

# DERWENT VALLEY MILLS WORLD HERITAGE SITE

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Clare Thornton  
Amber Valley Borough Council  
Town Hall  
Ripley  
Derbyshire DE5 3BT

30th November 2016

Dear Clare

**AVA/2016/1020: Residential development of 150 dwellings, and demolition of 153 Belper Lane and outbuildings at Whitehouse Farm, 153 Belper Lane, Hilltop, Belper.**

Please find below my response to the consultation concerning the above application. These comments will be taken to the World Heritage Site Conservation and Planning Panel for verification in January.

The site lies within the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site (DVMWHS) Buffer Zone boundary. The Derwent Valley Mills were inscribed on the World Heritage List by UNESCO in 2001. The Derwent Valley Mills Partnership, on behalf of HM Government, is pledged to conserve the unique and important cultural landscape of the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site; to protect its outstanding universal value (OUV), to interpret and promote its assets; and to enhance its character, appearance and economic well-being in a sustainable manner.

**The retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (SOUV) for the Derwent Valley Mills was adopted by the World Heritage Committee in 2010. The SOUV refers to the following UNESCO criteria, which the World Heritage Committee agreed were met at the time of inscription. They are:**

- C(ii) That the site exhibits “an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town planning or landscape design”;
- C(iv) That the site is “an outstanding example of a type of building or architectural or technological ensemble or landscape, which illustrates a significant stage in human history”.

**The SOUV records that these criteria were met for the following reasons:**

- C(ii) The Derwent Valley saw the birth of the factory system, when new types of building were erected to house the new technology for spinning cotton developed by Richard Arkwright in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.
- C(iv) In the Derwent Valley for the first time there was large-scale industrial production in a hitherto rural landscape. The need to provide housing and other facilities for workers and managers resulted in the creation of the first modern industrial settlements.

A Management Plan for the World Heritage Site was created in 2002, and updated in 2014. It has as the first of its nine aims to: “protect, conserve and enhance the Outstanding Universal Value of the DVMWHS.” In accordance with this aim, and with reference to Section 12.1 of the Management Plan, I have consulted with Derbyshire County Council’s Conservation and Design Section (which advises the World Heritage Site Partnership in planning matters) over this application.

A sub-group of the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site Partnership’s Conservation and Planning Panel visited the application site and various locations within the town, on the 25 November 2016, to assess the impact of the proposal on the Outstanding Universal Value of the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site, and the following comments are the result of that visit.

## **Context**

The application site comprises five open fields on the edge of the built framework of Belper. At the centre of the collection of fields is a menage, defined by floodlights on columns; the large adjacent field is used by horses; a public footpath runs across the site from Belper Lane, before descending from the ridge down to Dalley Lane. The field boundaries include extensive lengths of coursed stone walls, which contribute to the local character.

Adjacent to the site, the relatively modern estate dwellings of Mount Pleasant – located within the Buffer Zone – nestle, discreetly into the lower slopes of the valley slopes. From Belper Lane this collection of houses presents a roofscape, above which the form and limits of the town can be interpreted. The ridge of Windmill Lane is visible in the middle distance, with the higher ground of Openwoodgate, beyond. The extent of Belper town, surrounded by its rural setting, can be appreciated on entering the town along Belper Lane, with the World Heritage Site immediately located on one side of the lane, and its protective Buffer Zone on the other.

Similarly along Dalley Lane, despite its minimal distance from the Mount Pleasant housing, Belper’s rural setting is very much in evidence. In the valley bottom, De Bradelei Mill and Chapel Street can be picked out within the lower part of the town centre, but the rising land of Belper Lane ensures that the arrested development of the town – an attribute of the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site - is preserved.

## **Character of the town’s development**

Belper is a town that has developed away from the river flood plain, extending up the valley slopes. The encircling open countryside provides containment to the town, and limits its extent in a readable way, despite more recent expansion.

By comparison, the proposed development seeks to impose a sub-urban layout within a historic context of international significance. Despite this status, the layout makes no contextual references to this sensitive place.

## **Proposed development**

The layout essentially develops the entire application site, except for two attenuation ponds and a MUGA extended from the existing recreational area. Plots extend up the slope, almost as far as the highest parts of the site, to the west and the north. At the ridge line that marks the western edge of the site, a wide landscape buffer is proposed to screen the western edge of the development which extends to the ridge line/high point of the application site. The introduction of trees, in the form proposed, is contrary to the landscape character of the area.

The scale of the development is such that the appreciation of the World Heritage Site's rural setting would be significantly impacted on from a number of locations, including the locations mentioned above – Belper Lane, Dalley Lane, Swinney Lane.

## **Demolition of Whitehouse Farm**

A new vehicular access is proposed from Belper Lane, formed by demolishing 153 Belper Lane. Also known today as Whitehouse Farm, the building appears on the 1st edition OS plan. While it has been changed externally, its historic significance, both in its own right and as part of any significance of the World Heritage Site, have not been researched or assessed. Given the cultural significance of the area, the applicant should satisfy the LPA that the loss of the building has no contribution to make to the World Heritage Site's significance.

## **Form of adjacent housing**

The houses in Mount Pleasant are clearly ordered in rows, a characteristic form of the town, as at Long Row and the Short Rows, Field Row, etc. The linear, repetitive rhythm of the houses on Whitehouse Rise read as a strong feature from across the valley, for example from Swinney Lane. By contrast, the proposed layout follows a sub-urban model, sub-dividing the site into clusters, served by estate roads, with rear gardens grouped in the middle of each cluster.

## **Recommendations**

As proposed, it is considered that the development would be harmful to the Outstanding Universal Value of the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site. This harm would result from the significant impact on part of one of its key attributes, the rural landscape setting of the arrested industrial development, which took place from the C18th century onwards, in the Derwent Valley.

It was felt by the sub-group that a substantially smaller development in the south east corner of the application site may be acceptable, especially if it was accessed from Whitehouse Rise. However, the applicant would still need to sufficiently illustrate that it did not adversely impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site.

I hope these comments can be considered when a decision is made concerning this development.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Adrian Farmer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A' and 'F'.

**Adrian Farmer**

Heritage Co-ordinator, Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site.  
cc **Rachael Coates AVBC.**