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Plymouth City Council  
Development Management  
Planning Services  
Department of Development  
Civic Centre  
Plymouth  
FAO Rebecca Boyde

Your ref: 15/02230/FUL 15/02229/FUL & 15/02232/LBC  
Our ref E15/1138 & E15/1139

7 January 2016

Dear Sirs

**Change of use of former convent, dairy & chapel to single residential.  
Creation of 4NO new dwellings and creation of access off George Lane  
Conversion and part demolition of east wing to 4NO dwellings and  
construction of 2NO dwellings. Plympton House (formerly St Peters  
Convent), George Lane, Plympton St Maurice, Plymouth PL7 2LL**

Thank you for consulting the The Gardens Trust on the above applications which affect Plympton House, an historic designed landscapes of National significance which is included by Historic England on the *Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest* at Grade II.

The Gardens Trust, formerly The Garden History Society, is the Statutory Consultee on development affecting all sites on the Historic England *Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest*. The Devon Gardens Trust is a member of The Gardens Trust and responds to consultations in the County of Devon to ensure that your Council receives authoritative specialist advice on planning applications affecting historic parks and gardens and their setting.

We visited Plympton House on May 2012 at the invitation of the owners of St Peters Convent, and again in December 2015 in relation to the current applications. We have viewed the Historic England Register map and entry, and the planning application documents on your web site. We would ask you consider the following comments:

We are concerned that the developer is proposing to subdivide Plympton House into 14 different ownerships. Experience has shown that divided ownership is one of the major threats to safeguarding the future of historic designed landscapes because separate management tends to detrimentally affect their character and appearance. If the proposed development takes place it would no longer be possible to fully appreciate the C18 historic designed landscape of Plympton House with its gardens, pleasure grounds, mount garden and kitchen garden. We would suggest that it is essential that a Management Company is formed with clearly stated objectives to manage the site as a whole in accordance with a Conservation Management Plan.

We consider that there is insufficient detailed information to fully assess the impact of the proposals. For example, the proposed conservatory in the mount garden would appear to be an acceptable design but further and more detailed drawings are needed in order to be satisfied that this would be the case.

The Heritage Statement is a very comprehensive and informative document; the extract from Gardner's map of 1784 is particularly helpful. Mention has been made of reinstating the avenue to the North and the formal garden to the South of Plympton House to its C18 design but actual documentation of these suggestions as firm proposals has not been found on your website. Might we suggest that the conservation gains and mitigation proposals are clearly set out in a schedule attached to the planning application.

The Trust has no objection, in principle, to the conversion of the former chapel and dairy into dwellings and the proposed houses on the car park because development in this 'service area' would cause little harm to the significance of the heritage asset.

Similarly we have no objection to the conversion of the Grade I listed Plympton House into a single dwelling, the demolition of part of the east wing and the conversion of the remainder of the 1980s extension into 4 terrace houses.

We are informed that pre-application discussions have resulted in the integrity of the mount garden and the kitchen gardens remaining intact as part of the curtilage of the former dairy (unit 2). However, this does not preclude any future planning applications for development within the curtilage of unit 2 and so would suggest that this issue should be addressed within the Section 106 Agreement.

We do have strong reservations about the proposed two new houses (units 9 & 10) to the North of the 1980s extension and the proposed two detached dwellings (units 5 & 6) with access off George Lane. Not only are we concerned about the design of these dwellings, but also with the precedent which would be might be set for further development which would affect the integrity of the designed landscape of Plympton House *and its setting*.

In 2012, the Trust was invited, together with representatives of Plymouth City Development and English Heritage to a site meeting at Plympton House to discuss a proposal by the Convent for residential development on an adjoining field in their ownership. The field is not within the boundary of the Registered site, but is immediately to the east and contributes to the historic open green setting of Plympton House. We informed the Convent that The Garden History Society and the Devon Gardens Trust could not support any application for residential development, as it would have an adverse impact on the setting and historic significance of the Grade I listed building and its Grade II Registered landscape.

At the time we also advised that, if the Convent did not have a Conservation Management Plan, then at the very least, the issue of tree maintenance and possible replanting was an issue that needed to be addressed in the near future. The trees at St Peter's Convent are a very important feature of the designed landscape and, as they are reaching maturity, it is important to consider how their inevitable demise and replacement is to be managed.

We have not seen a Conservation Management Plan amongst the documents on your web site. We would suggest that a Conservation Management Plan should form part of the planning application

Elements such as hard standings, garages, garden sheds, conservatories, garden enclosures and clothes drying areas can be extremely damaging in the historic landscape and we advise that any such subsidiary development should be identified as an integral part of the planning application prior to its determination. We suggest that any further subsidiary development should not be permitted as it would not preserve or enhance the historic designed landscape. We would advise that, in view of the sensitive nature of the site, it would be appropriate to impose a condition on the planning permission to remove all permitted development rights in order to control all subsidiary development in the future.



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In conclusion, The Trust has serious concerns about aspects of the two planning applications but, if your Authority is minded to approve the application, we would ask that the S106 Agreement requires the applicant to implement the conservation gains (which should be clearly set out in a schedule) linked to the stages of development within a specific timetable, that the landscape is maintained in perpetuity in accordance with a previously agreed Conservation Management Plan and good horticultural and arboricultural practice, and that the site is secured against future development in perpetuity, in order to prevent damage to the historic landscape in the future.

Yours faithfully  
John Clark  
Conservation Officer  
Devon Gardens Trust