

DERWENT VALLEY MILLS WORLD HERITAGE SITE

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Helen Frith
Amber Valley Borough Council
Town Hall
Ripley
Derbyshire **DE5 3BT**

29th April 2019

Dear Helen

AVA/2019/0224: Removal of existing derelict tea room and proposed replacement building at Swiss Tea Rooms, Belper River Gardens, Matlock Road, 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 June.

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:

The proposal to replace the Tea Room building, and re-establish its function within this popular and historically significant public space, is welcomed.

The proposed design is generally acceptable although elements of the building give rise to concerns for the future maintenance of the building and its ability to provide an appearance of lasting quality. In particular, by seeking to replicate something of the original design, the roof design is likely to be a disappointing element, within the whole, including the vulnerable and highly visible rainwater disposal system. The rainwater disposal solution might be better achieved in ways other than the proposed external gutters and freestanding swan-necked downpipes. Secret gutters and chains rather than pipes are examples of solutions that could offer a more creative approach to this functional requirement.

The character of the original building was largely determined by the dominance of its simple, steeply-pitched roof. The variation in roof pitches in the proposed tea room, between the side slopes and the front and rear, would inevitably appear awkward by comparison with a constant roof pitch; this seems an unnecessary compromise for a newly-designed building.

The original roof was simple and expressively dominant by its steep pitch. The proposed roofs would incorporate gables to a ‘bonnet’ or a ‘Dutch gable’ roof form, together with a pair of dormers, which seem to serve little purpose.

The success of the final product will be determined by the quality of its materials and detailing. The proposed tiled roof is not necessarily the most appropriate covering; the visible hip detail can be constructed by a variety of means to facilitate satisfactory junction with other elements of the roof covering. A contemporary lightweight metal roof to a steeper pitch, could provide a simple, elegant, low maintenance solution, devoid of the complex detailing of gables, hips and dormers, with all their associated junctions.

While the proposed design would not explicitly harm the Outstanding Universal Value of the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site, the opportunity to better enhance this special place could be achieved with bolder and a more imaginative approach to detailed aspects of the design.

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 a long, sweeping tail on the 'r'.

Adrian Farmer

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