Hewitt&CarrArchitects

Heritage Statement

Boat House Cottage, Reacliffe Road, Rudyard ST13 8RS

Mr P Dudley

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1.0 HERITAGE STATEMENT
Introduction

1.1. This Heritage Statement has been prepared in support of an application for the extension and alteration of a former boathouse on the shore of Rudyard Lake.

1.2. Boathouse Cottage is situated on the western shoreline of the lake, surrounded by woodland, and accessed via Reacliffe Road.

1.3. Rudyard has recently been designated a Conservation Area, (as part of the Churnet Valley Masterplan), following a comprehensive review conducted under section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, and following guidelines from Historic England. The Rudyard Lake frontage is currently under an Article 4 Direction, removing all permitted development rights, as a result of the "piecemeal development of domestic paraphernalia" (Mel Morris Conservation).

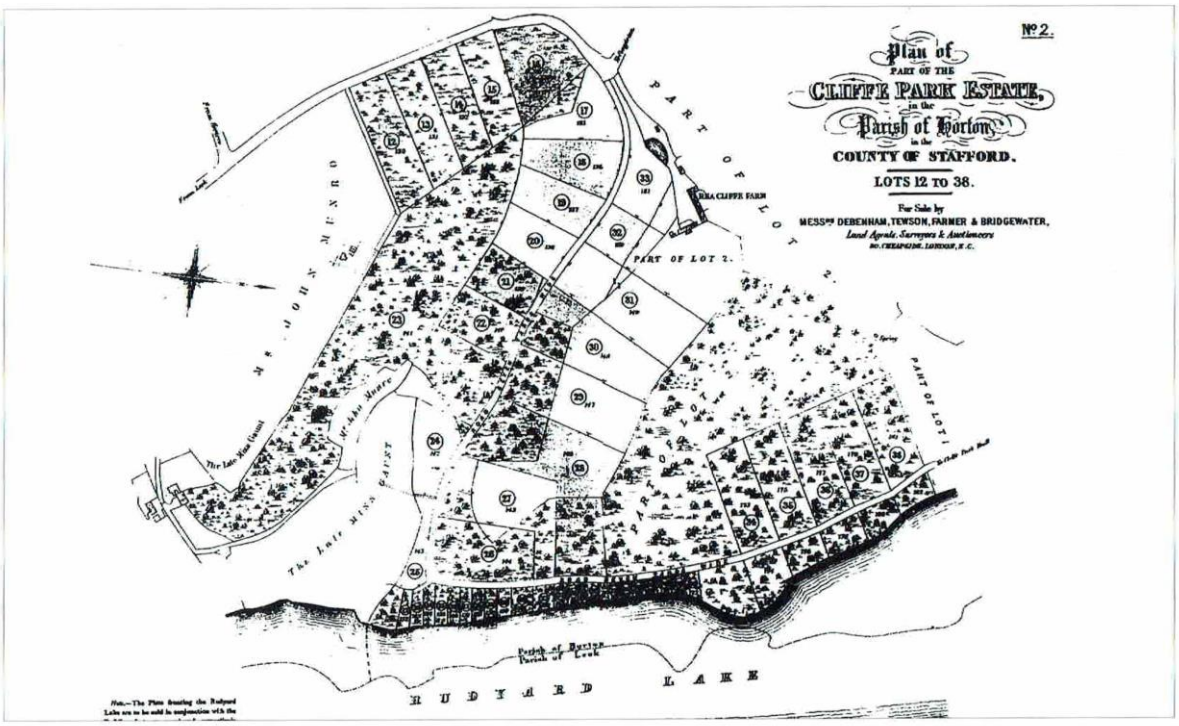
1.4. The review process involved a conservation appraisal, undertaken by Mel Morris Conservation, in consultation with Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, local residents, and a number of stakeholders. The appraisal document was issued in July 2016, within which the boathouse is designated a 'Positive Building/Structure,' being unlisted but vulnerable to change (Mel Morris Conservation).

2.0 HERITAGE STATEMENT
Description of the Asset

2.1. Rudyard is a small lakeside village situated to the west of Leek and close to the Staffordshire-Cheshire border. The 3km long reservoir at its centre was constructed at the turn of the 19th century, as a method of feeding the growing canal network.

2.2. The development of the Cliffe Park Estate between 1818 and 1930, together with the opening of the Churnet Valley Railway in 1849, saw the village expand and the lake became a popular weekend destination for day trippers travelling on excursion trains from Manchester and Stoke.

2.3. The Cliffe Park Estate was sold in 1875, and a number of plots of land were auctioned off in 1885, before the remainder was purchased by the North Staffordshire Railway Company in 1903. This encouraged the lake to reach the height of its popularity during the Edwardian era, as visitors could hire out motor launches or rowing boats, visit the newly laid golf course or dine at one of many local tearooms that benefitted from the increased tourism.



Extract from the auction catalogue of 13 August 1885, showing the sub-divisions of the Cliffe Park Estate into building plots for villa residences, for weekend chalets and for boathouses. The breaking up of the estate in this manner determined the pattern of land ownership and usage down to the present day.
Christine Chester collection

1 Cliffe Park Estate Auction 1885

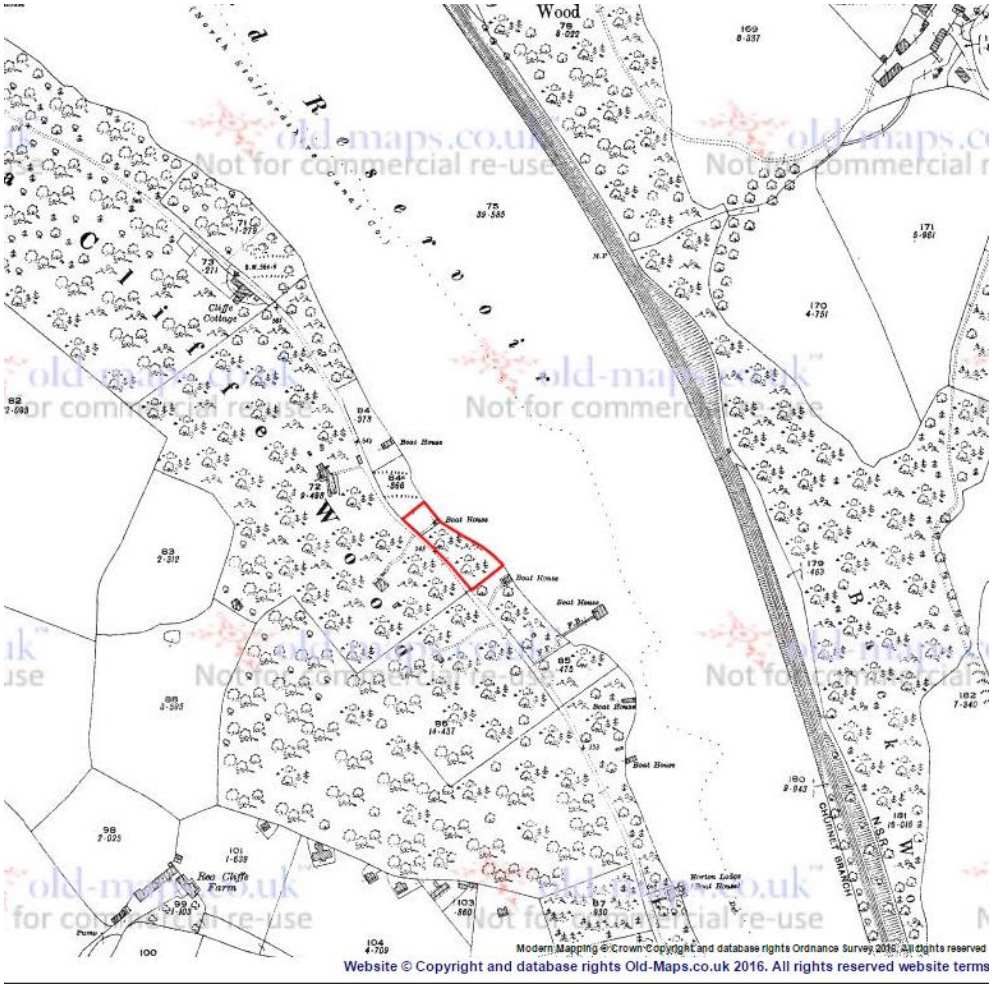
2.4. Sadly, Rudyard suffered in the latter part of the 20th century, but has undergone somewhat of a resurgence in recent years, owing to the creation of new recreational buildings overseen by the Rudyard Lake Trust. It is primarily used for boating and watersports, but also benefits from picturesque lakeside and woodland walks, a miniature railway, and numerous holiday homes.

2.5. The village itself is characterised primarily by late Victorian and Edwardian architecture, including a number of gritstone cottages, large villas and holiday chalets, all set within a splendid woodland landscape. In addition, "picturesque groupings of traditional and modern boathouses and chalets punctuate the lakeside." (Mel Morris Conservation)

2.6. The boathouses represent a style of architecture all of their own. They were principally established following the 1885 auction of Cliffe Park estate, when small parcels of land were sold off and the small unique structures built by private owners as boat storage/holiday homes. A covenant existed under the sale, which restricted development to discourage permanent homes on the lakeside.

2.7. The most notable boathouses are The Earl of Macclesfield's boathouse (the oldest, built in the 1850s), the uniquely jettied Lady of the Lake, Lower Horton Lodge (c. 1891), and the former Trent & Mersey Canal Boathouse, now the Visitor

Centre. These are large structures, primarily gritstone, with characteristic gated wet moorings beneath the accommodation above.

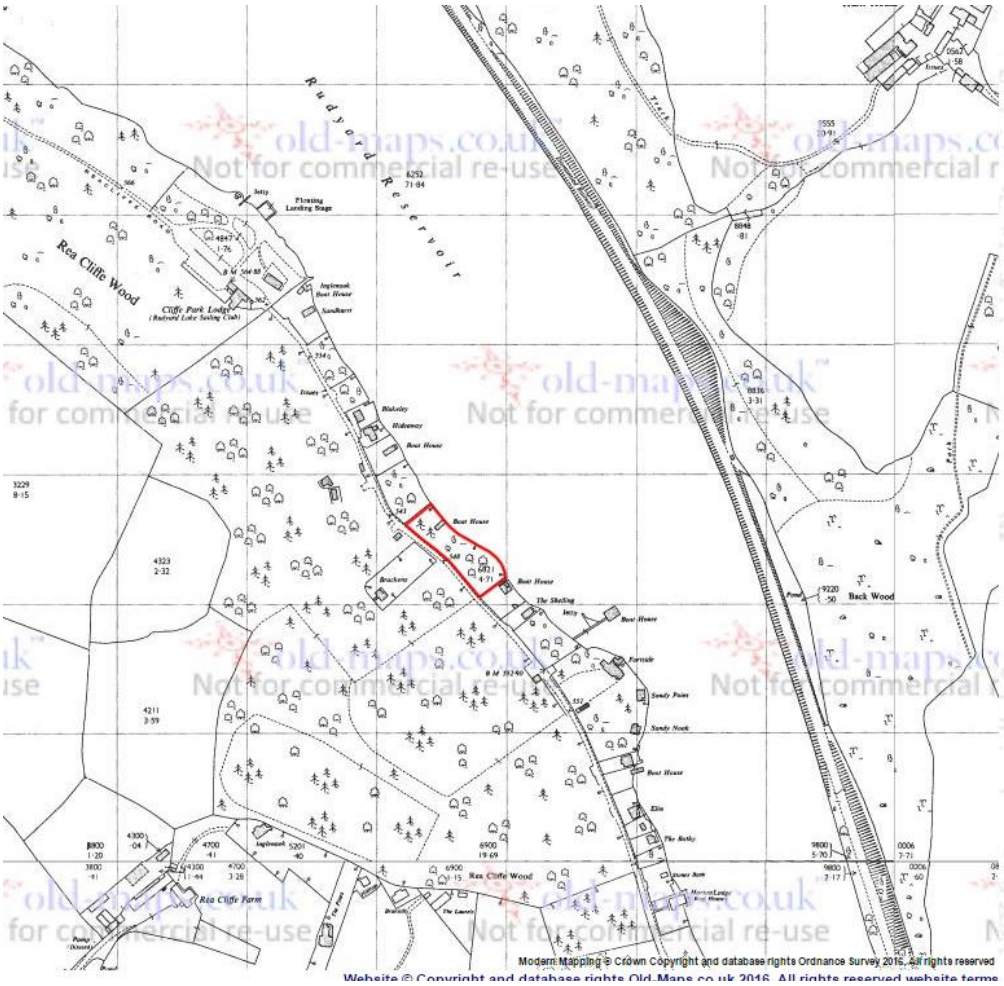


2 **Historic OS Map 1925**

2.8. Boathouse Cottage is, by comparison, a very small structure. Sitting within a substantial plot and surrounded by mature trees, the building is a modest size and simple rectangular footprint, timber-clad, with gabled tile roof, decorative bargeboards and gritstone base. Boat access is/was via a disused slipway.

2.9. The boathouse first appears on the 1899 OS map, though in what looks to be a considerably smaller footprint. It's likely that whatever structure existed here was subsequently extended or rebuilt. Formerly known as 'The Brackens Boathouse,' the conservation appraisal dates the structure at 1905, and the building is certainly visible by the 1925 map, one of two situated just to the North of the Lady of the Lake – "The Brackens and Bilton boathouses…were built c1900 and a succession of little boathouses have been constructed ever since, with distinctive and clashing architecture." (Jeuda, 2001)

2.10. In the early part of the 20th century, there was a large increase in the number of boathouses and chalets appearing along the western edge of the lake, and by the 1960s/70s, there were no less than 27. By the early 2000s, a number of planning applications had been submitted and approved for the demolition or extension of some of these buildings to create large dwellings or holiday homes, such as Hideaway and Sandy Cove.



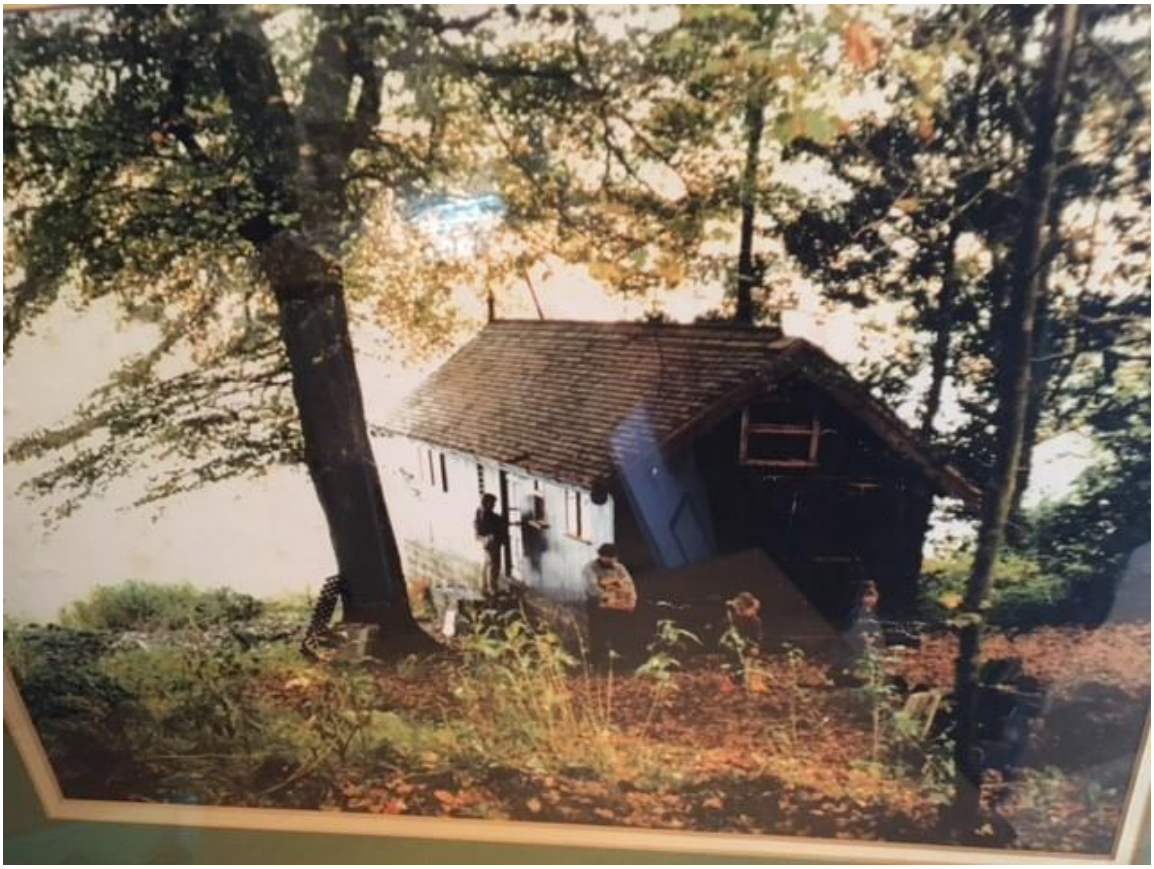
3 **Historic OS Map 1970**

2.11. In contrast, Boathouse Cottage has remained very modest in size, but has undergone a series of changes throughout the course of its life.

2.12. It's believed that the original form of the building was as a full-height boathouse, with no intermediate floor. Originally, boats would have been lowered into the water via rails supported on stone pillars (that are still visible today). Doors (purportedly glazed with stained glass at one point), used to span the opening from the old floor level to the full height of the building.

2.13. There is no clear photographic record of how the boathouse looked originally, though an early 1980s photograph shows it vertically boarded and painted green. It was modified in 1985 to provide living accommodation, by removal of

the rails and insertion of a new timber floor above the boat store. A kitchenette, bathroom, and septic tank were also added.



4 **Photograph c. early 1980s showing vertical boarding and green colour**

2.14. The external appearance was modified further in 2003, when the 'Rosemary red' roof tiles were replaced with Staffordshire blue. The cladding was 'overboarded' with horizontal timbers, and painted a deep brown, along with an addition of the large timber balcony, giving it its current appearance.

2.15. The boathouse has operated as a permanent dwelling since 1996, and in 2011 this use was deemed lawful via a Lawful Development Certificate.

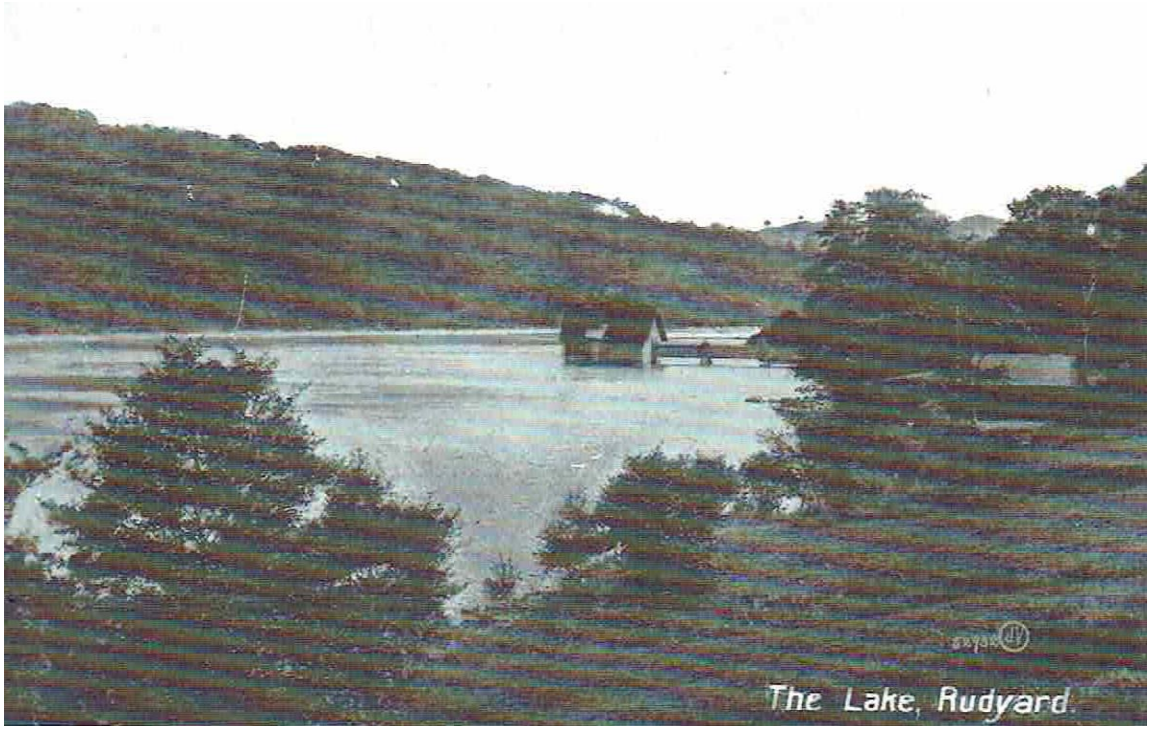


5 **Boathouse Cottage as it appears today**

3.0 HERITAGE STATEMENT
Assessment of its Significance

3.1. In order to assess the significance of the boathouse within its setting, this document adopts the methods outlined in Historic England's publication "*Conservation Principles, Policies & Guidance*." The guidance describes four heritage values that may contribute to the significance of a place: Evidential, Historical, Aesthetic and Communal.

3.2. *Evidential Value* is described as "the potential of a place to yield evidence of past activity." For example, archaeological deposits may provide clues in place of any written record. Boathouse Cottage, it may be argued, contributes some value in that the size, form and materials of the structure have changed relatively little in its 116-year lifespan. However, evidential value is proportional to the amount of material evidence that has since been lost or altered, and in this respect the building contains less value due to significant modifications, such as the addition of the intermediate floor and balcony, the replacement of much of the historic fabric such as the tiles and boarding, and the removal of the 'slipway.'



6 **The Brackens Boathouse (foreground), with the Lady of the Lake c.1905**

3.3. There are, however, very few original boathouses left along the lakeside, as many have been demolished to make way for larger premises, or extended and altered beyond recognition. Boathouse Cottage, therefore, still retains some evidential value as one of the oldest intact boathouses, and characterises the change between the early stone built structures, such as The Lady of the Lake, and the later, often smaller, timber clad buildings.

3.4. *Historical Value* derives from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present. The continued survival of the boathouse contributes a significant amount of historical value as part of the conservation area, and along the lake frontage in particular. This is a key indicator of the lake's history as a leisure destination during the early 20th century, and particularly during the Edwardian period.

3.5. The boathouse also has strong links to the chalet located to the opposite side of Reacliffe Road. Named 'The Brackens,' the conservation appraisal describes this as a purpose built Swiss chalet, built in black and white Arts and Crafts style. It's likely the house and boathouse were owned and used by the same family, hence its original lack of accommodation above - this wouldn't have been necessary with the house in such close proximity. The survival of the two together adds more weight to the boathouse's value as a heritage asset.



7 **The Boathouse 2016**

3.6. *Aesthetic Value* derives from the way in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place. This may be the result of conscious design, or fortuitous evolution. In the case of Boathouse Cottage, the value sits more

within the latter. The architecture along the lake front is distinctly eclectic and has evolved naturally over time. Each boathouse is unique in its design, but all retain an element of aesthetic merit, both independently and as a whole.

3.7. Architecturally, the boathouse is not particularly finely detailed or representative of any local vernacular (beyond that of its original purpose). This is reflected in its very humble exterior – the only decoration being the pierced bargeboards and pinnacle to the tiled roof. Internally, the most notable features are the timber trusses which span the width of the single room below. It's likely that many features have been altered or added to over time.

3.8. *Communal Value* is about the meaning of a place for the people who relate to it. For the boathouse, being a private dwelling, communal value is somewhat limited. However, its location on the lake may contribute in some way to the value of the lake as a whole, and its meaning to both residents of, and visitors to, Rudyard. Its modest size and appearance may be somewhat lost amongst the woodland, and its neighbours such as the Lady of the Lake and Red Roofs, but that is not to say that this detracts in any way from its significance.

4.0 HERITAGE STATEMENT
The Design Concept

4.1. The application proposes the addition of a single storey extension to the existing cottage from its southwest elevation, along with a single storey extension to its southeastern elevation to replace an existing timber storage shed that currently occupies the site.

4.2. Pre-application discussions took place as part of the design process, and several amendments were made to the original scheme as a result of comments from both the planning and conservation officers.

4.3. The previously application (SMD/2016/07963) was submitted in December 2016, for which there was no objection on conservation grounds. However, the scheme was considerably reduced in size following feedback from the arboricultural and planning officers. This involved the loss of a second bedroom and the narrowing of the principal elevation to the extension. This scheme was subsequently approved in June 2017.

4.4. The current application seeks to enlarge the scheme once again, whilst remaining within the guidelines set by green belt planning policy. The proposed scheme reinstates the small second bedroom, but is still considerably smaller than the originally submitted proposals, with a narrower lakeside elevation.

4.5. The proposed extensions reflect the design of the original boathouse, but in a modern, yet subservient fashion. The timber structure sits atop a gritstone base, as with the existing boathouse, and the use of timber boarding throughout ensures the scheme continues to blend into the surrounding woodland.

4.6. The small extension to the southwest elevation, housing the kitchen, is separated from the existing boathouse via a small glazed link, which serves to limit the impact of the extension on the original structure. The width, and therefore ridge height, has been reduced, so as to appear secondary.

4.7. The larger extension, to the southeast elevation, has been carefully considered in terms of its most visible aspect i.e. from the lake. The existing boathouse remains unchanged from this approach, while the extension has been treated in a more modern aesthetic, with larger expanses of glazing. This helps to separate the two structures in terms of what is new, and what is original. Furthermore, the lack of any additional derivative decoration, such as the pierced bargeboards, adds to this.

4.8. The setting back of the extension from the lakeside elevation goes further towards helping the new structures to appear subservient, and the original dominant.

4.9. A single new opening to the northwest elevation is proposed, to allow further light into the central living space. New timber windows are also planned, with the sills of the existing windows on this elevation lowered, in order to ratify the new with the old.

4.10. The foundations to the new structure have been carefully designed so as to limit the impact on the surrounding trees, which are subject to Tree Protection Orders. Details of these are submitted alongside this application, along with an Arboricultural Impact Assessment.



8 **The Proposed Scheme**

5.0 HERITAGE STATEMENT
The Impact

5.1. The aim of this report is to assess the impact of any proposals on the significance of the heritage asset in question. To this end, the history of the boathouse and its setting i.e. the conservation area; has been thoroughly researched and discussed earlier within this document, together with an assessment of its significance, as outlined under the values put forward by Historic England.

5.2. The revised scheme, being smaller than that originally submitted and identical in appearance, means the following impact assessment still applies. The original (larger) submission received no objections from the conservation officer.

5.3. Rudyard has been recently designated a conservation area, and permitted development rights along the lake frontage removed under Article 4. This is a result of the increase in "piecemeal" infill development described by the conservation appraisal, and in the planning statement that accompanies this application.

5.4. Several large extensions or new build residences (in place of much smaller boathouses), have been permitted along the lakeside in the last 20 years. The conservation appraisal states that this has resulted in a haphazard appearance that lacks any cohesive design or character.

5.5. It may be argued that the most significant values still applicable to the boathouse are aesthetic and historical. Evidentially, the boathouse has undergone many alterations throughout its lifetime, and its original appearance is mostly undocumented and subject to speculation or hearsay. What remains of its evidential value should continue to be protected, as the design aims to create an obvious distinction between the new and the old.

5.6. The addition of one further opening, and the re-sizing of the existing openings to the northwest elevation, should do little to harm this value. Some significance has already been eroded via past intervention, such as the addition of the floor and removal of the rails. However, this serves to demonstrate the progression of the boathouse over time, whilst the extension takes this one step further – adding a modern element but leaving the original structure as the dominant feature.

5.7. In terms of historical value, the addition of the extension should in no way detract from the significance of the boathouse as a key indicator of past activity i.e. the lake's popularity as a leisure destination during the Edwardian era, or its connection with The Brackens chalet. By creating additional living space, it allows the building to operate as a long-term dwelling and ensures its continued survival for years to come.

5.8. Aesthetically, the extension to Boathouse Cottage is relatively modest in size. Though it represents a 58% increase in the footprint, the visual impact on the

surrounding area and, what is arguably, the most important elevation (from the lake), will be limited due to the original structure's small volume, as well as the removal of the existing timber shed. The design is sympathetic to the character of the architecture along the lake frontage, as well as the boathouse itself, with the continued use of timber cladding painted in a dark grey to help blend with the surrounding woodland. There should be no loss of any historic detailing as a result of the proposals.

5.9. The extension will be barely visible on the approach from Reacliffe Road, as the elevated position of the road, and the heavily wooded surroundings, mean that the boathouse, and any additions to it, are relatively secluded.

5.10. In conclusion, it is felt that the proposals represent a well-proportioned development that is in keeping with the surrounding area and has less than substantial impact on both the conservation area and the heritage asset itself. The scheme does not result in any considerable harm to the significance of the building, as its value lies beyond its historic fabric, and may be apportioned to its unique location and character within the lake side frontage. The benefits of creating an enlarged living space, and modernising, yet retaining, the boathouse outweigh what little, if any, negative impact may occur as a result, and ensures the continued survival of this important part of Rudyard's history.