

Temperate House and Restaurant,
Royal Leamington Spa
Completion Date 2002
Contract Value £1.2m
Client Warwick District Council

Located in Royal Leamington Spa, the new Temperate House and Restaurant was part of a major regeneration scheme for the listed Jephson Gardens, a Victorian Park in the centre of this historic Spa Town. Providing a temperate climate for myriad plant types, the 'glass house' is sandwiched between a two-storey exhibition foyer and a 120-seat restaurant.

The Client's brief was for a temperate house, teaching facilities and restaurant, which would form a key element of the major park refurbishment undertaken by Warwick District Council, assisted by monies from the Heritage Lottery Fund. On a site previously occupied by derelict potting sheds, the new building provides a focus for the Gardens and an extension to the public amenities in the centre of the town.

The riverside building, which hovers over the River Leam and offers panoramic views across the gardens, is constructed of structural glass fixed to a light steel frame. The entrance and teaching facilities are located alongside the main avenue in the park and the plan exploits the gentle slope in the site to allow visitors to wander down a series of ramps and through the glasshouse, before arriving in the restaurant overlooking the river.

The brief required that the restaurant be designed to be capable of independent operation, being franchised to external operators who may wish to remain open in the evening when the gardens would be shut. A separate entrance from the east is provided for out-of-hours access. The teaching facilities, operated by Warwickshire College are used for horticultural courses.

A key challenge was the technical realisation of the light structure, 'floating' over the plant exhibits whilst providing sufficient environmental control to accommodate the plant specimens within. This was achieved with structural glazing supported from a steel frame of gull wing spines spanning the width of the building.

Carefully engineered with specialist engineers, each glazed gull wing is connected with a zone of openable clerestorey glazing that automatically opens to naturally ventilate the space, but which also ensures that each wing is read as an individual form. The central glasshouse is supported by a reinforced concrete base structure with rises at either end to form the teaching block and the cantilevered restaurant which projects out of the bank as the land dips down to the river.



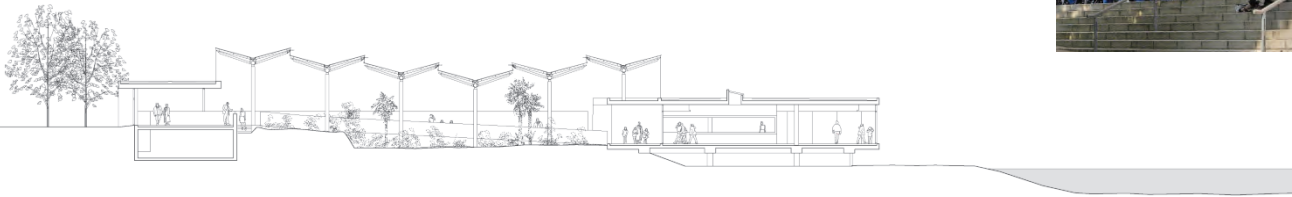
01 Exterior of Temperate House
02 Glass house interior
03 Within Jephson Gardens



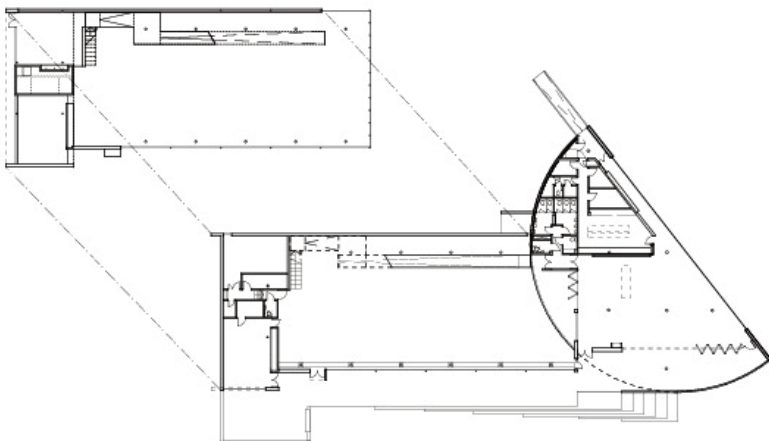
The Planning Authority were supportive of the scheme as the key element in the refurbishment of the Gardens. The prime riverside location provided its own challenges as, following the floods of 1998, the Environment Agency imposed strict guidelines on floor levels and flood profiles along the riverbank. The projecting restaurant with its 'flood undercroft' is a result of accommodating these constraints.

The scheme was awarded a Civic Trust Commendation in 2005.

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- 01 Restaurant terrace
- 02 Glass house exterior
- 03 Longitudinal section
- 04 Floor plan
- 05 View from across lake