

The Old Boathouse Mill Lane Taplow Buckinghamshire SL6 0AA Ref. No: PL/19/0027/FA

The Hitcham and Taplow Society wishes to withdraw its letter of objection to this application and replace with the following.

We note that, in addition to some more technical objections, there are concerns from the Conservation Officer and Historic England.

The reality of the situation is that SBDC were powerless to prevent the re-designation of this site to residential and the associated proposal to create 18 tiny dwellings in the existing buildings. Criticisms of this latest application must be seen in that context. The emphasis must be to ensure improvements against that existing outline permission.

Much as we, as a civic society, are in favour of preserving the best of our local heritage, we think that neither Driftwood Cottage nor the Studio has the architectural or historic merit to justify refusing this application. In 2015, SBDC approved the replication of Dunloe Lodge – originally built in 1896 as Millstream, a ‘gentleman’s residence’ – as a family home. Its recently revised approval to build Dunloe Lodge as an enlarged pastiche accommodating nine flats indicates that SBDC is willing not only to compromise on historic reference but also to remove any residual visual link between it and Driftwood Cottage, its former lodge.

The Old Boathouse itself has significantly more merit and our own first reaction was that it should be preserved. However, we doubt strongly that this wooden shed – built over 120 years ago to house boats, converted in the late-1940s to build speedboats and again in the 1980s as offices – is structurally capable of yet another conversion to a durable residence of high quality. Further, we feel its retention will compromise the rescue of the overall site, making it very unattractive to any developer, given the existing permissions and zoning. We consider the current application to be a significant improvement over the previously withdrawn plan from egg Homes, particularly in terms of housing density, which has already grown across the Mill Lane site since the 2013 Supplementary Planning Document guidance and the approvals given since to Berkeley Homes.

That is why we wish to withdraw our earlier letter.

The Conservation Officer has concerns over the height of the buildings but SBDC has approved the adjacent Dunloe Lodge as a heightened three floors and appears likely to approve some version of the public house to the south, again of two storeys and with a roofline in keeping with this application. Further, the Conservation Officer appears not to recognise that the proposed window design echoes that of the Old Boathouse.

The retention and future management of the associated moorings is clearly of concern but the whole of this site is private property, with no existing rights of public access.

Notwithstanding our comments, there remains a duty upon SBDC to ensure the continuation of river-related business by virtue of its planning control over this and its adjacent sites and its ownership of another by Maidenhead Bridge. We would prioritise a viable and vibrant future for our riverbank over the preservation of outdated elements of its past.

Roger Worthington, Secretary Hitcham and Taplow Society