



PROPOSED LISTING OF LARKBEARE HOUSE CASE No 1489043 EXETER CIVIC SOCIETY CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Exeter Civic Society supports the listing of Larkbeare House and grounds. Some aspects of the consultation report do not fully and accurately describe the house and grounds.

1. Larkbeare House is the last remaining substantial and significant nineteenth century house standing in its own walled garden in Exeter. Very few other houses of a similar size and style remain and none are complete within their own separate grounds as originally intended. The house and grounds are therefore unique.
2. The house, gardens with the gazebo and listed boundary wall, form a largely intact ensemble of a mid-nineteenth century suburban villa built in Elizabethan style of largely local materials, designed with views across the River Exe and canal towards the Haldon Hills and the Haldon Belvedere.
3. The house and grounds are much as they were originally envisaged and designed. The consultation report does not properly reflect this. It makes more of what has been lost in the grounds, which is a small part, rather than what remains, which is much larger and would have formed the main aesthetic impact for house and grounds together,
4. The consultation report does makes clear that the external architectural features of the house are substantially intact. Internally, the main rooms and adjoining halls and staircases are also intact with original features.
5. The house and grounds were created to a specific commission and therefore have a unique quality, particularly as the house was designed by a local architect. House and grounds were envisaged as a single entity with the grounds laid out by Veitch, noted garden designers, nurserymen and plant experts. Veitch nurseries and their owners were nationally important. The consultation report fails to draw this out but should do so.
6. Substantial aspects of the original layout of the grounds are intact. Walkways and steps survive. Although the planting has been lost, the platform for the formal garden to the south of the house remains. The consultation report should make this clear – a reference to the formal gardens being lost suggests that the area has completely gone, which is not the case. The house is still, properly sited within the context of its original grounds. The consultation report should note that some of the original tree planting

survives, rather than simply referring to 'mature trees'. Some also predate the house so would have been incorporated into the overall design.

7. The house is of the same period as the Grade II listed church across the lane. Although built by different architects they have a similarity of style and stonework. They form a harmonious grouping which the consultation report should acknowledge.
8. The house and grounds are in the Southernhay and the Friars conservation area. It is the only house of that size and quality in the conservation area. It is therefore important and integral to it and a factor to be taken into account under the general listing principles. The grounds are similarly unique in the conservation area. These points are not recorded in the consultation report but should be as it is clearly relevant to the house and its grounds. Listing the house and grounds would preserve that part of the conservation area and its unique architectural contribution to it, in line with the statutory criteria.
9. There is an eighteenth century gazebo in the garden, now sadly dilapidated but retaining some of its original fireplaces. The consultation report mentions a brick built folly was retained from the older house but then says no more about it. This is a significant omission. It appears on Hayman's 1805 map and the 1844 Tithe map, and contemporary accounts describe it as having been built in the Eighteenth Century. Its site is within the area that was originally part of the now-vanished Little Larkbeare, rather than the tenter ground or limekilns, which suggests that it was built either by the Barings or the Bowrings for their personal use. From the upper floor there would have been a view of the entry to the Exeter Canal just across the river, and further off, to the Haldon Belvedere (built 1788). While much less grand than the Haldon Belvedere, it may well have been inspired by the fashion for such structures popular at the time. Further down the river was the Powderham Belvedere, built in the 1770s. There is a compelling case that the gazebo features in John Gendall's (1790 – 1865) watercolour "Exeter and the Canal Basin" held in the Royal Albert Memorial Museum collection. A photograph of the gazebo as it now stands is below. A link to the Gendall painting (it is the hexagonal building) is here: [Exeter and the Canal Basin - Category:Images from Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery - Wikimedia Commons](#) There is a strong case for the gazebo to be listed in its own right or at least to be included as a subsidiary feature as the gate piers might be under the statutory criteria.
10. There is also a Victorian wash house and an icehouse which the consultation report fails to mention.
11. The consultation report should more properly reflect the fact that the original owner of the house, John Charles Bowring (1821-1890) is of national importance. He was a resident and merchant in China (one of the earliest – the report simply notes that he 'travelled there') and noted botanist and entomologist, many species having been named after him; he gave his extensive collection to the British Museum. He cultivated and hybridised orchids, and was a regular customer of Veitch. He also brought back orchids from Ceylon, giving Royal Botanic Gardens Kew four or five species not in

their collection, being a regular correspondent with Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker, the first director of Kew.

12. The river wall of Larkbeare House is listed but this is not mentioned in the report although relevant to the grounds. It would be perverse not to list the house as well given its position and importance to the area.
13. The house and grounds are being sold, most likely for development. If there is development, housing will encroach on the grounds and the house may well be demolished or subject to major alteration. If this were to be the case a significant part of Exeter's architectural heritage from the Victorian era would be lost. So too would an important aspect of the views to the city from south of the river.

Exeter Civic Society

15 March 2024



LARKBEARE GAZEBO