

DERWENT VALLEY MILLS WORLD HERITAGE SITE

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Sarah Peace
Amber Valley Borough Council
Town Hall
Ripley
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3rd December 2020

Dear Sarah

AVA/2020/0705: Erection of single storey agricultural building, and formation of new agricultural access at Highfields, Belper Lane End, Belper.

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 Group for verification in February.

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 maintain the Outstanding Universal Value of the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site by protecting, conserving, presenting, enhancing and transmitting its culture, economy, unique heritage and landscape 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 2020. It has as the first of its nine aims to: “protect and conserve the Outstanding Universal Value of the DVMWHS to ensure its transmission to future generations.” In accordance with this aim, and with reference to the operational guidance in Section 20 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 application site is immediately opposite the WHS itself. The small settlement at Belper Lane End, which is set around and concentrated at the junction of Belper Lane and Dalley Lane, contains a mix of traditional Derbyshire vernacular buildings and modern dwellings. The modern dwellings that have infilled between the traditional vernacular buildings demonstrate the impact on the character of place where new buildings fail to respond to context. The settlement has historically included two chapels, a public house, farms and cottages.

The site is visually contiguous with the wider rural landscape, which surrounds the small settlement and the application site. The open landscape character is clearly evident as it extends to the horizon, in a sweeping arc from the north, west and south. To the east of the site, the rising land contains Wyver Wood and the enclosed farmland of Wyver Farm, located wholly within the WHS. The current garden and parking uses associated with the curtilage of Highfields, visually accommodate the dominant open landscape character, despite the temporary occupation by mobile homes and storage containers.

The proposed development includes the erection of a single storey agricultural and storage building, to serve an existing smallholding, located beyond the existing modern dwelling. The dwelling itself would be somewhat incongruous, separated from the core of buildings range around the junction at Belper Lane End. The introduction of a large building would extend the presence of built structures outside this historic group, which would consolidate that incongruity and impact negatively on the open countryside.

The access route, proposed to serve the building, would be a significantly engineered arrangement introduced into this rural context. Despite the limited vehicular movements anticipated for a building of this site-related purpose, the breach in the stone boundary wall against the lane would need to be 6 metres wide, with visibility splays which would, it is assumed, result in the loss of extensive lengths of the boundary wall and vegetation, in both directions from the access point, with a consequential urbanisation of this rural character. Additionally, while no indication of ground levels for the access road are provided, the change in level between the lane and the land behind the wall would entail a significant degree of unnatural engineering works and retaining structures of one type or another.

The cumulative impact of a large agricultural building, its prominent and incongruous vehicular access arrangement, including the track connecting them both, would result in a loss of rural character, which would not preserve or enhance the setting of the WHS, an attribute of the WHS’s significance defined as a relict industrial landscape, where late 18th and early 19th century industrial development may still be seen in an 18th/19th century agricultural landscape.

In conclusion, it is considered that the proposed development would have an adverse impact on the character or appearance of the rural setting of the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site and would, therefore, be harmful to its significance as defined by its Outstanding Universal Value. The harm to the designated heritage asset would be 'less than substantial' as defined in the current NPPF (February 2019), although the great weight afforded to the conservation of designated heritage assets would require the development to include significant public benefits were it to outweigh the harm to assets of international, national and local heritage value.

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 with a large initial 'A'.

Adrian Farmer

Heritage Co-ordinator, Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site.

cc Sarah Brooks, AVBC