

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

3.0 DESIGN AND PLANNING CONTEXT

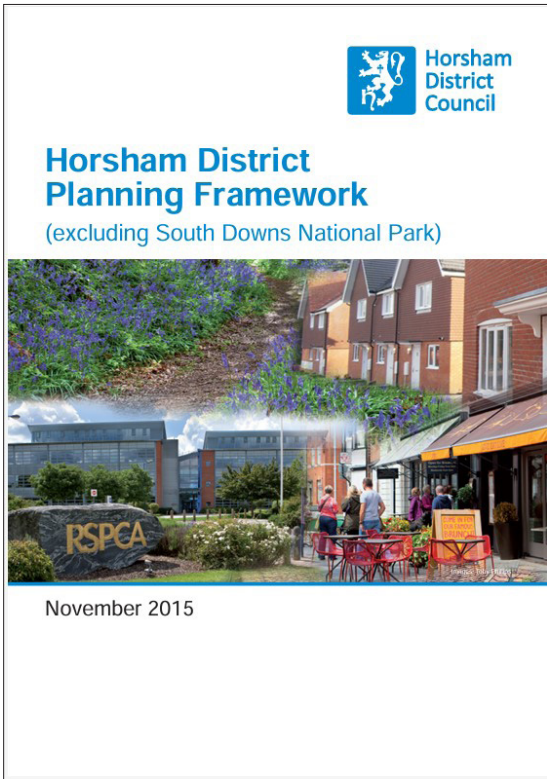


3.1 LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

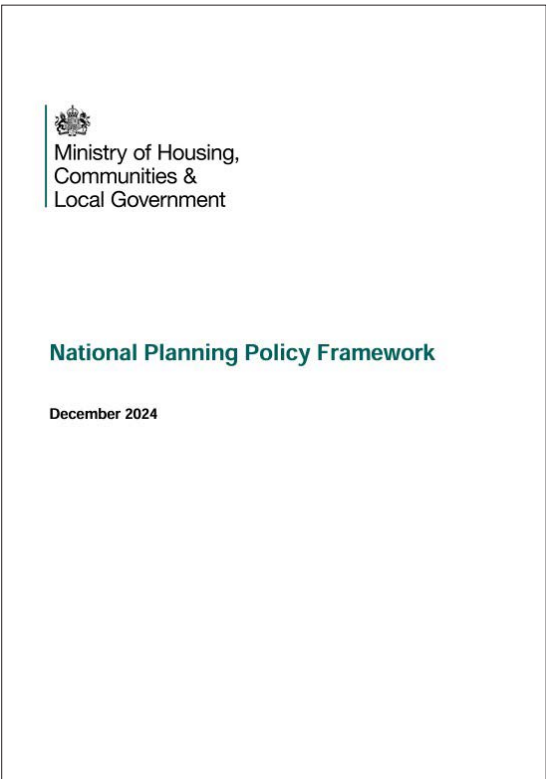
3.1 LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

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

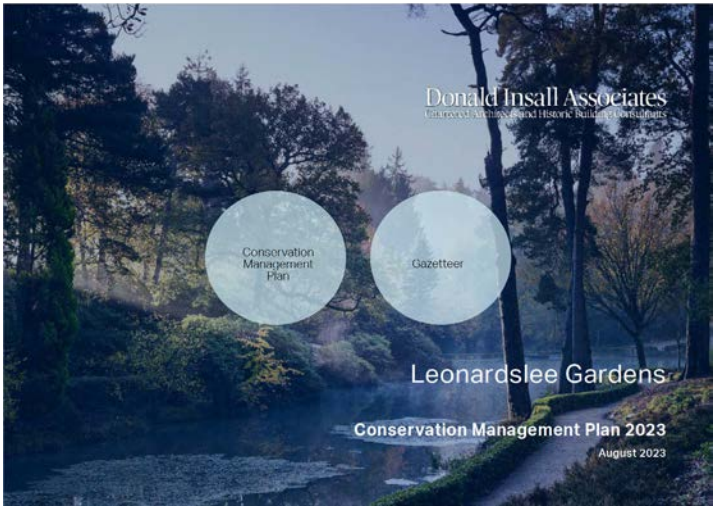
The current owners of the Leonardslee Estate commissioned Donald Insall Architects to prepare a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for the House and Estate Buildings to support their ongoing development of the site. It was part of this analysis that led to the separate Garden GCMP to be developed and 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.

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

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

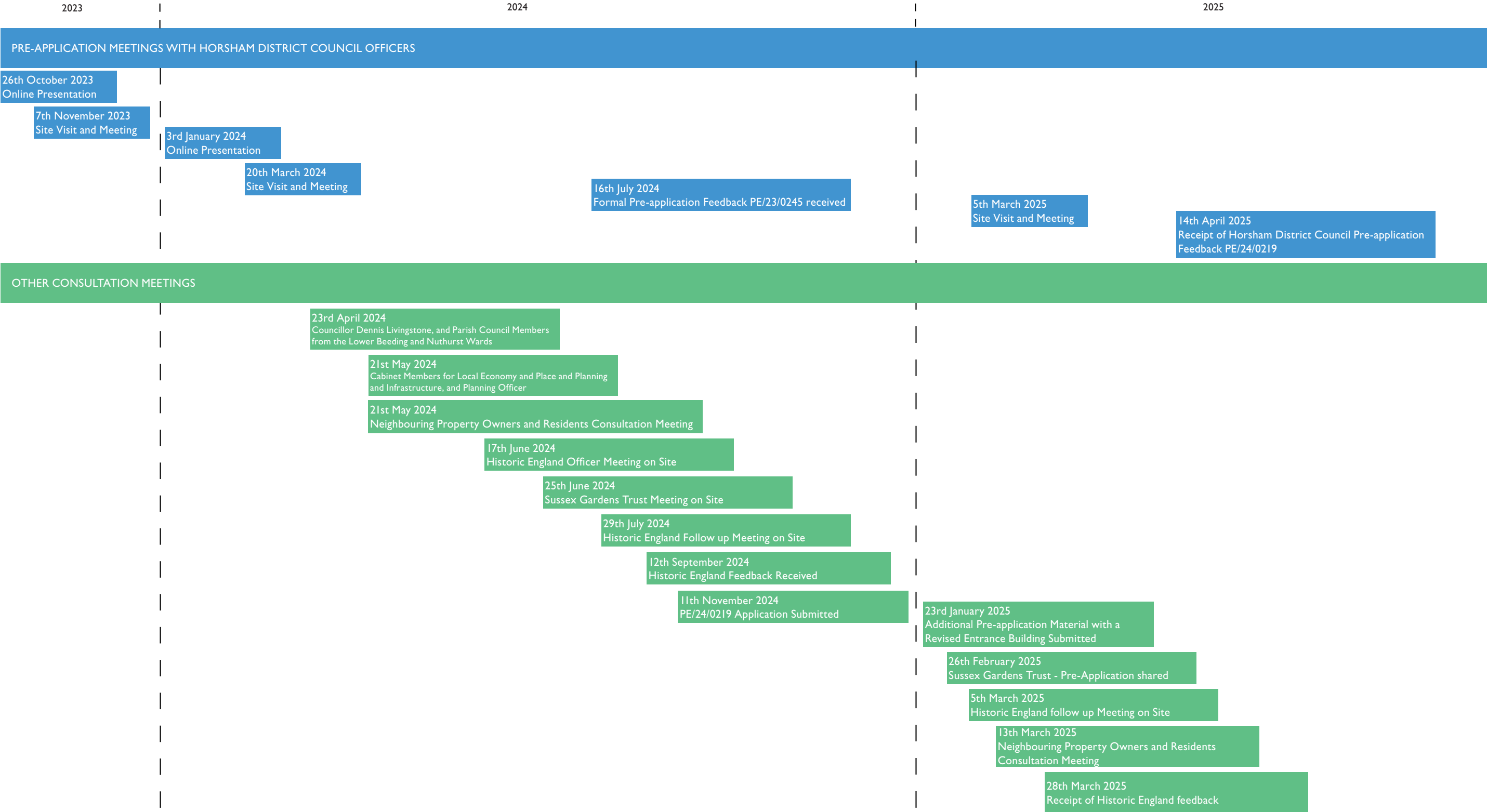
3.4 PRE-APPLICATION AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

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:

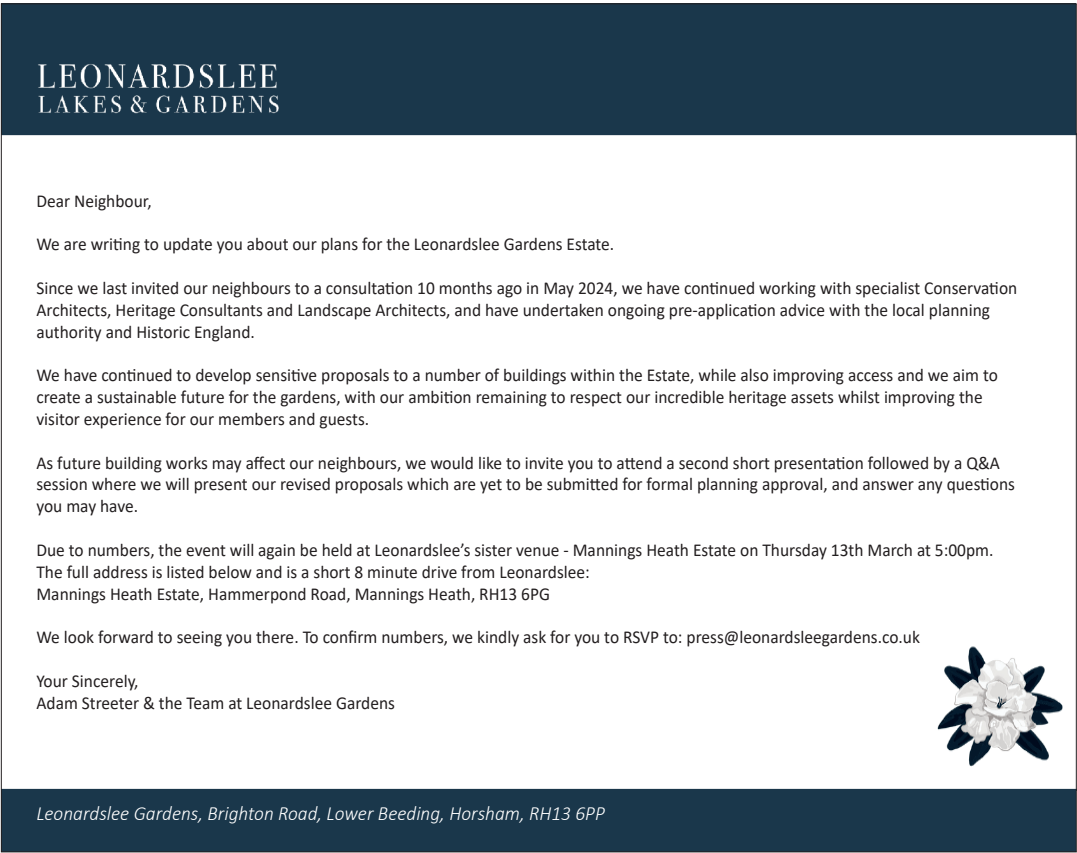
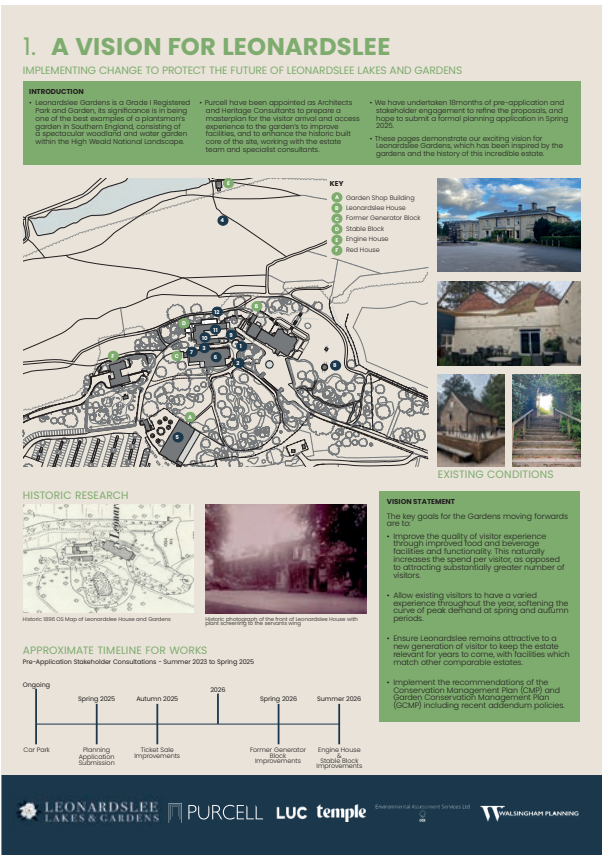
- 21st May 2024 at Mannings Heath Golf Club
- 13th March 2025 at Mannings Heath Golf Club

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 AI 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.





4.1 USE MAP

4.1.1 EXISTING USES

The Leonardslee Estate contains a large number of existing uses distributed across the site. Leonardslee House, which is the focal point of the site, comprises predominantly of hotel accommodation and a fine dining restaurant.

The ancillary buildings are made up of a mix of visitor facing uses such as a Cafe, WCs, Dolls' House Museum, external seating in the Former Generator Block open courtyard, and back of house spaces such as staff accommodation and empty offices. The close proximity of front and back of house functions is notable.

Key:

Cafe

Restaurant Interlude

Leonardslee House Hotel

Dolls' House Museum

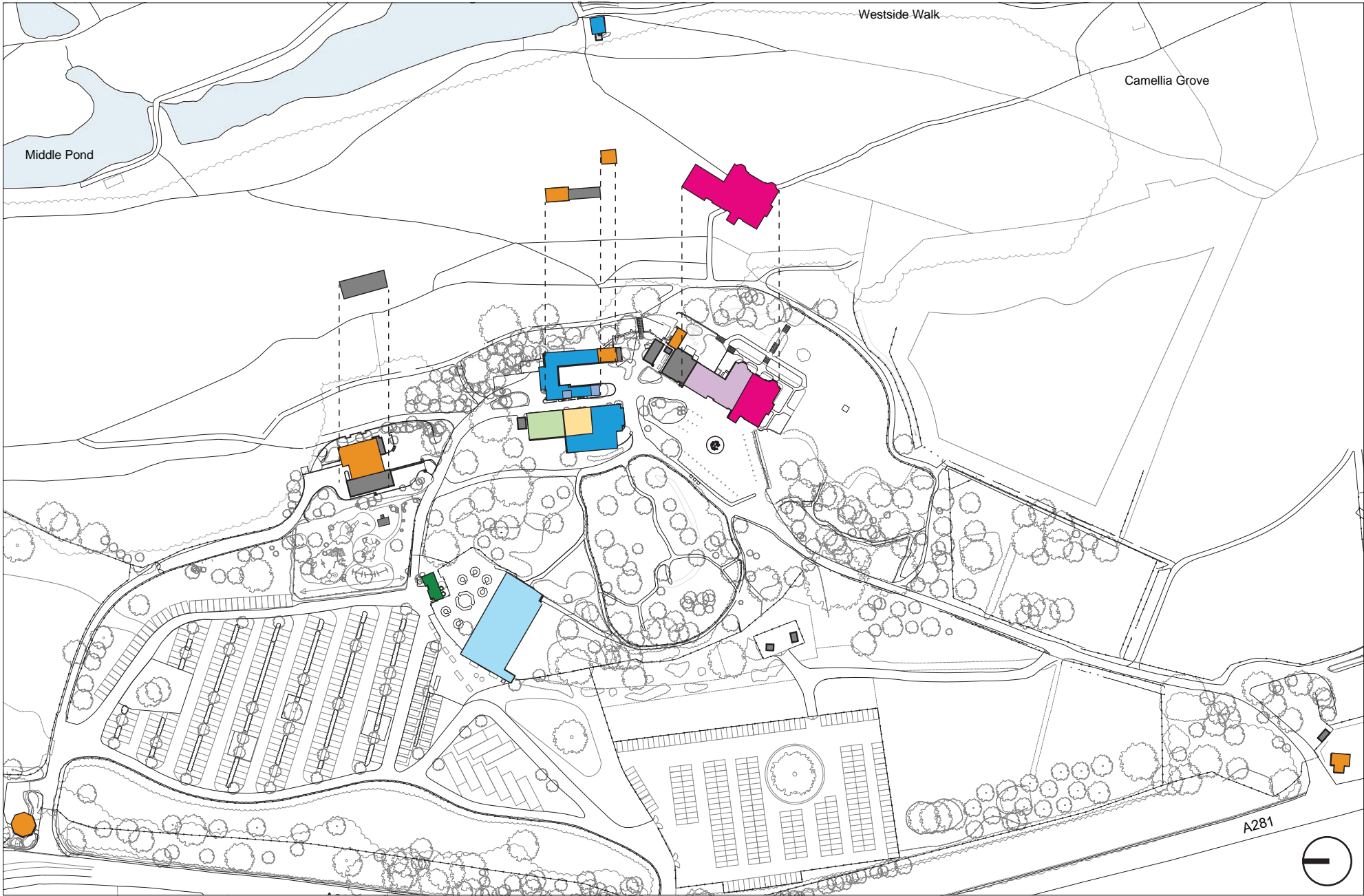
Alpine House

Entrance Retail Building

Staff Accommodation

Former Staff Offices/Storage

Visitor WC



Site plan illustrating existing uses

4.2 FOOD AND BEVERAGE STRATEGY

4.2.1 CONSOLIDATION OF FOOD AND BEVERAGE (F+B) OFFER

At present, the Leonardslee Estate offers the following:

- Michelin starred Restaurant Interlude
- Clocktower Cafe - Grab and go and a limited selection of hot food.
- Snack hut adjacent to the children's play area
- Engine House Cafe

The Clock Tower Cafe was introduced in the 1980s and offers a selection of pre-prepared foods in a canteen style environment. Although it makes good use of the former stable block, the cafe is restricted by its current form with limited covered seating and lack of views to the gardens. The kitchen and WC infrastructure are in desperate need of refurbishment which is highlighted in the CMP.

Opposite the Stable Block, adjoining the Dolls House Museum, until recently there was a secondary overspill cafe under a perspex roof, spilling out into a courtyard which was formerly the generator hall for the main house. This has now been converted to an events room by the client. The courtyard is also used for wine tasting in the summer, with interpretation on the walls.

Whilst Restaurant Interlude is affiliated with the House and Gardens, a booking is required and the price point is substantially higher than other offerings on the estate, which naturally means the offer does not cater for everyday Garden visitors.

4.2.2 RELEVANT CMP POLICIES

The Use of the Park Buildings is highlighted in the CMP, with opportunities highlight for the Engine House, Stable Block, Museum Block and Glasshouse.

The Engine House located by the lake is used as a seasonal café during the summer, however more could be made of this. Its location by the lake makes it idea for visitors to stop for a warm drink in the winter months to grab a take-away for their walk round the gardens. Being located further away from the main estate buildings would give the opportunity for visitors to make a stop without having to return back up to the stables café.

The museum block which currently houses the dolls house museum, gardeners greenhouse and courtyard café, feels like a rather underused area. The possibility to expand the catering provision within the block to supplement that in the adjacent stables could be considered.

The stables currently offers drinks and a limited range of cold snacks, a limited amount of seating is arranged inside and out. There is no hot food available to visitors to the gardens (excluding Interlude) this should be considered along with a larger quantity of seating to give visitors the ability to prolong their visit to the gardens.



Restaurant Interlude interior inside Leonardslee House



Existing Stable Block courtyard



Existing Clocktower Cafe



Existing Clocktower Cafe



Former Tea rooms in Leonardslee House Hotel



Recently converted rear events space to the Former Generator Hall



Former Generator Block courtyard



Entrance to Former Generator Block