

Council for British Archaeology

A National Amenity Society

Ms Sarah Westwood
Ribble Valley Borough Council
By email: planning@ribblevalley.gov.uk
Cc: sarah.westwood@ribblevalley.gov.uk

25th April 2014
Your ref: 3/2014/0226 and 3/2014/0183
CBA ref: 6937/2014151

Dear Ms Westwood,

Works and a change of use to the Grade II Listed Kirk Mill to create a hotel (18 Bed) and bar/restaurant. Works comprising partial demolition and extension of Kirk Mill...

Thank you for consulting the Council for British Archaeology (CBA) on the above case. Our comments relate to the conversion of the Grade II listed Kirk Mill building.

The Council for British Archaeology (CBA) was established in 1944 and is the national amenity society concerned with protection of the archaeological interest in heritage assets. Heritage assets with archaeological interest are the primary source of evidence about the substance and evolution of places and of the people and cultures that made them. Local planning authorities have a duty to notify the CBA of applications for listed building consent involving partial or total demolition, under the procedures set out in ODPM Circular 09/2005 and in Welsh Office Circulars 61/96 & 1/98.

CBA advice summary:

- The CBA supports the principle of reuse of this building
- However, there are various elements of the proposal which do not protect or enhance the significance of the heritage asset as encouraged by NPPF paragraph 131 and the CBA recommends revision to the plans as detailed below.

Significance

Kirk Mill is significant as an early example of an Arkwright-type cotton mill. Built in 1785, coinciding with the lapse of the patent for Arkwright's water frame, the mill is part of the early series of mill innovation. The expansion of the cotton spinning industry is clearly shown through alterations to the mill as early as 1790 - 1801. The extensions and alterations to the mill, in such a legible fashion through its history, provide much of the historic character and special interest of this building. They represent an architectural form regularly adapted for functionality with a consistency in materials and details such as quoining. The extensions to house larger waterwheels are a clear example of this, where the former wheel house and its later counterpart to house a larger wheel can still be clearly read in the building's fabric.

The key features of the building include the waterwheel with associated gears, and the visibility of the watercourse. Evidence of the line shafting permits reading of the functionality of the building, as does the relationship of the building to the mill pond. Just as significant however, is the hundred year history of the building's use for furniture manufacture, in particular chair-making by the Berry family. It is understood that the

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conversion to furniture factory resulted in very little architectural impact to the building, except perhaps for the continued use of wood for fenestration. However, any residing equipment relating to furniture manufacture is also significant to the site.

Heritage protection

Kirk Mill and its associated mill pond are Grade II listed, highlighting their national significance. The mill is also of central importance to the Kirk Mill conservation area.

Proposal comments

The principle of returning the building to use is supported. However, the CBA have concerns about various elements of the application.

Firstly, the CBA advises that further information on the conservation and maintenance of the waterwheel is sought. The application lacks details as to the future provision for this key historic feature on the site. It is essential that it is understood how such an important heritage asset will be maintained for future generations. Further, it is a shame that the wheel is not given priority in the proposal, as it appears to be completely hidden at ground floor level and only visible through a small viewing platform on the first floor. In, "sustaining and enhancing the significance" of the heritage asset, the ability to see the wheel within the building would be highly beneficial, particularly in understanding its former use.

Another aspect key to the character and understanding of the building are the external walls with patterns of alteration. There is a large amount of intervention proposed to the south façade, particularly at ground floor level. This façade displays the evidence of the changes that the building went through in its time as a functioning industrial building, and therefore is significant to the character and legibility. Although the façade is not neat and regular this is the character of the listed building and as such should be respected. The CBA recommends revision to the plans to respect the listed building, perhaps including greater visibility of the walls or an approach with less intervention at ground floor level.

Any machinery or equipment left from either the mill use or the furniture manufacturing period in the building should be at the least recorded to an appropriate level and made publically available through the HER as according to NPPF paragraph 141. Relocation to an appropriate museum may be better for well-preserved pieces. Retention of a remnant from the furniture manufacture era within the building with appropriate interpretation would be beneficial to the heritage asset to display the full history of the site.

In conclusion, as the proposal stands, it would harm the significance of the Grade II listed heritage asset. However, the CBA supports the principle of returning the building to a suitable new use, and therefore recommends that the proposals are amended in order to better sustain the heritage asset.

I trust these comments are useful to you; please keep the CBA informed of any developments with this case.

Yours sincerely,



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