Historic England

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Dear Mr Alan Redmond

T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015
& Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990

DEMOLITION OF FORMER CARE HOUSE AND REPLACEMENT WITH 8 DWELLINGS ON FIELD LANE, BELPER
APPLICATION NO: AVA/2026/0187

Summary

Thank you for your consultation regarding the above application for planning permission. On the basis of the information available to date, we offer the following advice to assist your authority in determining the application.

Historic England Advice

Significance of Belper Conservation Area

Belper Conservation Area is principally significant as a former industrial town set on the River Derwent which grew exponentially in the c18 to become the second largest town in the county. Nail smithing, framework knitting and cotton spinning were Belper's primary industries and their prominence can be read in the built landscape.

The Belper Conservation Area centres on the patronage and prominence of the milling pioneer Jedediah Strutt. Strutt harnessed the water power of the Derwent in a manner similar to Richard Arkwright's mill at Cromford, except in Belper a weir was created to produce a mill of 300 horsepower, which was far more ambitious than Cromford. At the time of its build, it was the largest textile mill in the world, and its international significance is celebrated in its designation within the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site (DVMWHS) and the attributes of that pertain to its outstanding universal value (OUV).

Strutt expanded Belper with a model of terraced housing for workers built in a gridiron form which can still be read today and contributes greatly to the conservation area's historic value. Interestingly, the plots used for housing followed a strip system relating to strips within Belper's enclosed common which defined the site before housing was built. A key feature of the town were the allotments and gardens laid out besides the housing for the benefit of tenants; this consideration of amenity was progressive compared to the back-to-back workers housing of the cities. The town continued to develop into nineteenth and twentieth century under the patronage of the Strutt family to include chapels, churches, a railway station and schools, all of which contribute to the town's architectural value.

The site sits within character area C of the Belper Conservation Area which is a location where the Strutt family provided well built housing laid out with gardens. The housing was typically built on an east-west alignment with narrow passages between blocks. Variety was expressed through different heights, materials and layouts. However, there is a strong building line across all houses with small nailshops and workshops amongst the housing for men unable to work in the factory workforce. Gardens were provided to the rear of these terraces with allotments beyond. Field Row has a row of three stoney houses with graduated slate roofs.

The development site subject of this application is described in the Belper Conservation Area Character Appraisal as being inappropriate in terms of scale, design and materials. We think the site has the potential to make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area.

Impact

The proposal is to build 8 dwelling houses on the former site of the Ada Belfield care home on Field Lane. An existing consent is in place for the construction of 7 dwelling on the same site: AVA/2020/0089.

We think the removal of the existing care home is positive in townscape terms. Its replacement with eight homes would help enliven the vacant site and offers an opportunity to improve the general appearance of Field Lane and character area C.

The gridiron layout proposed and variety created by having two housing types is well considered. The terraced housing is particularly welcome in terms of a contextual approach which nods directly to Belper's distinctive terraced groups as built by Strutt.

The building heights, curved garden front walls (facing Field Lane) and chimneys to the propertied work well.

The proposal of eight units feels dense for the small site, however, it is for the local planning authority to comment on the quantum appropriate for this site from a planning perspective. If eight units is deemed appropriate, we think high quality design could help offset any harm the additional unit has to the character of the conservation area.

We feel aspects of the current designs go some way to achieving this aspiration, but we suggest some tweaks in order to reduce harm to significance and better enhance the character and appearance of the Belper Conservation Area which we will detail below.

Policy

We have viewed the current application in terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Paragraph 2 of the NPPF clearly states that 'planning policies and decisions must also reflect relevant international obligations and statutory requirements' which is of relevance to the impact of development on the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site.

Section 16 Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment, sets out policies for decisions governing change in the historic environment.

> Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes a statutory duty on planning authorities to ensure that proposals preserve or enhance the character or appearance of conservation areas. This duty attracts great weight in planning terms.
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> Paragraph 208 states that local planning authorities "should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal."
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> Paragraph 212 notes that "when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance."
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> Paragraph 215 requires that less than substantial harm to significance should be weighed against the public (including heritage) benefits of a proposal.
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> Paragraph 219 states that Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.
>
> Paragraph 220 notes that the loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 214 or less than

substantial harm under paragraph 215, as appropriate.

UNESCO's Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments (2022) has superseded the ICOMOS 2011 guidance signposted in the Planning Practice Guidance. The UNESCO guidance provides a sound basis for heritage impact assessment in cases where the Outstanding Universal Value of World Heritage sites is a factor, as in this instance. Its structured approach supports a process where the OUV of the World Heritage Site, and what is optimal to safeguard that significance, is front and centre in the assessment, options and design process. Applying the UNESCO approach allows an authority to address NPPF para 2 in respect of the UK's international obligations.

The National Design Guide (January 2021) offers useful guidance on the design considerations needed in order to achieve successful and contextual development. We would refer you to the following subsections of Part 2 in particular:

Context
- C1 Understand and relate well to the site, its local and wider context
- C2 Value heritage, local history and culture

Identity
- I1 Respond to existing local character and identity
- I2 Well-designed, high quality and attractive places and buildings

Built form
- B1 Compact form of development
- B2 Appropriate building types and forms

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide

The Belper Conservation Area Character Appraisal is of relevance to this application: Belper Conservation Area Character Statement

Position

Historic England is supportive of the principle of developing the former Ada Belfield care home site with high quality new homes.

We think the scheme offers many positives compared to the previous scheme approved for this site including the retention of trees, the terraced row proposed (type 2 housing), the layout, the curved boundary walls and the choice of high-quality materials.

In order to reduce harm to significance in terms of high-quality detailing of buildings in Belper and the DVMWHS, we think the designs could be tweaked to better enhance significance as required by paragraph 219 of the NPPF.

- We think the tonal red brick proposed is positive but suggest a traditional English or Flemish brick bond (rather than stretcher bond) would improve the quality of the elevations.
- We commend the active frontages proposed to Field Lane but think the

modern single panel door style feels too suburban for this context and the development would benefit from a traditional door style.

- We think a traditional and lighter colour for the frames of windows and doors (rather than anthracite) would be more in keeping with the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- On the Type 2 terraced properties, we think stone lintels would help tie the properties to the character of the wider area rather than the brick solider courses.
- To balance the façade of the house Type 1 fronting Field Lane, we think a stone lintel should sit above all windows. This would be consistent with Strutt's architectural palette applied in the wider conservation area.
- If the garage on the Field Lane elevation is proposed, we think to appear less suburban through traditional timber doors which would be more akin to the traditional small buildings in Belper (such as nail making shops as a building type).

Recommendation

Historic England largely supports this application on heritage grounds but thinks amendments could be made to the architecture of the buildings in order to reduce harm to the significance of the Belper Conservation Area. We recommend that the Local Planning Authority requests amendments in light of our advice above.

In determining this application, you should bear in mind the statutory duty of section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

Your authority should take these representations into account when making a decision on the application. If there are any material changes to the proposals, or you would like further advice, please contact us

Yours sincerely

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