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Planning Services
East Devon District Council
Council Offices
Knowle
Sidmouth
EX10 8HL

Your reference 16/0872/MFUL
Our reference E16/0170

7 June 2016

Dear Sirs

The construction of an assisted living community for older people comprising extra care units, staff accommodation and communal facilities, including a kitchen, restaurant/bar/cafe, a well-being suite comprising gym, treatment rooms and pool, a communal lounge and storage facilities; car parking for residents, visitors and staff of the assisted living community; comprehensive landscaping comprising communal and private spaces; and associated groundworks. Council Offices, Knowle, Sidmouth EX10 8HL.

Thank you for consulting The Gardens Trust on the above application which affects The Knowle, an historic designed landscape included by the Devon Gardens Trust on the Devon Gazetteer of Parks and Gardens of Local Historic Interest.

The Knowle was one of the most famous houses in Sidmouth in the nineteenth century but later rebuilding has left few of the early features. Part of the fine parkland grounds remain as a public park, although diminished to some extent by the council car parks which are an intrusion into the parkland; the offices of East Devon District Council are rather nondescript. The parkland of The Knowle forms part of the attractive approach to Sidmouth, providing an important contribution to the overall historic character and landscape of the town.

We have studied the application documents on your web site and have visited the site on many occasions. In our letter of 5 November 2012 regarding application 16/0872/MFUL, we stated that The Devon Gardens Trust would not have any objection to the principle of redevelopment on the footprint of the existing Council offices but that we consider it would not be acceptable, in terms of the historic designed landscape, to build on any of the existing parkland.

It would appear that the proposed development by Pegasus would not intrude into the parkland. The applicant states that *EDDC are currently engaged in discussions to transfer ownership of 3.5ha of land (which is presumably the parkland) at the Knowle to Sidmouth Town Council*. We would welcome this as it would ensure the long term future of the parkland.

The Heritage and Archeology Statement and the Design and Access Statement are very comprehensive documents. We note that the proposed development has been designed by an award winning architect and promises to be an interesting scheme, whilst not being to everyone's taste, it will certainly be a vast improvement on the existing Council offices.

We trust that these comments are helpful.

Yours faithfully
John Clark
Conservation Officer