



BLUE FOREST
THE TREEHOUSE PEOPLE

CHILDREN'S PLAYHOUSE

Design & Access Statement

835
JULY 2020

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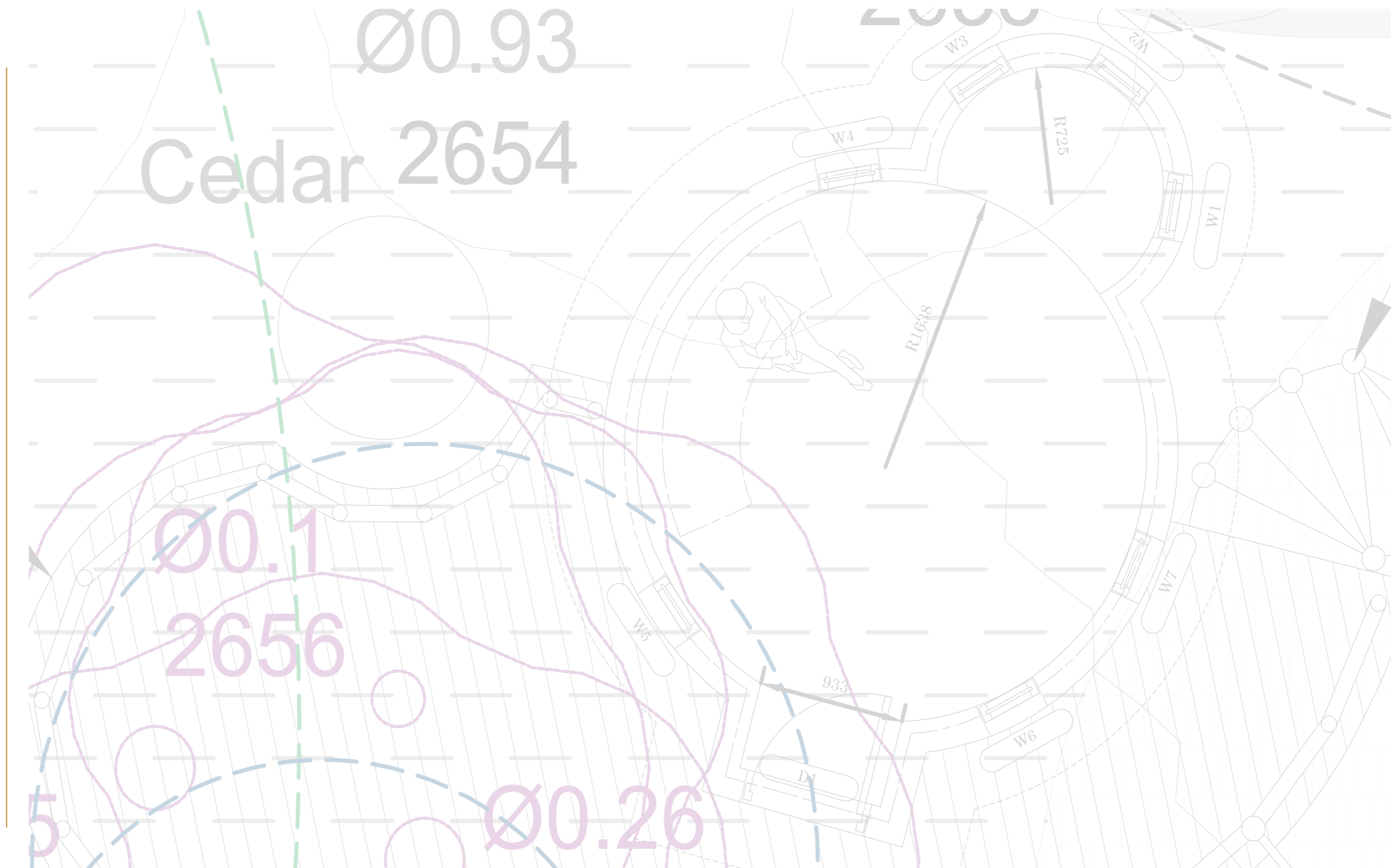
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1.1 Site Location Plan



● Site



Athlone House
Hampstead Lane
London
N6 4RU

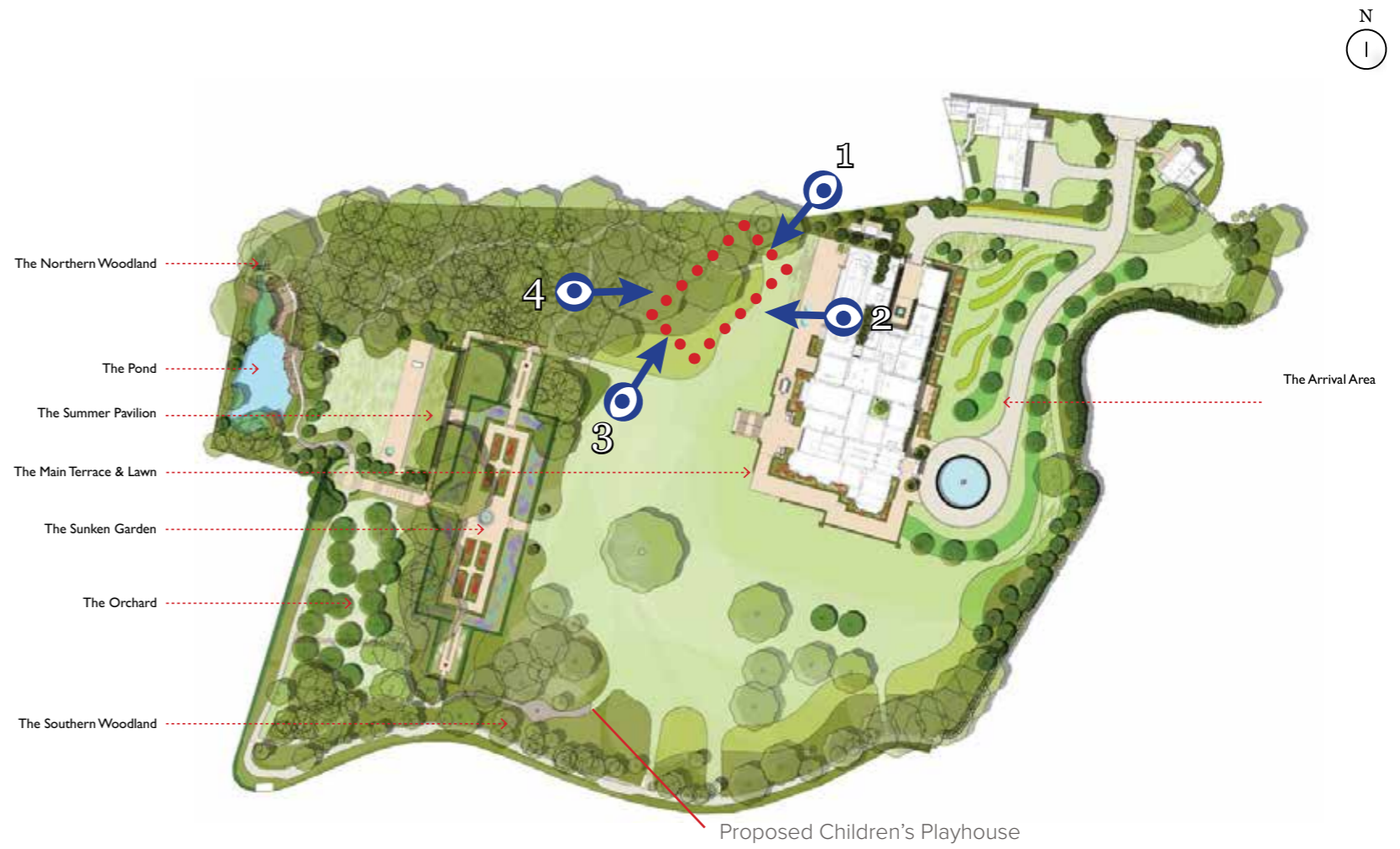
Site Location



1.2 Site Views

Proposed Playhouse Site

- 1. North View Towards Playhouse Site
- 2. East View Towards Playhouse Site
- 3. South View Towards Playhouse Site
- 4. West View Towards Playhouse Site



1. North View



2. East View



3. South View



4. West View



1.3 Design Proposal

DESIGN BRIEF

One wooden children's playhouse with raised platforms to be erected within the curtilage of Athlone House. Key considerations and design parameters include:

- To design a unique wooden children's playhouse for the recreational use of the residents of Athlone House.
- To create an unimposing structure that will be appropriate for the appearance and nature of the wider estate and garden.

THE PROCESS

The playhouse has been located and designed to limit the visual and ecological impact the proposed structure will have within the landscape. Natural timber materials have been carefully selected to help the playhouse to blend in to the character and appearance of the surrounding environment.

To ensure that the construction of the playhouse has little or no negative impact upon the surrounding trees, we have chosen to support the playhouse structure on ground screws, meaning no digging will take place in the construction of the playhouse.

The structure will have a deck and platform accessed from ground level by a spiral staircase. The deck will be built at a height of approximately 1.5m from ground level at the base of tree 2654 (Cedar). The structure will not be fixed to the surrounding trees in any way. The peak of the roof will reach a height of c6m above ground level at the base of tree 2654.

USE

The proposed Playhouse will be used purely for the enjoyment of the residents living at Athlone House.

AREA

The total internal floor space of the playhouse is approximately 9.6m².

The construction area is c. 460m² (shown with a red line on planning drawings).

LAYOUT

Our experience in designing playhouses has a big role in the structures we now build. We have acquired a good understanding of what makes an attractive, safe yet fun and adventurous space. This experience helps us to understand all the critical success factors that are associated with each of our playhouse designs. The layout of the playhouse and deck are predominantly determined by the location of the trees and the surrounding vegetation. In this case, the main playhouse structure is free-standing and will not be fixed to the surrounding trees.

SCALE

The structure is of a size and scale that are appropriate to the wider property, whilst allowing for the use of the whole family (e.g. both adults and children). The playhouse will be finished in timber, and will not be painted so the timber can weather to a silver-grey tone naturally and blend in with the surrounding trees and shrubs. The structure will be visible from Athlone House but is largely screened from views from the wider landscape by the surrounding trees and shrubs.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF THE SURROUNDING TREES

The following tree works will be taken before construction begins;

- Remove Holly Trees 2655, 2656, 2657, 2658.
- Raise the low lying canopy on the eastern side of the Cedar 2654 to circa. 3m from ground level to allow for rope walk to pass underneath.
- Remove deadwood from Sycamore 2647
- Mulch area beneath playhouse and surrounding trees to a min depth of c. 50mm

Please refer to the accompanying Construction Method Statement for details of the construction sequencing and measures taken to ensure the well-being of the trees and habitat. (All Mitigation measures have been written in conjunction with local ecology, tree and historic landscape report.)



2.1 Construction Statement

CONSTRUCTION

The playhouse is entirely supported using solid timber posts, which will be individually secured into the ground using hand augured ground screws. This method of support requires no digging or concrete and provides secure installation in all soil types and can be installed in and around the existing tree roots without causing damage.

The playhouse platform will sit next to the Cedar 2654 but will not be fixed to the tree. There will be a minimum gap of 150mm between the structure and the tree trunk. The satellite deck wraps around the trunk of tree 2663. A gap of c. 70mm will be left between the framework and decking and the edge of the tree trunk to allow for tree growth. There will be no fixings to the tree. Blue Forest offer all of our clients an annual maintenance service at which point regular adjustments are made to the deck to allow for further tree growth if required.

APPEARANCE

There is no significant visual impact on view from the historic landscape.

The structure has been designed to provide an enchanting woodland den. The playhouse will be clad in a combination of vertical Cedar boards and Cedar shingles. The surrounding deck and support structure will be stained dark brown, a colour we have chosen as it blends in discreetly and beautifully with the natural surroundings. Over time the cladding will weather and 'silver' down to a natural tone. Combined with Blue Forest's innovative craftsmanship, this will produce a high quality finish in keeping with the garden and local tree species.

ECOLOGY & BIODIVERSITY

The following enhancements will be undertaken following the construction of the playhouse:

- Top up mulch to area beneath playhouse and surrounding trees to a min depth of c. 50mm
- Creation of natural log-piles separating the play equipment from the nearby Hawthorn.
- Additional planting with native species to bank on north of site boundary.

SUSTAINABILITY

Blue Forest will ensure that the timber in the proposed playhouse will be sustainably harvested and certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) or the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC).



Images 1 & 2: Similar playhouse precedent images. Structures supported using solid timber posts (N.B. Not proposed playhouse)

CONSTRUCTION & SPECIFICATION:



1. Cedar Roof Shingles



2. Soft Wood Rafters With Cedar Sarking Boards



3. Detail of Internal Junction



4. Spiral Staircase



5. Handmade Windows



6. FSC Decking



7. Softwood Substructure



8. Support Platform



3.1 Site Plan

ACCESS

The playhouse is located in the Northern part of the grounds forming Athlone House. Access will be by way of existing surfaced paths from the northern side of Athlone House. No ongoing vehicular access is associated with this development.

CONCLUSION

We have worked hard to develop processes that reflect best practice in our sector. Our approach to the design and construction of our playhouse, above all, takes into consideration the well being of the neighbouring trees, the safety of our structures and the sustainable means in which each of them is built.

- The playhouse will be limited to the private use of the residents of Athlone House
- The chosen site is unlikely to form critical habitat for protected species and it is unlikely that there will be indirect effects to protected species recorded in the grounds.
- There will be minimal implications to existing vegetation with minimal loss of habitat or structure
- Impact on the existing acid grassland will be minimal, 5-10m² of woodchip play surfaces at the base of the slide, swing set and ramp.
- There would be minimal implications to either the Highgate Conservation Area or the local heritage asset or the historic landscape structure.

If further information is required as part of this application we would be happy to provide it.

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