

RHS Garden Hyde Hall Hilltop Complex

Location: Essex, UK

Client: Royal Horticultural Society

Completed: 2018

Size: 1,094 sqm

Contract Value: £4.5M

Awards:

- Civic Trust Award
- Civic Trust Selwyn Goldsmith Universal Design Award Shortlist
- RICS Awards - Tourism & Leisure
- RICS Awards - Design Through Innovation Finalist
- Blueprint Awards Finalist
- AJ Architecture Awards Finalist

“Everyone was so proud, so excited... we had all waited so long for this building. The Learning Centre’s prominent position made us feel like we were shouting out that the RHS is doing education! We love it.” Jill Baker, Education and Learning Manager, RHS Garden Hyde Hall



Above: Hilltop Lodge (left) and Clore Learning Centre (right)



Above: Clore Learning Centre

Imagine a place that could inspire a nation to garden and grow.

On the Hilltop overlooking the rolling Essex landscape and expansive grounds of RHS Hyde Hall, a major transformation has taken root. What was once a working farmstead for the site is now a hub for enjoying and learning about horticulture. The site owner and stewards of this journey are the Royal Horticultural Society, whose long-term objective is to be the world’s leading gardening charity by inspiring passion and excellence in the science, art and practice of horticulture and to offer the best visitor experience.

Making buildings and places that support getting us all involved in gardening is key to enabling the RHS’s objective. The garden at Hyde Hall has been steadily evolving over 20 years but was lacking key facilities, namely a dedicated education facility, a multipurpose event space and a restaurant to nourish visitors after their exploration of the extensive gardens. Cullinan Studio have designed new Hilltop buildings to house these essential components of the visitor experience. They comprise the Clore Learning Centre, funded by Clore Duffield Foundation; and the Hilltop Lodge, home to a new award-winning field to fork restaurant and new activity barn.

The Hilltop hub has become a home for a thriving horticultural community and has garnered a coveted 2020 Civic Trust Award, with the judges noting: *“This is a delightful scheme, with a strong original concept that has been carried through into the detailing and construction, providing fantastic spaces to be used by the public and local community.”*

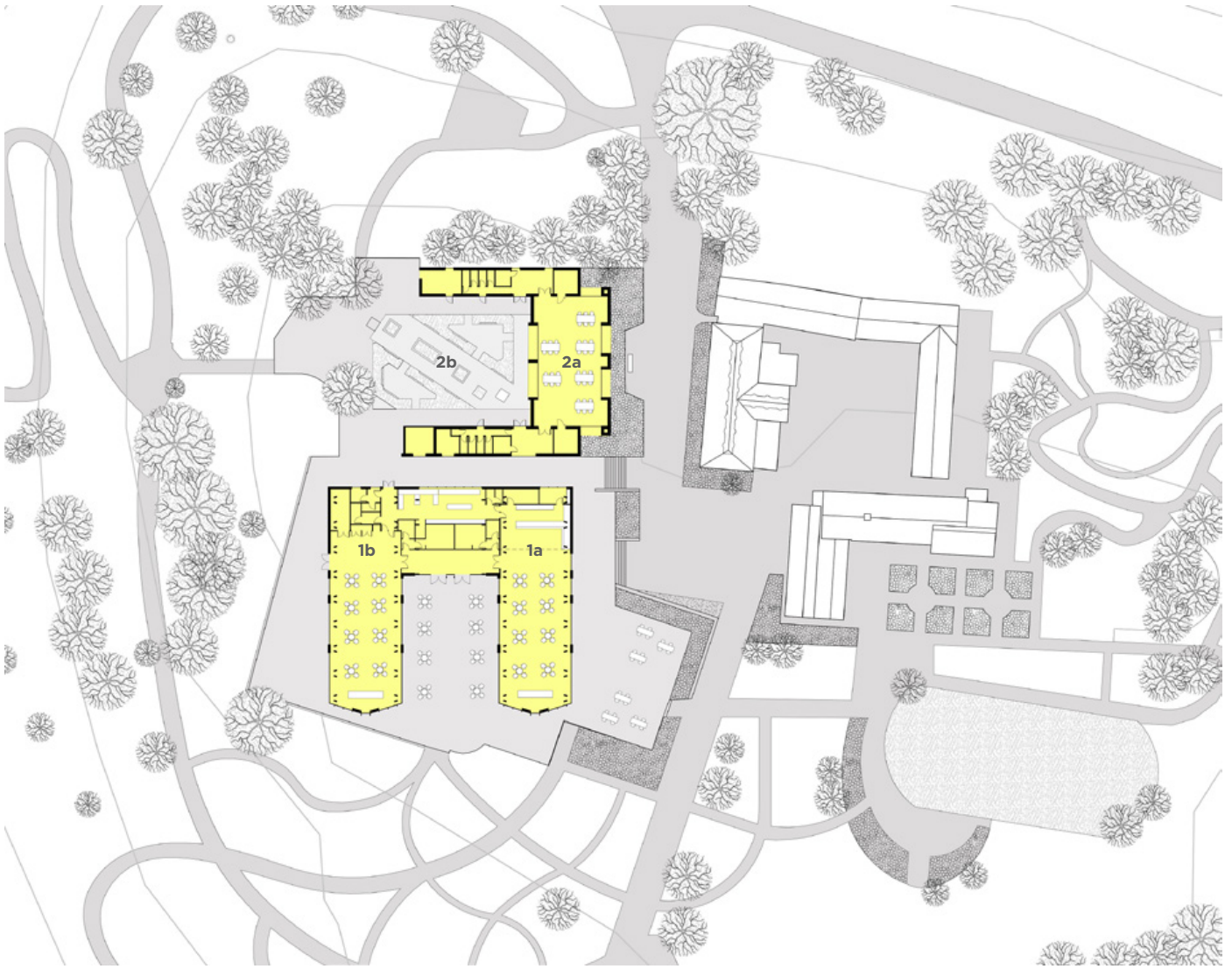
The Hilltop project is part of recent architectural investments made by RHS to improve education facilities and the visitor experience across all of its five gardens. The Learning Centre completes the RHS’s nationwide purpose-built education spaces, equipping Hyde Hall with the facilities to drive forward the RHS Campaign for School Gardening; inspiring schools to provide children with gardening opportunities to enhance their skills and boost their development, improving physical and mental well-being. Jill Baker, Education Manager at Hyde Hall, was instrumental in defining the brief for the Learning Centre to ensure it supported the versatility of RHS education programmes serving all ages and abilities.

Integrating architecture with the garden was paramount. Award winning landscape designer, Adam Frost, collaborated with Cullinans on the wider masterplan and the new gardens surrounding the Hilltop Buildings. Head of Site Ian le Gros and Curator Robert Brett guided the overall vision to ensure new interventions supported the long-term ambitions for Hyde Hall.



Above: Hilltop Lodge restaurant





Above: Ground floor plan of the Hilltop Lodge Restaurant (1a) and Activities Barn (1b), Clore Learning Centre (2a) and Clore Learning Garden (2b).



Above: Clore Learning Centre



Above: Hilltop Lodge

