

DERWENT VALLEY MILLS WORLD HERITAGE SITE

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Sarah Pearce
Amber Valley Borough Council
Town Hall
Ripley
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17th December 2019

Dear Sarah

AVA/2019/1013: Four bedroomed detached dwelling in accordance with outline approval AVA/2017/1322 on land at Longwalls Lane, Blackbrook.

Please find below my response to the consultation concerning the above application. These comments will be passed 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. 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:

It is noted that the outline application related to these reserved matters, and which was granted permission for a single dwelling of unspecified size and design, on 06 April 2018, was not referred to the Partnership.

The site is located alongside the former turnpike road (Ashbourne Road/A517) leading into Belper. Although a number of mid-20th century houses occupy land in Blackbrook, developments such as Plains Lane are, beneficially, sufficiently set-back to minimise their intervention on the local character. Other sporadic residential interventions have impacted on its historic rural landscape, as have inappropriate alterations to some of its more historic buildings and features. Nevertheless, this small settlement still retains its rural character and contributes positively to the immediate setting of the World Heritage Site.

The proposed new development would occupy part of the curtilage land to Longwalls Barn, directly adjacent to Ashbourne Road. It should be stressed that very few of the current collection of buildings, in this context, are of any age that would justify enabling development. Longwalls Barn and its detached garage are relatively modern structures, possibly with no agricultural associations. ‘The Mistal’ is likely to represent the oldest fabric in this group, although greatly altered in recent times. Holly House is an authentic dwelling, of its time, with a form and siting that is more typical of residential development within this group.

The development would introduce built form between Longwalls Barn and Hollybrook Cottage, with a proportionate loss of openness. In the form and scale proposed, the new dwelling would have a strong presence from the A517/ Ashbourne Road, as well as Longwalls Lane. The dwelling has been designed for a flat site, despite the significant changes in level from the existing garage to Ashbourne Road. The only options that would enable the dwelling to be constructed as described, would be to set it down below the roadside hedge or, or more worryingly, involve a significant level of underbuilding that would raise the height of the dwelling. The required engineering works would compete against the natural topography, where the traditional buildings work closely with, and are respectful of, their physical and environmental context.

With respect to design and local distinctiveness, the siting, form, scale, massing, materials and detailing of the proposed dwelling are wholly inappropriate for its context. The design of the dwelling is distinctly complex, as represented in its L-shaped plan form, its projecting bay windows, its large glazed gable windows, its gablets and

dormers, its projecting porch and associated extended roof and its interplay with adjacent projecting window and roof features and its Juliet balcony. While render and painted brickwork can be found in small amounts, within the locality, the predominant walling materials are brick and stone. Despite the suppressed eaves height, a four-bedroom dwelling with an attached double garage is demonstrably over-sized for its site, in terms of the impact it would have on the character of the locality. A projecting verge detail is not typical of the context other than the authentic detail of the former mill house, opposite. The one-and-a half storey form is itself untypical of the prevailing form of buildings in the locality.

In a recent appeal decision, relating to the refusal of outline planning permission for three dwellings on a nearby site in Blackbrook (AVA/2018/0916), the inspector (Appeal Decision APP/M1005/W/19/3233180) considered:

The site, the WHS and Buffer Zone

- 9. The appeal site is in the small village of Blackbrook off Ashbourne Road. Housing, of varying age, size, type and finish, in the village are found along Ashbourne Road, Plains Lane and Longwalls Lane. To the west of the site on Ashbourne Road there are a number of dwellings situated within large plots and with defined gaps between each dwelling. Most of the village is omitted from a Special Landscape Area (SLA) which surrounds it.*
- 10. The site is within the WHS Buffer Zone. The Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site Management Plan (Management Plan) explains that the WHS contains a series of 18th and 19th century cotton mills and an industrial landscape of high historical and technological significance. The WHS 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. The scale, output, and numbers of workers employed were without precedent and saw, for the first time, a large-scale industrial production in a hitherto rural landscape on the basis of water power. The need to provide housing and other facilities for workers and managers resulted in the creation of the first modern industrial settlements.*
- 11. The protection of the WHS's setting is particularly important, because of the critical significance to the Property's Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (SOUV) of the location of the mills and their associated settlements, within a rural landscape, arrested in time. Because it is of vital importance to the maintenance of the SOUV for the setting to remain rural, local planning authorities have adopted policies to ensure the protection of this setting.*
- 12. Blackbrook comprises a small group of buildings, originally, loosely ranged around the flour mill and forge/smithy. Historically, the pattern of residential development has either been dispersed or of a linear form, against the road or on the edge of fields. Within the Buffer Zone, settlements such as Blackbrook can be viewed as built up areas within the landscape. However, despite the line of twentieth century semi-detached dwellings to the south-west, the site has a distinctly rural character due to its open undulating landform bound by low hedgerows. I recognise that landscaping does affect the visual connectivity between the site and the land to the west, but the site, and the land which adjoins it to the south-west and west collectively provide a rural setting to*

Blackbrook that is evident from Ashbourne Road and Plains Lane. I agree with the main parties that the site is not a 'relict' rural landscape and the site is not part of the SLA. However, the site, which is not in the centre of Blackbrook as the appellant suggests, does contribute to the rural character of the locality and the approach to the WHS even though it does not affect views into or out of the WHS.

...and,

14. While, three terraced dwellings may reflect the character of what was historically built for industry workers, and they would be set back from the road, the proposed layout would fundamentally change the character of the site and its positive contribution to the setting of the WHS.

15. Although the Buffer Zone is not itself a heritage asset, its role is to protect the setting of the WHS. Having regard to Framework paragraph 196 the harm to the setting of the WHS would be less than substantial. Even so, this still amounts to a harmful impact which adversely affects the significance of the WHS as a designated heritage asset. The appeal scheme would result in three new dwellings that would add to the mix and supply of housing in the Borough. Public benefits would also stem from the improvements to the junction of Plains Lane and Ashbourne Road which would improve highway safety and accessibility to the bus stops. There would also be limited economic benefits associated with the construction of the dwellings, jobs and future occupants spending in the local economy.

...and,

17. I conclude that the proposed development would not preserve or enhance the setting of the WHS and as such the proposal would not comply with saved Local Plan Policy EN29 and Framework paragraph 196. Jointly, these seek, among other things, development proposals within the WHS Buffer Zone to preserve or enhance the setting of the WHS, and were less than substantial harm would be caused to the significance of the designated heritage asset, weigh this harm against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

While the principle of development has been granted – albeit against the Local Plan policies - it is considered the significance of the context has not been understood, by the applicant either in the outline application or that of the current reserved matters. No Heritage Impact Assessment has been submitted for either application as far as we are aware.

The importance of preserving the setting of the World Heritage Site, as expressed in this locality by the rural character of Blackbrook, prominently located on one its significant approaches, is established in a place of international importance. In addition to respect for local distinctiveness for development generally, the required design quality within the WHS and its Buffer Zone is an important pre-requisite of the management of the World Heritage Site, on behalf of HM Government.

In conclusion, it is considered that the proposed dwelling would be harmful to the Outstanding Universal Value of the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site, for the reasons described above.

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "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 Sarah Brooks, AVBC