DERWENT VALLEY MILLS WORLD HERITAGE SITE

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Heather Wynne
Amber Valley Borough Council
Town Hall
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3rd November 2020

Dear Heather

AVA/2020/0334: Conversion of and extension of garage to residential annex at Bryden House, The Meadows, 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 later this month.

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 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 located within the Belper and Milford Conservation Area. Bryden House (Meadows Lodge) was designed by Hunter, of a high quality and contemporary with the fine dwelling of Highfields, Belper, of the same year, 1895. The former lodge lies on a historically significant route, developed by the mill entrepreneurs, the Strutts, from the former turnpike road, opposite the Gibfield Lane junction, along the river meadows, turning to cross the river bridge, where the former Meadows Lodge is located, and hence turning off, northwards to Bridge Hill, marked by West Lodge, and ultimately to the former Strutt residence of Bridge Hill, elements of which survive within the developed estate land, including the listed ice house. One of the Strutt Estates still owns the bridge and the land on each side.

Meadows Lodge was extended, relatively sympathetically, in a similar style, in the late-20th century, although a little more subservience would have allowed the original design composition to be interpreted. The introduction of the garage is most intrusive to the character and appearance of a building type, of intrinsically small scale, designed to stand alone in its surroundings. The position and scale of the detached garage is intrusive and harmful, as it exists today. The former lodge is not listed, but its close associations with the Strutt Estate, its known purpose and designer, confers it being an element contributing to an attribute which helps define the significance of the WHS; it also makes a positive contribution to the special architectural and historic interest of the conservation area.

The proposal is to extend and convert the existing garage to an annex to the former lodge dwelling. Notwithstanding its damaging location, and intrusive relationship with the former Meadows Lodge, the garage is currently a relatively simple structure, with a simple gable form presented to the access track/drive; some reference to its host building and context has been attempted, in its form, materials and detailing. The design of the proposed extension to the garage contains none of the quality of the main building on the site, the adjacent former Meadows Lodge.

It is considered that the proposed works would not preserve the character or appearance of the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site (EN29) or the Belper and Milford Conservation Area (EN26). The proposals as submitted would have an adverse impact on the special interest of the designated and non-designated heritage assets affected, including being harmful to the significance of the WHS as defined by its Outstanding Universal Value. The harm would be 'less than substantial' as defined in the current NPPF (February 2019), although the great weight afforded to designated heritage assets would need to be outweighed by significant public benefit were it to outweigh the harm to an asset of international, national and local heritage value.

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

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

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