

DERWENT VALLEY MILLS WORLD HERITAGE SITE

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Mark Penford
Amber Valley Borough Council
Town Hall
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16th April 2018

Dear Mark

AVA/2018/0056: Restoration of two cottages, replacement of social club building with a new detached dwelling, construction of a terrace of three dwellings and conversion and extension of barn to form a dwelling at Ambergate Sports and Social Club, Matlock Road, Ambergate.

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 later this month.

The site lies within the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site (DVMWHS). 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 18th 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, Heritage and Design Service (which advises the World Heritage Site Partnership in planning matters), and have received the following advice:

Detailed comments were provided to the previous submission for the site by the World Heritage Site Partnership on 2 February 2018. While broadly in support of the conservation elements of the scheme, which included the repair and re-use of the historic farmstead and the removal of modern elements that detracted from the rural character of the site, concerns were expressed for the new-build element and particularly its height and scale.

The site is located squarely and prominently within the World Heritage Site, in full view of the physical and historic linear threads that make up its significance, of international standing; the River Derwent, the turnpike road, Cromford Canal and the railway. The site’s character is indisputably ‘rural’, being a vernacular farmstead set within an agricultural landscape, adjacent to the river.

The new-build three-storey housing element is of an unprecedented scale, sited in the most prominent location of the site where its visual impact would be at its greatest. The intervention would confer a distinctly ‘urban’ character, which would seriously harm the Outstanding Universal Value of the world heritage site, comprising, as part of its significance, its arrested industrial process in a relict 18th century rural landscape setting.

While the previous advice referred to the design quality of the new-build element of the proposed development, acknowledging that it was inherently of a high standard, this would not overcome the adverse impact on the rural character of the site.

Although it is something of a moot point, in the amended plans, the design quality has been reduced with respect to that originally proposed. Nevertheless, it is the scale and height of the residential block that is inappropriate for this site, irrespective of its design quality.

On closer inspection of the quality of conversion, the proposed extension of the attractive ‘barn’ with the large arched opening (Plot 1) is not of a high standard. Furthermore, the window detail of the cottage refurbishment is less than exemplary, in respect of its window detail (Plots 2-3). The car parking arrangement pays little regard to the sensitivity of the site, where all cars would be prominently visible within the courtyard formed, with its open end facing the former turnpike road; the bin collection point is also located in a prominent location. The detached double garage to Plot 4 would further urbanise the character of the site.

The revised footprint of plots 5-7 closes down views of the buildings with historic interest on the site, further marginalising the farmstead.

Should the new-build element (Plots 5-7) be included in the proposed development to the indicated height, then the World Heritage Site Partnership would strongly object to the permission being granted. There would be harm to the Outstanding Universal Value of the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adrian Farmer'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Adrian Farmer

Heritage Co-ordinator, Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site.
cc Sarah Johnson, AVBC