



## Coronation Boathouse, Bantham Quay - Grade II Listed Building



Charity No 263985

Registered Address: 20 Highfield Drive, Kingsbridge, Devon TQ7 1JR  
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**PLANNING REF: 2887/24/FUL**

**DESCRIPTION: Proposed conversion of first floor of boathouse into holiday let (revised scheme to 2605/22/FUL).**

**PLANNING REF: 2888/24/LBC**

**DESCRIPTION: Listed Building Consent for proposed conversion of first floor of boathouse into holiday let (revised scheme to 2605/22/FUL)**

**ADDRESS: Coronation Boathouse Bantham TQ7 3AP**

**LETTER OF OBJECTION FROM THE SOUTH HAMS SOCIETY**

**23<sup>rd</sup> October 2024**

### **The South Hams Society interest**

For the last 60 years, the South Hams Society has been stimulating public interest and care for the beauty, history and character of the South Hams. We encourage high standards of planning and architecture that respect the character of the area. We aim to secure the protection and improvement of the landscape, features of historic interest and public amenity and to promote the conservation of the South Hams as a living, working environment. We take the South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty very seriously and work hard to increase people's knowledge and appreciation of our precious environment. We support the right development - in the right places - and oppose inappropriate development.

The South Hams Society are objecting to this proposal for the conversion of first floor of Coronation boathouse into holiday let.

Coronation Boathouse was recently listed on the 13<sup>th</sup> August 2021. Historic England stated:

*'The retention of its modest character and fabric and features such as the wall niches in the walls is increasingly rare, **alterations to the buildings are minor in terms of historic fabric and largely comprise like-for-like repairs**'.*

The boathouse has a long history of being a community asset and it is obvious that the current estate owner wishes to remove that asset for commercial reasons.

The reasons for its listing in 2021 is significant.

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## **Summary**

*A large boathouse of 1937 built to mark the coronation of King George VI and a small adjacent stone store building formerly part of a pilchard fishing community on a small quay.*

## **Reasons for Designation**

*The Coronation Boathouse and adjacent store building at Bantham Quay are listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons:*

### *Architectural interest:*

*\* for the confident and striking design as a very substantial boathouse on a small Devon quay that presents a very distinctive character as a landmark feature at its riverside location; \* the boathouse is an unapologetically historicist design that touches on Elizabethan traditions as well as maritime themes, and yet also features modern flourishes, all under the auspices of celebrating the coronation of a new British monarch; \* for successfully uniting the local vernacular materials and building traditions with early C20 construction techniques, taking many cues for the modest adjacent fish cellar and another nearby listed boathouse, and using high quality craftsmanship; \* as a modest but well-built structure, the thatched stone store building is an evocative and well-preserved example of the buildings that once were commonplace across the coastal landing places of Devon and Cornwall but have been prone to loss and conversion to other uses. The retention of its modest character and fabric and features such as the wall niches in the walls is increasingly rare; \* alterations to the buildings are minor in terms of historic fabric and largely comprise like-for-like repairs.*

### *Historic interest:*

*\* the boathouse has the unusual claim to being a substantial building constructed to mark a Royal coronation, in this case of King George VI who ascended the throne in 1937, as embodied in the Royal insignia and wall plaque to the east gable end. It has strong cultural interest for its association with an important national event; \* the buildings illustrate important aspects of the nation's history as both are uncommon survivals regionally and nationally of structures that represent evolved maritime pursuits and traditions.*

### *Group value:*

*\* the buildings have a strong historic group value with each other, with the quay itself and with other buildings in the locality including a boathouse and inn (both listed at Grade II) as part of an evolved pilchard fishing community that was established in the C18 and has been carefully managed as part of a wider estate since the early C20.*

## **History**

*The village of Bantham and its quay stand on the River Avon estuary in Devon and the adjacent promontory of Bantham Ham (Scheduled Monument 1019322) has origins as a Neolithic settlement and served as a trading port from the Roman period. The boathouse on the quay was designed by (John-Baptiste) Sebastian Comper (1891-1979) for Lieutenant Commander Charles E Evans RNVR, the owner of the village of Bantham and its environs since 1922, to commemorate the coronation of King George VI in 1937.*

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Comper was a son of acclaimed Victorian church architect Sir (John) Ninian Comper (1864-1960) and his later designs included the Nurses' Chapel in Westminster Abbey (1950).

The boathouse was built by Pearn Bros. alongside a stone-walled, thatched building on the quay. This small structure was probably used by the fishing industry from the C18 or early C19 along with two other adjacent buildings that are shown on the Thurlestone Tithe Map of around 1842, and the Ordnance Survey Maps of 1887 and 1906, and on historic photographs. The quay and neighbouring buildings formed part of an active pilchard fishing community on the estuary of the River Avon that went into decline by the late C19. In 1937 the two other quay buildings were demolished to make way for the boathouse and the quay was reduced in width. Some of the stone from the demolished structures may have been used for the new boathouse, which was used for boat building and storage as well as social events. The building has been little altered since that time although the two ships figureheads to exterior corners facing the quay have been restored and reset. A painted board beside the figurehead to the north-east corner identifies it as being from a missionary ship bought and equipped by Lady Franklin in memory of her husband, Sir John Franklin, who died in 1847 during his voyage to discover the Northwest Passage. Some reconfiguration of the partitions to the first floor took place in the later C20. The adjacent stone building has had some repair and replacement and is used for boat storage in 2021. The bank behind the boathouse was subject to repair and strengthening in 2021 and there was a proposal for the conversion of the boathouse to a restaurant and café in that year.

## **Details**

A boathouse of 1937 built to commemorate the Coronation of King George VI to the design of J-B Sebastian Comper for Commander C E Evans; and an adjacent stone building of probable C18 date.

**MATERIALS:** constructed of brick with steel and timber floors and timber roof structure. The walls are faced in local rubble stone to the ground floor and render to the first floor. The hipped roof is thatched in reed and there are timber details and fixings including jetty mouldings and two painted ships' figureheads. The exterior staircase at the west end is of cast concrete. The window frames are metal with leaded panes and the cills are slate. The window lintels are timber planks laid on edge. The interior has a poured concrete ground floor with a boarded first floor loft.

**PLAN:** built on an east-west orientation it is of two storeys and largely an open rectangular plan with an external stair to the first floor of the west end.

**EXTERIOR:** the building is in a Tudor vernacular style with a jettied rendered first floor below an oversailing thatched roof and above a rubble stone ground floor. The moulded timber jetty is a prominent visual feature and there are timber dragon beams and braces to each quayside jetty corner with an attached painted ship's figurehead. The east gable end faces the approach from the village path and has a double central opening with sliding doors from a sloping stone slip. The opening has a cambered head of stone voussoirs and to the right is a stone plaque that reads: THIS BOATHOUSE WAS ERECTED BY/ LT COMDR CHARLES E EVANS RNVR/ AO DNI 1937 TO COMMEMORATE THE/ ACCESSION OF HIS MOST GRACIOUS/ MAJESTY KING GEORGE THE SIXTH./ JBS COMPER ARCHITECT PEARN BROS. BUILDERS. To the first floor is a four-light casement with timber hood mould extending to the eaves at each side. Above the mould is a timber niche with a gold painted Royal Crown and Lion, with 1937 inscribed below.

*The quayside front has two sets of tripartite casements to each side of central plank doors. To the corners at each end are painted ships' figureheads attached to a timber brace below the jetty dragon beam. The figurehead to the left has a small wooden plaque noting its history. There are five sets of casements to the first floor, alternately of three and two lights, breaking through the thatched eaves.*

*To the west end there is a door to the ground floor and a four-light casement and door to the first floor. The door is served by an external concrete stair with concrete balustrade to the right side. Behind the stair is a plank door to a cloakroom and cast-iron rainwater goods are fixed to the wall.*

*INTERIOR: sliding timber doors at the west end lead into the open plan ground floor (with small partitioned-off area at the west end). The first-floor structure has exposed beams secured by steel plates and machine sawn joists, and with some steel reinforcement above the ledged double-leaf plank doors to the north (quayside) wall. A timber ladder stair to the first floor is placed laterally against the centre of the back wall. The first floor has a partitioned workshop to the east end and a cloakroom and door to the exterior staircase to the west end. The west end is partially lofted but the roof structure, including six roof trusses with metal straps and bolts to the collars, is otherwise exposed. The window frames have metal fittings.*

*SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: the adjacent stone building is square on plan and has double braced and ledged doors to the east elevation and a casement to the north, overlooking the estuary. The hipped roof is thatched in reed and the roof structure is mostly constructed of unworked timbers although there are two machine sawn collars used to store boating materials above. The roof is partly supported on cob infill above the stone walls. In the lower section of the north and south walls are square voids possibly for former shelving or floors.*

*The buildings stand on a stone quay that was at least partly rebuilt in the 1930s.*

We have become aware that for the recent licensing application that the licensing committee were misled with the plan submitted.

The ground floor plan area is 7 metres wide (6 metres internally) x 19 metres (18 metres internally).

The committee were supplied a plan that stated the floor size to be 13 metres wide x 28 metres deep.

The plan as illustrated proposed that the width allocated to boat storage and wine storage would be the same with the result that the centre access would be 1 metre wide, so leaving a 3 metres width for boat activity and 3 metres for wine storage.

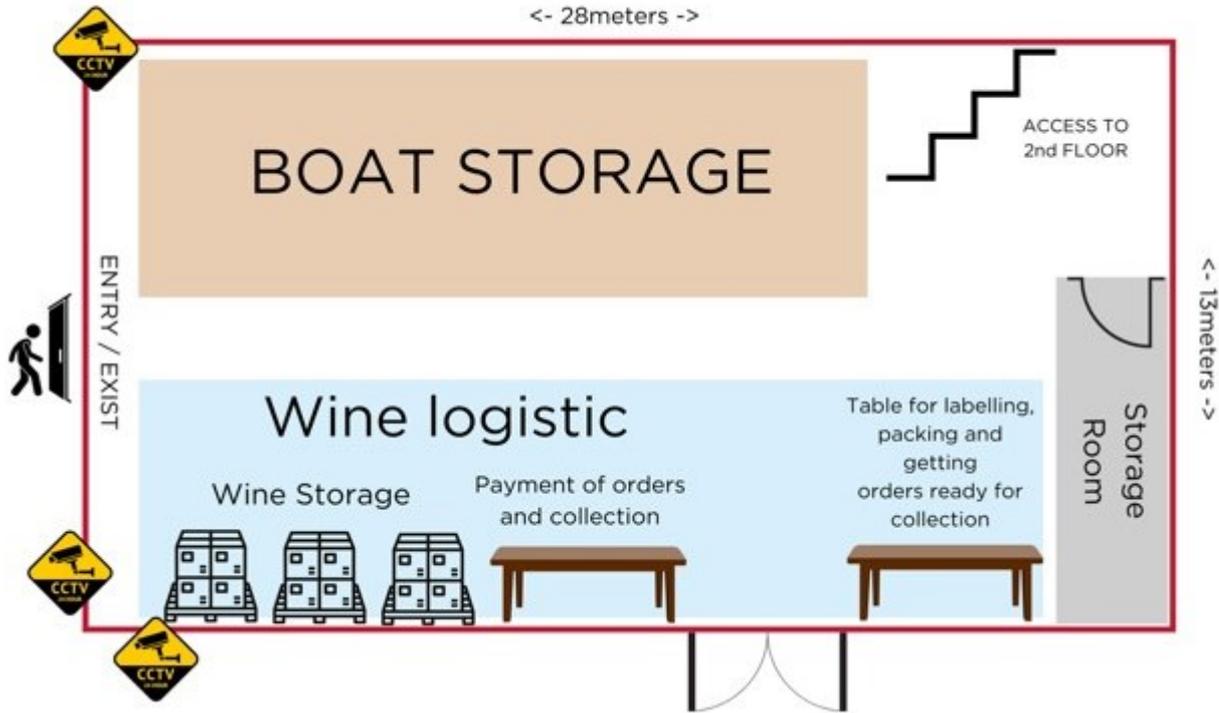
That the District Council should be misled in this way is disappointing.

Consequently the Case Officer should ascertain what the full proposal is for the boathouse as we are of the opinion that the area stated as boat storage is not fit for that purpose. It is noticeable that the east boat entrance is shown as being partially blocked by the wine logistic business.

It is fairly obvious that with the east entrance door centrally located boat access will be severely compromised by the wine logistics operation.

# Bantham Quay, Coronation Boathouse

<- 28meters ->



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It is also obvious that as an unique building constructed for the purpose of a boathouse, the conversion of the building to support domestic use will bring substantial changes to its fabric to comply with building regulations requirements.

The boathouse is in a far from an ideal location for living accommodation, facing north as it does and being hidden behind a high steep bank surrounded by water. The stone structure of the building receives almost no direct sunlight throughout the year which is limited to the thatched roof. In addition the necessary boxing in of the first floor to comply with fire protection regulations is likely to introduce damp related issues into the currently open boathouse structure. This would not be helped by the fact that the ground floor is prone to spring tide flooding.

It is apparent to the Society that the historical community (public) benefit is being lost.

## **NPPF**

### **16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment**

**203.** In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to **viable uses consistent with their conservation**;
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

**205.** When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

**206.** Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.

Substantial harm to or loss of:

- a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;
- b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II\* listed buildings, grade I and II\* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.

The buildings conservation status is as a boathouse which is being changed (largely) into non maritime uses.

The Society consider that the change from the historical maritime boathouse use to a holiday let will inevitably lead to harm to a building that can *'illustrate important aspects of the nation's history as both are uncommon survivals regionally and nationally of structures that represent evolved maritime pursuits and traditions'*.

The change of use to domestic at this location will require outside lighting for safety reasons, because of the requirement for access to the external first floor stairs along the quayside as well as a considerable increase of first floor internal lighting, along with other equipment like space heating and extraction ventilation facing the cliff side vegetation behind the building.

The Society have noted the proposed condition recommended by ecology: *'No external lighting shall be installed at any time at the application site without the written permission of the Local Planning Authority. Reason: In the interests of nocturnal biodiversity'*.

It is not obvious what the intention of the proposed condition is as it will be impossible prevent external lighting on safety grounds alone. It is inevitable that external lighting will be required and looking at the images in this letter, flood lighting is already installed. The local planning authority should consider the impacts of the introduction of domestic living along with the introduction of lighting both internally and externally on the recorded bat community of this location prior to approving the change of use of the building.

The Society are of the opinion that the proposed changes will harm the buildings conservation status as an open plan boathouse and should be refused

Richard Howell – Chair

For and on behalf of the South Hams Society.