

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.

Key:

Buildings

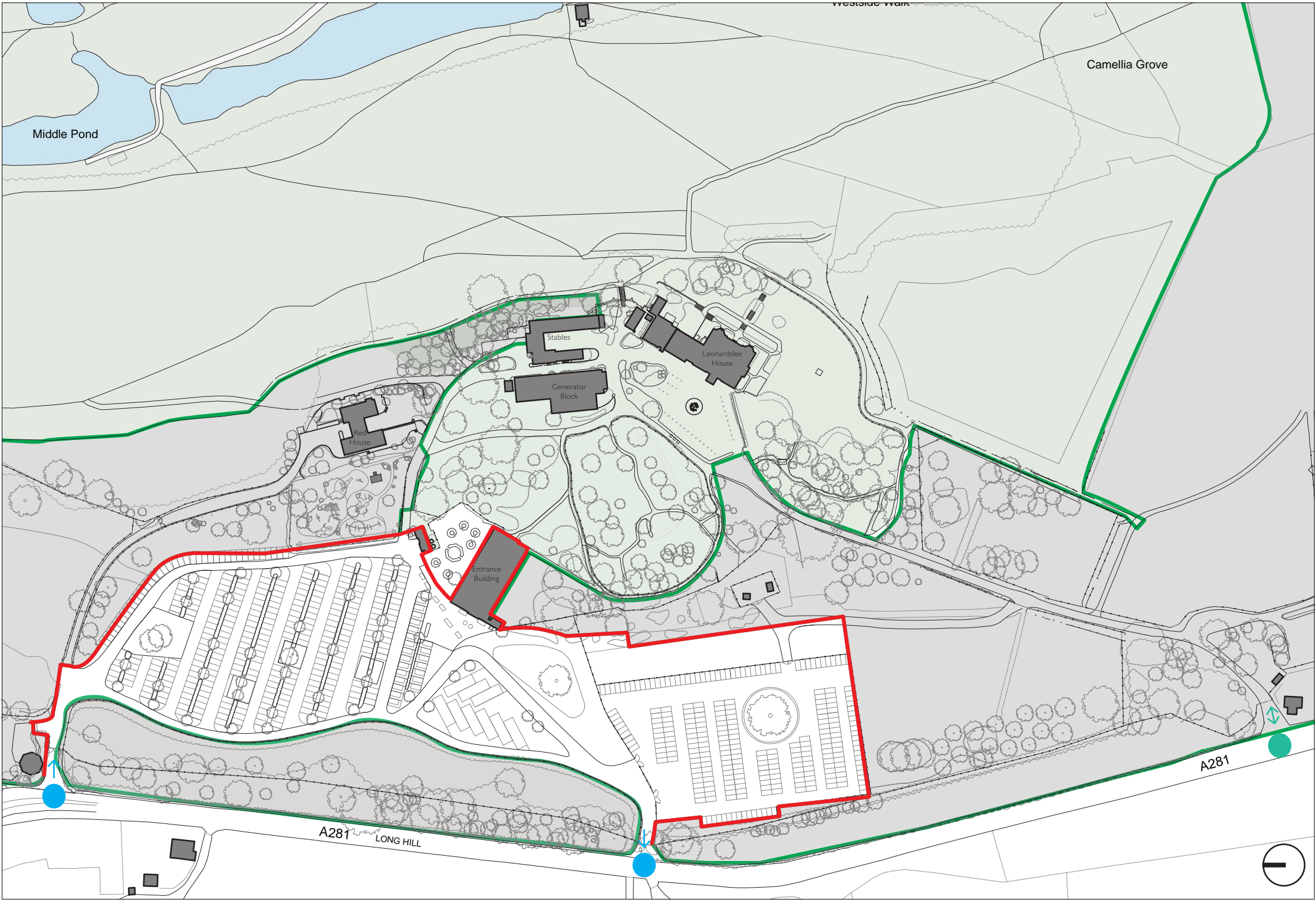
Area Not Accessible to Public

Gardens

Ticketed Boundary to Gardens

Leonardslee House Hotel Entrance/Exit

Leonardslee Gardens Entrance/Exit



Existing entrance sequence



5.3 OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

5.3.3 PROPOSED VISITOR ARRIVAL

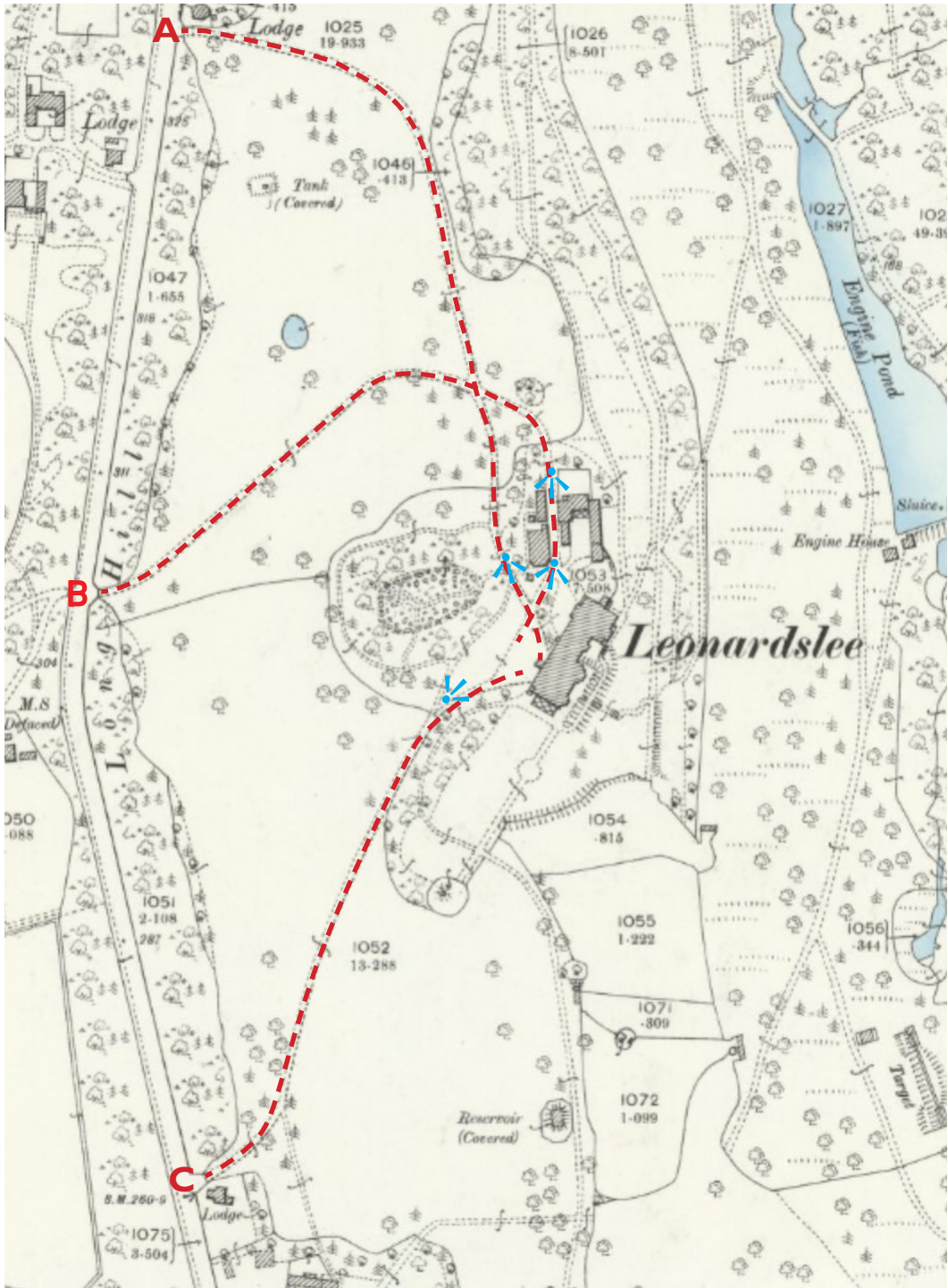
The historic entrances and routes from the road are still visible in the roads and paths that exist today, and all three historic entry points to the estate remain utilised. The southern route “C” is still used by visitors to Leonardslee House Hotel and Restaurant Interlude, albeit visitors have to turn 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.

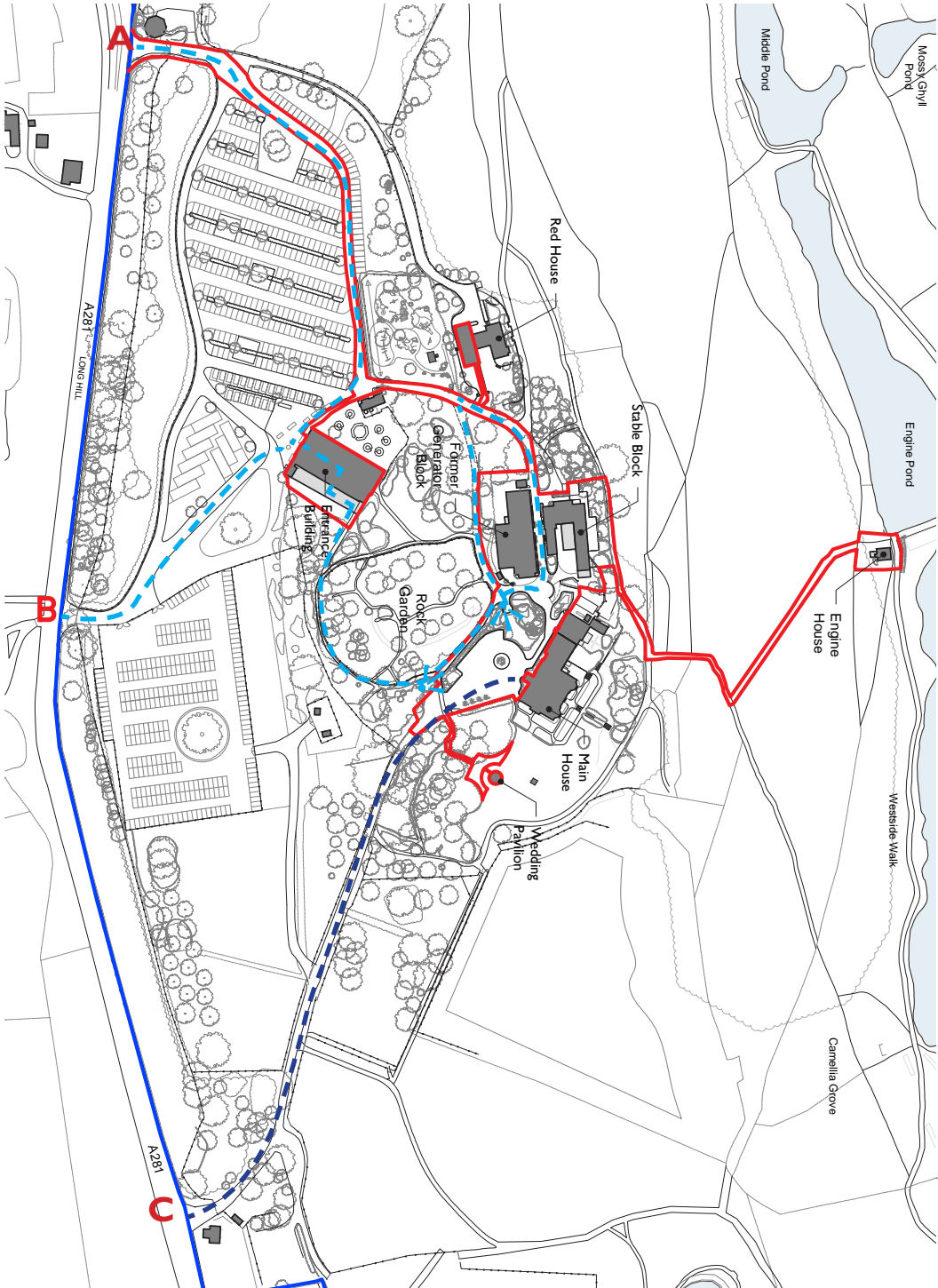
The subsequent surprise view of the House is part of every visitor’s journey before they travel onto their next destination. Whether that’s choosing which pathway to take into the gardens or visiting the Hotel and Restaurant Interlude.

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
  - X 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.

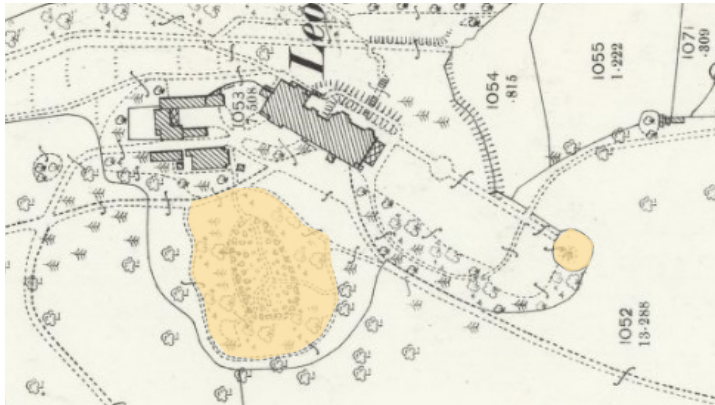
This will then lead visitors onto paths to the Wallaby Enclosure. The low quality timber post and mesh enclosure structure will be replaced with estate style fencing with a discreet mesh behind to control animal entry and exit to the enclosure. The traditional style will be more in-keeping with the rest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



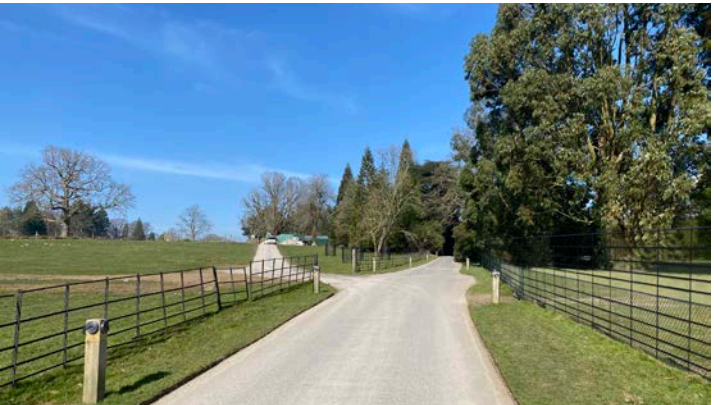
Proposed Zoning Plan



1896 OS Map with Victorian Rockeries marked in yellow



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:

<b>Condition</b>
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.
<b>Significance</b>
Detrimental due to the expanse of hard surface.

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



Images of existing car park treatment



Rendered plan showing the existing materiality and planted areas