

DERWENT VALLEY MILLS WORLD HERITAGE SITE

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Paul Wilson
Amber Valley Borough Council
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18th September 2018

Dear Paul

AVA/2018/0864: Approval of reserved matters following the approval of AVA/2017/1294 for land at Holly Cottage, Longwalls Lane, Blackbrook.

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 November.

The site lies within the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site (DVMWHS) Buffer Zone. 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:

The Partnership’s comments on the outline application were as follows:

The site is located alongside the former turnpike road (Ashbourne Road/A517) leading into Belper. Although a significant number of mid-20th century houses occupy land in Blackbrook, and have subsumed many of its more historic buildings and features, it retains its rural character and contributes positively to the immediate setting of the WHS.

The new development would occupy a small piece of land between Ashbourne Road and Hollybrook Cottage. The information submitted with the application, notably the Visual Impact Assessment, indicate that the new dwelling will have a strong presence from the A517. However, it will be seen against the wider urban context of Blackbrook and so its visual impact on the wider rural setting should be limited. Other views presented in the Visual Impact Assessment demonstrate the proposed dwelling will not be visible from within the wider rural setting or the WHS. Although the drawings are not yet fully developed they indicate that the dwelling is of a suitably modest scale for the site and it has distinguishably modern features which should allow it to be clearly interpreted as a new building. Therefore the World Heritage Site Partnership does not object to the proposed development as it will have a negligible impact on the immediate setting of the WHS.

While the advice on the application remains valid in terms of the information submitted, the detailed proposals of the reserved matters are considered to have an adverse impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site and, therefore, unacceptable.

Even the simpler and more modest indicative proposal of the outline application, has undergone significant changes. The proposed dwelling fails in most respects to respond to the character of the locality. The siting of the dwelling, being set-back from the lane, runs contrary to the pattern of development within the settlement. This is driven by accommodating vehicle parking on the front of the property, which in itself would convey a distinctly sub-urban character, again contrary to the prevailing character of this small settlement. The increased scale and complexity of form of the proposed dwelling is decidedly sub-urban and not responsive to local distinctiveness. The introduction of a gabled projection, gabled dormers, an open, eccentric canopy to the front, and a lean-to across the entire rear elevation, to accommodate increased ground floor space, would be incongruous features that would be highly visible in this elevated and open location.

The plot is relatively small and filled to its full width with the proposed three bedroom property. The opportunities to mitigate the associated elements of a private house are reduced by virtue of the intensity of development; car parking, as discussed above is forced to the front of the property, with visible hardstanding not typical of dwellings with a relationship to the lane, plot boundary treatment could potentially be very harmful were it other than a hedge boundary, with no control through the planning system, associated domestic clutter such as garden structures, summer houses, sheds, play equipment, etc., would cumulatively change the balance from a rural, agricultural character to that of sub-urban domestic character.

While the Visual Impact Assessment, submitted in support of the outline application, was not the correct vehicle for appraising character of the built environment, its conclusion of the likely impact on views immediately around the site are shared. However, the appropriateness for the scale, form, siting and detail of a new building is beyond the remit of a landscape assessment.

The majority of historic dwellings of the group have simple form and detailing. The twentieth century ribbon development opposite the old forge, on Ashbourne Road, and along Plains Lane, do not engage with the small group at the bottom of Longwalls Lane, as much as the application site potentially would.

It is recognised that elements of a Victorian style have been incorporated into the external design, including bargeboards, albeit of plain profile, decorative finials and ridge tiles and exposed rafter ends at the eaves junction. Authentic elements of this style are to be found at Mill House on the opposite side of the Ashbourne Road. Although this is the only representative of that style, it works within the traditional pattern of development.

A contemporary style, with design quality derived from simpler, plain details with a less overly sub-urban domestic character could offer a satisfactory solution. This may need to relate to a dwelling of a smaller scale and different orientation, with a more traditional relationship with the Longwalls Lane and Ashbourne Road, in order to minimise the impact of the associated elements of modern dwellings, particularly vehicle parking.

In conclusion, it is considered that the detailed proposals have not sufficiently responded to the local context for it to be assimilated without harm to an area designated to preserve the setting a site of international significance.

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

Yours sincerely

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

Adrian Farmer

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