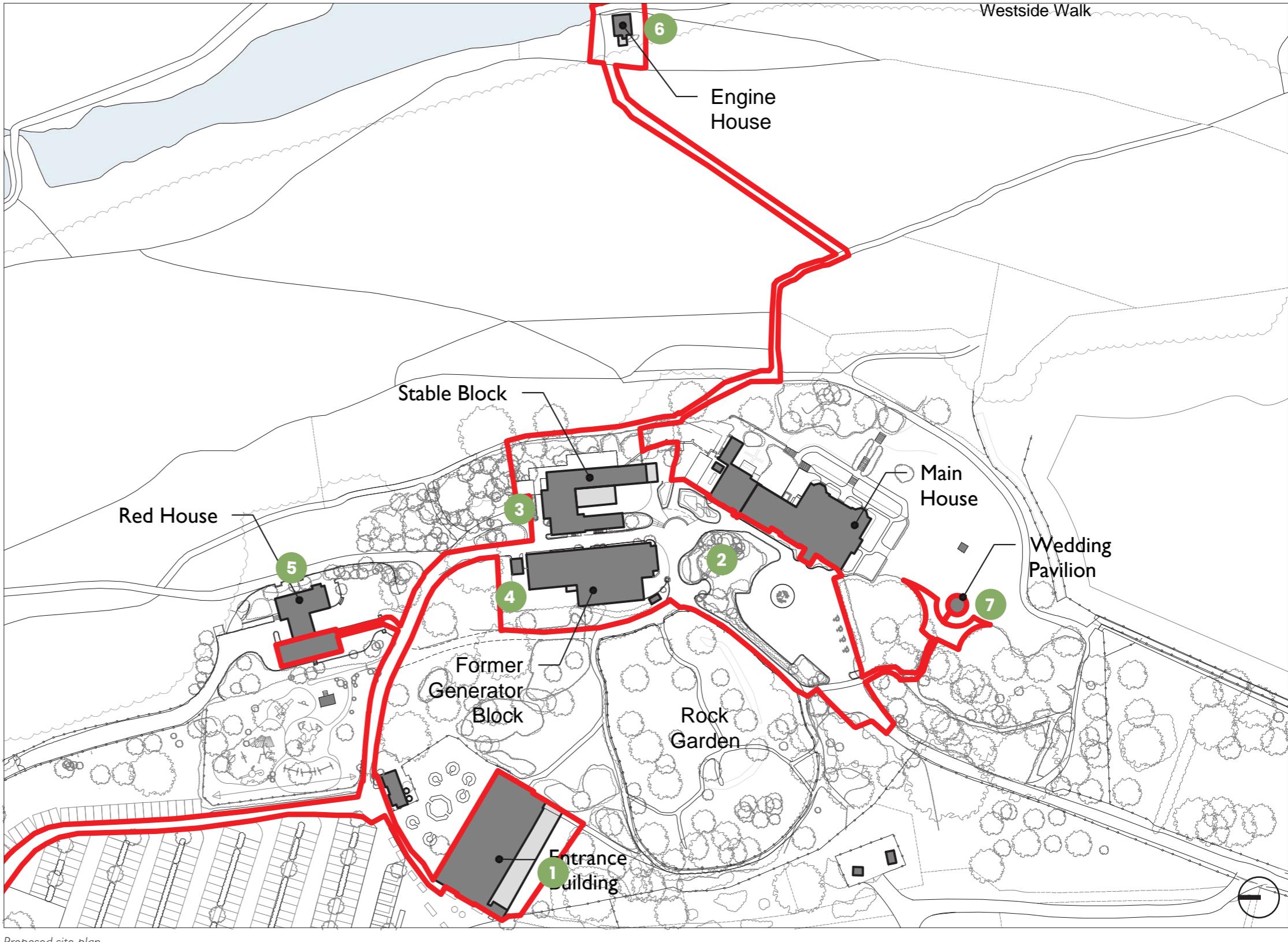
A small extension is proposed to house an accessible WC. An extension to the existing terrace is also proposed for further seating capacity.

7 Lightweight Wedding Pavilion

A new lightweight wedding pavilion is proposed on the lawn to the south of Leonardslee House to hold wedding ceremonies.

Existing buildings

Proposed extensions



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