

# DERWENT VALLEY MILLS WORLD HERITAGE SITE

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Sarah Pearce  
Amber Valley Borough Council  
Town Hall  
Ripley  
Derbyshire DE5 3BT

21st October 2019

Dear Sarah

**AVA/2019/0874: Proposal to provide two new dwellings to the land adjacent to the property known as Swiss Barn on Chevin 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 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 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, Heritage and Design Service (which advises the World Heritage Site Partnership in planning matters), and have received the following advice:

This land is located approximately 250m from the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site. The nearest listed building is Bankfield House, north of the site, located on Chevin Road, slightly to the north, opposite Chevin (Green) Farm. The supporting ‘setting and context’ study, shows that small groups of twentieth century dwellings have been introduced into this rural setting over time. These dwellings existed at the time that the Derwent Valley was inscribed onto the World Heritage List. The dwellings also serve to demonstrate the importance of appropriate response to context, as some of the dwellings clearly apply an unrelated model that bears no relationship with their locality.

The character of the site is that of an isolated group of vernacular buildings within the open landscape context, detached from, but clearly on the edge of, the town of Belper. Swiss House and Swiss Cottages appear on the 1st edition OS and while there is no mention of it forming part of a farmstead, its relationship with the agricultural land, together with the presence of (converted?) barns and the Dutch barn, suggest it must have been associated with farming, historically.

The application site occupies a prominent position against Chevin Road, currently screened by vegetation and containing the open Dutch barn, the proposed removal of which would represent a loss of agricultural character.

The proposal is for two single storey dwellings of different sizes and plan forms, each set in their own separate plots. Despite their traditional form and materials, the dwellings adopt a distinctly sub-urban layout, strongly determined by vehicle parking, which would be prominently located at the front of each plot. By contrast with the traditional form of development in this context, which is for buildings to be set hard against the lane, the larger of the two dwellings, on Plot 1, would be set inside the boundary, further adding to the inappropriateness of the proposed development. The dwellings are also distinctly domestic in character, in form and detail, with the fenestration pattern and window types perpetuating a sub-urban character.

As such the development would not appear to be a natural addition to this group of agricultural buildings. Consequently the proposed development would cause a loss to the relict 18th century rural setting of the World Heritage Site.

It is considered that the proposed development would not preserve the character or appearance of the rural setting of the World Heritage Site and would therefore be harmful to its significance as defined by its Outstanding Universal Value. The harm would be 'less than substantial' as defined in the NPPF, but the harm to a heritage asset of international significance is unlikely to be outweighed by any public benefit of the private development of two dwellings.

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". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Adrian Farmer**

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