

Application No: 14/3242M

Location: QUARRY BANK MILL, QUARRY BANK ROAD, STYAL, CHESHIRE, SK9 4LA

Proposal: Upper Garden: Redevelopment of the Upper Garden, including the restoration of the historic glasshouse and back sheds, including provision of an ancillary retail offer within one of the restored back sheds, the temporary provision of a structure for catering and landscape restoration works. Construction of a new Gardener's Building and compound. Quarry Bank House: Change of use of Quarry Bank House from C3 (Dwellinghouse) to D2 (Assembly & Leisure). Styal Village Properties: Change of use and Listed Building Consent for 13 Oak Cottages from C3 (Dwellinghouse) to D2 (Assembly and Leisure) and conversion and adaptation of existing Collection Store to use as an interpretation facility. Northern Woods: Restoration of paths and bridges including the removal of modern paths. Car Park: Reconfiguration and extension of the existing car park, with associated landscaping works. Welcome Building: Provision of a new single storey visitor welcome building.

Applicant: Phyllis Bayley, National Trust

Expiry Date: 27-Oct-2014

Date Report Prepared: 14 November 2014

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

Approve subject to conditions

MAIN ISSUES

- Whether the proposal is acceptable in the Green Belt
- The impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area
- The impact upon the Listed Buildings and their setting
- The impact on the amenity of adjoining residents
- Whether access and parking arrangements are suitable
- The impact of the proposal on existing trees and landscaping
- Ecological impact

REASON FOR REPORT

The application is a major development and a departure from the development plan and under the Council's Constitution is required to be determined by planning committee.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

The application site comprises parts of the Quarry Bank Mill and Styal Estate. The whole of this estate covers an area of 172 hectares along the valley of the River Bollin, at the heart of which lies the Cotton Mill surrounded by other elements of this early industrial site. These other elements include the Mill Owner's house (Quarry Bank House), the Mill Manager's House, the Apprentice House and an entire worker's village as well as the agricultural land, a farmstead, allotments, walled garden, and picturesque gardens and woodland which complemented and helped to sustain this early industrial community.

A number of the buildings across the site are listed and the site is located within the Styal Conservation Area, the Green Belt and an Area of Special County Value as identified in the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan.

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

This application seeks full planning permission for:

Upper garden – Redevelopment of the upper garden, including the restoration of the historic glasshouse and back sheds, including provision of an ancillary retail offer within one of the restored back sheds, the temporary provision of a structure for catering, and landscape restoration works. Construction of a new gardeners building and compound.

Quarry Bank House – Change of use of Quarry Bank House from C3 (dwellinghouse) to D2 (Assembly & Leisure).

Styal Village properties – Change of use of 13 Oak Cottages from C3 (dwellinghouse) to D2 (Assembly & Leisure) and conversion and adaptation of existing Collection Store to use as an interpretation facility, provision of additional car parking.

Northern Woods – Restoration of paths and bridges including the removal of modern paths.

Car park – Reconfiguration and extension of the existing car park, with associated landscape works.

Welcome Building – Provision of a new single-storey visitor welcome building.

RELEVANT HISTORY

There is a range of planning history across the site, but none is specifically relevant to the current proposals.

POLICIES

Macclesfield Borough Local Plan Policy

- NE1 Areas of Special County Value
- NE2 Landscape Character Areas
- NE5 Parkland Landscapes
- NE7 Woodlands

NE9 River Corridors
NE11 Nature Conservation
BE1 Design Guidance
BE2 Historic Fabric
BE3 Conservation Areas
BE15 Listed Buildings
BE16 Setting of Listed Buildings
BE24 Archaeology
GC1 Green Belt New Buildings
GC8 Reuse of Buildings in the Green Belt
RT13 Tourism
RT17 Reuse of Rural Buildings for Tourism Purposes
DC1 New Build
DC2 Extensions and Alterations
DC3 Amenity
DC6 Circulation and Access
DC8 Landscaping
DC9 Tree Protection
DC54 Restaurants, Cafes, Takeaways

Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework)

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version

MP1 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
PG2 – Settlement Hierarchy
SD1 – Sustainable Development in Cheshire East
SD2 – Sustainable Development Principles
EG4 - Tourism
SC1 – Leisure and Recreation
SE1 – Design
SE2 – Efficient Use of Land
SE3 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity
SE4 – The Landscape
SE5 – Trees, Hedgerow and Woodland
SE7 – The Historic Environment
SE9 – Energy Efficient Development
SE12 – Pollution, Land Contamination and Land Instability
SE13 – Flood Risk and Water Management
CO1 – Sustainable Travel and Transport

CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)

Manchester Airport – No objections subject to an informative relating to the use of cranes.

Natural England – No objections

Environment Agency – No objections

English Heritage – Restorative aspects of the proposals constitute a positive impact upon the significance of this valuable collection of heritage assets and are welcomed in principle. No objection to the introduction of a temporary marquee structure for a period of 5 years. The LPA will need to satisfy itself that clear and convincing justification for the car park extension has been provided to a satisfactory degree.

Environmental Health – No objections, but recommend hours of construction

Public Rights of Way – Any changes to the public rights of way must be agreed with the Public Rights of Way Unit prior to any works being carried out.

Archaeology – No objection subject to condition requiring a programme of archaeological mitigation.

Strategic Highways Manager – No objections, the proposed access and parking arrangements will benefit the site.

Visitor Economy Manager – Proposals would enhance an already popular attraction and would be a welcome development in Cheshire East.

VIEWS OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

Styal Parish Council – fully appreciate that the National Trust has taken steps to minimise the impact of the proposal upon Styal Village, the Council has the following serious concerns about the application:

1. **Loss of Green Belt to car park growth** – this is yet another incursion into the ever shrinking Green Belt. Increasing loss from airport parking and construction of A6 relief road. The Parish Council looks for consistency in the approach to requests for an increase in car parking in the area, and would urge that further consideration be given to the impact upon prime farming land.
2. **Risk Assessment** – No reference to any risk assessment in the plans
3. **Over development** – Concerns that the overall size of the project is out of proportion to the size of Styal village.
4. **Visitor numbers** – the proposal to double visitor numbers to 300,000 is a concern for a number of reasons:
 - Road safety
 - Congestion
 - Noise and pollution
 - Loss of privacy for existing residents

REPRESENTATIONS

One letter of representation has been received from the tenant farmer of the neighbouring land who is also a resident of Styal Village objecting to the proposal on the following grounds:

- No reference in the submission of the impact of the development upon the farm
- No risk assessment carried out for additional visitors using paths
- Over development in the Green Belt and Styal Conservation Area
- Spoil peace and tranquillity for residents

- Additional noise and pollution
- Farm will suffer land loss and division of an already fragmented holding. The extended car park will isolate about 30 acres from the rest of the farm. Access will be along a tortuous track which will make the day to day farm work more complicated and time consuming

APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The following information has been submitted with the application:

- i) Planning Statement
- ii) Design & Access Statement
- iii) Conservation Management Plan
- iv) Transport Statement
- v) Biodiversity and Geodiversity Statement
- vi) Arboricultural Report

In summary the application seeks to address the following issues across the Quarry Bank Mill estate:

- a. The current inability to tell the full and complete story of the history and heritage of the site given false constraints imposed by the 20th Century dissemblance of the estate. This has only become possible relatively recently with the National Trust's acquisition of firstly Quarry Bank House, the home of the Greg family, and then the Upper Garden, where produce was grown for the Greg family in contrast to the food available to the workers and apprentices.
- b. The difficulty of physical access around the entirety of the site caused by its topography and access to buildings which were not built with access for all' in mind.
- c. The management of large numbers of visitors to the site. The current infrastructure is at capacity and there is a requirement to enhance visitor facilities such as car parking, catering and toilets for them to be compatible with the expanding and expected visitor numbers.
- d. The site encompasses a number of different and disparate environments which all form the basis of the story at Quarry Bank, but which need elements of interpretation and orientation in order to appreciate the connections. The current visitor journey is disjointed and is difficult to interpret; there is now the opportunity to make significant improvements to this, not least by welcoming people at a more logical point.

OFFICER APPRAISAL

Sustainable development

At the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. At paragraph 25 it states that local plans should *"support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside. This should include supporting the provision and*

expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres.”

The site is approximately 900 metres from Styal railway station, and has its own bus stop within the site. Visitors to the site are therefore not wholly reliant on the private car. The existing site protects and enhances the natural and historic environment, contributes to the local economy and support's health, social and cultural well being. Given that the proposals seek to enhance the experience for visitors and increase visitor numbers, it is considered that the proposal is a sustainable form of development.

Therefore, the key question is whether there are any significant adverse impacts arising from the proposals that would weigh against the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Heritage Assets

The main heritage issue is the impact of the proposals upon the significance of heritage assets. Whilst other listed buildings exist across the estate, in this case, the main heritage assets that could be affected are:

- The Grade II* listed Mill Building (setting)
- The Grade II listed Mill Cottage (setting)
- The Grade II listed Packhorse Bridge (setting)
- The Grade II listed Quarry Bank House
- The Grade II* listed Apprentice House (setting)
- The Grade II listed Oak Cottages
- The Grade II listed Styal Shop
- Styal Conservation Area

Upper Garden

The Upper Garden was in very poor condition following acquisition by the National Trust. Whilst considerable work has been undertaken to restore the garden, much work remains to be done, particularly to the back sheds and the glasshouse. The glasshouse was truncated by the construction of a later garage with the glass and secondary structure having largely been lost. The Upper Garden presently has no facilities for visitors. The intention is to restore the Upper Garden to its earlier condition and produce plants as the Greg family would have done, telling an important part of the story of Quarry Bank.

The works within the Upper Garden include the restoration of the historic glasshouse and back sheds to their original footprint, size and symmetry as existed on 1872 Ordnance survey mapping. This includes the creation of an ancillary retail unit within one of the restored back sheds, with the remainder being used for interpretation purposes, including activity based interpretation. The glasshouse will be restored to its full length, re-glazed and ultimately planted with vines to the two vinery wings and exotic fruits and plants to the curvilinear central section. Heating will be provided by a biomass boiler using hot water flowing through large pipes to transmit heat. This approach is apparently a modern version of the later approaches to heating used in the glasshouse.

The works also include the reinstatement of the wall to the walled garden on its original line and to its original height. The modern garage that serves the existing Gardeners Cottage will be demolished to accommodate this.

The café was originally intended to be housed within the Gardeners Cottage, but the viability for this proved challenging and so the proposal is now to site a temporary building outside of the walled garden. This will allow the National Trust to assess whether a more permanent catering facility within the Gardeners Cottage is a viable option for the future. Sited within an area of open land, adjacent to the walled garden, the lightweight form, scale and position of the temporary structure has been chosen to minimise its visual impact.

Similarly, the gardener's building will be sited within an area utilised for external storage, bordered by woodland. It is low level and timber clad and will not be a prominent feature within the site. It is considered to be in keeping with the "rear of house" nature of the area to the rear of the walled garden.

Overall, the restoration works will have a positive impact upon the heritage significance of the site and upon the Conservation Area. There will also be no significant impact upon the setting of any of the listed buildings, and the gardener's building will sit comfortably in its setting, whilst removing an existing area of external storage. The temporary café building will however result in some limited harm to the significance of the Conservation Area.

Quarry Bank House

Quarry Bank House is a Grade II listed building. At present it is a well maintained domestic dwelling with a very fine historic interior. The intention for this building is to interpret the way the site was developed from the Greg family's perspective by converting to visitor use.

The proposals for this building are relatively simple, in that they are for a change of use only, with any works required, such as roof repairs, repairs to decorative finishes and repairs to the render externally not requiring Listed Building Consent or planning permission.

The primary spaces at ground and first floor will be opened to the public with access via the front door, which is a level access. Each of these spaces will contain interpretation focusing on the character and stories within Quarry Bank House. At the first floor, the master bedroom will be opened to the public. Access to the first floor is limited as it can only be achieved by the existing staircase due to the constraints of the listed building.

In an attempt to overcome this, the ground floor space below being of similar configuration and interpretable in the same way, the experience at first floor can be recreated at ground floor level thus permitting access for all to the stories wishing to be told within the building. The remaining bedrooms and ancillary spaces at first floor will be used by the staff and volunteers operating the building for changing facilities, WCs, storage and offices.

As there are no physical alterations proposed to this listed building, and the use seeks to maximise the significance of the building within the context of the site, the impact upon the significance of the heritage asset is considered to be a positive one.

Styal Village Properties

The two properties within Styal Village, 13 Oak Cottages and the Village Store Rooms are to become accessible to the public in order to tell the stories about the workers in the place where they lived.

For 13 Oak Cottages this will mean minimal adaptation, amounting to repairs and alterations to a handrail on the stairs to the basement. The reason for minimising change, apart from the obvious issues around conserving the historic significance of the building, is that there is much character in its slightly dilapidated condition, having the feeling of a well lived in dwelling with a great deal of history. Access into the building is via steps, both to the ground floor and the basement level.

The Village Store Rooms requires greater adaptation in order to provide the functionality required. The building will provide the visitor hub for the Styal Village part of the visitor experience and whilst it is anticipated that the number of visitors coming to this part of the site will be modest, the National Trust are keen to ensure that there is a strong presence of staff and volunteers to carefully manage visitors.

Due to the constraints of the access into 13 Oak Cottages, the Village Store Rooms will provide interpretation space and provision for staff and volunteers in the form of WCs, storage and some office facilities. Visitors with access needs who might be unable to physically enter 13 Oak Cottages can access its stories from the Village Store Rooms.

The building was rebuilt in 1985 and despite the quality of the rebuilding it has lost much of its historic significance in the process. The building is currently in use as a Collection Store, but has a small change in level within its ground floor of approximately 100mm. This area of floor will be raised to provide level access throughout. The existing WC provision at ground floor level will be reconfigured to provide an accessible WC and maintain a fire escape route.

The first floor spaces will retain their current configuration but will be converted from storage to a break room for staff and volunteers, which will also have a computer point to provide some office functionality. It is intended that the Village Store Rooms are the first port of call for visitors to Styal Village who will then be escorted in small groups to 13 Oak Cottages by National Trust staff and volunteers.

The Village Store Rooms part of the development was initially intended to take up the whole of the historic Village Shop, but the need to retain accommodation for volunteers and challenges around alterations to the tenanted property above meant that the scheme needed to be scaled back and is now focused on the building adjacent the Village Shop which is currently used for Collection storage. This building is intended to house interpretation focusing on Styal Village.

The car park that is proposed within Styal Village seeks to formalise parking arrangements. Currently vehicles are parked on the road, and the proposal cuts into an existing grassed area to provide hardstanding and a repositioned hedgerow. Whilst the grassed area will be reduced, the parking will benefit existing residents and visitors. There is not considered to be a significant impact upon the Conservation Area arising from the car park.

Once again, given the limited extent of the physical alterations proposed to these listed buildings, and the fact that the uses seek to maximise the significance of the building within the context of the site, the impact upon the significance of the heritage assets is considered to be a positive one.

Northern Woods

The Northern Woods will be renamed 'Chapel Woods' in reference to its historical name. All paths are generally worn and uneven, with stones and roots protruding above the surface which provide challenging walking conditions. The intention is to improve paths for all users and as part of this making it clear what the woods contain and the nature of the environment so that people can make informed choices on whether to enter. This will be done through the use of improved signage, but also by making the threshold points where there is a transition from less rugged environments into the more natural Woods as clear as possible.

The proposed improvements generally include:

- Blocking off unsafe path routes;
- Restoration of suitable historic pathways;
- Improved connection between Northern Woods and Quarry Bank Mill;
- Creation of an accessible route (connection from Lower Gardens);
- Redressing of paths;
- Resetting of steps and provision of stringer edging;
- Creation of seating areas; and
- Creation of a picnic area.

The overall intention is to restore the Woods, reinstating their original character and improving access. These repairs and maintenance works are not considered to have any harmful effect upon the significance of the Conservation Area or the setting of any of the listed buildings.

Car Park and Welcome Building

Since the broadcasting of the television series 'The Mill', interest in Quarry Bank Mill has significantly increased with visitor numbers increasing by 20%. Use of the site's overflow car park has increased as a result. Access into the current car park, with each car stopping at the existing kiosk, is not ideal, particularly at busier times. The surfacing to the car parking spaces also generates some management and maintenance issues. The car park provides facilities for coaches, management of waste on the site and also provision for the local bus service to stop and turn around.

The proposed new car park will be created in the field to the east of the existing car park. The car park design attempts to maximise the retention of trees and hedgerows and the use of the existing ponds as landscape and ecological features, adding to the overall visitor experience.

The new car park will create 367 additional parking spaces, provide pedestrian routes towards the Welcome Building and incorporate landscaping to break down the areas of hard standing and filter views from adjacent land. The new car park will be unlit, with the exception of the bus stop and accessible parking area. However, the path routes linking with the Welcome Building will have low level bollard lighting.

The applicant's aim for the Welcome Building is to broaden the visitor experience of Quarry Bank. Building upon the opportunities offered by the wider context, taking in existing routes to the Village, the Northern Woods, the Upper Garden and the Apprentice House, the site for the building becomes a gathering point from where initial orientation of the whole estate occurs. From this point, visitors make choices and are able to plan their visit to the site effectively.

The applicant states that the building itself aims to be a gateway into the site, with a low roof profile so as not to dominate. Its primary functions are to sell tickets, exchange information

and orientate visitors. In order to achieve this aim, the central public space is transparent, encouraging movement through the building into the site beyond. This is achieved by the fully glazed screens and continuous floor finishes drawing visitors through, blurring the thresholds between inside and outside spaces. The building will be located within an existing mature landscape setting.

Having regard to the scale, form and positioning of the welcome building, it is not considered to have a significant impact upon the setting of any of the listed buildings within the site, the nearest of these being the Apprentice House. The contemporary, glazed design contrasts well with the solid form of the historic buildings across the site. The established vegetation will help to soften the impact of this new building within the site. Consequently, there is not considered to be any detrimental impact upon the significance of the heritage assets.

English Heritage has noted that the introduction of the car park within the distinctly rural setting of the site and within the Styal Conservation Area will have some harmful impact upon their setting and significance. Any harm to heritage assets requires clear and convincing justification (paragraph 132 of the Framework). They advise that if the local planning authority is minded to approve the new car park provision, it will be important to ensure that great weight is given to the conservation of the valuable heritage assets in question, minimising harm through screening, placement and landscaping measures.

It is accepted that the proposed car park extension will have a negative impact upon the Conservation Area. However, it is also noted that the car park is not known to impact on any historic features. Marl pits and field boundaries are retained and there are no known archaeological features in the vicinity. It is proposed to use resin bound gravel for the majority of parking bays, and a reinforced grassland surface for the spaces, which are anticipated to be less frequently used (being further away from the visitor centre), on the perimeter of the site, which will help to minimise the overall visual impact. With the additional landscaping proposed, it is intended to give the car park as natural an appearance as possible. The car park is located away from the historic buildings as far as possible with the existing landscape and topography serving to limit locations where the setting of listed buildings might be affected by the car park.

It is therefore concluded that there is less than substantial harm to the Styal Conservation Area arising from the proposed car park extension.

Conclusions on heritage impact

The only identified harm to the heritage assets within the Quarry Bank estate arises from the temporary catering facility and the proposed car park extension in terms of their impact upon the Styal Conservation Area. This harm is considered to result in less than substantial harm to the significance of this designated heritage asset. Paragraph 134 of the Framework states that less than substantial harm arising from a development should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

In terms of public benefits, English Heritage has noted that the restorative aspects of the proposal constitute a positive impact upon the significance of this valuable collection of heritage assets. The conversion of key buildings such as Quarry Bank House and the Styal Village properties to promote public access allows for an enhanced understanding and appreciation of the site and is also a positive aspect of the scheme.

The viability of converting the Gardeners Cottage to a catering facility has been explored by the applicants, but was not established. The temporary structure is proposed for a five year period, after which time the National Trust expect to understand the viability of a permanent catering facility and ultimately prove that the Gardeners Cottage conversion is a viable proposition.

The background to the scale of the car park is outlined further in the Green Belt section of this report. The conclusion being that this is required to accommodate the anticipated number of visitors to the site. The National Trust envisages that visitor numbers will increase from 167,466 to 300, 000 in 2020/21. Following increased visitor attendance during the past 12 months, in part due to the success of the recent television drama series, strain has been placed on the existing parking facilities and the use of the overflow car park and village has been more regularly required. In order to accommodate the increased numbers and reduce the reliance on the overflow car park, a traffic assessment has identified that 542 car parking spaces should be provided.

Having regard to the above circumstances it is considered that the less than substantial harm that has been identified is outweighed by the public benefits of the proposal.

Green Belt

Paragraph 89 and 90 of the Framework identify the exceptions to inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Included within the paragraph 90 exceptions are engineering operations provided they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in Green Belt.

Upper Garden

Whilst the glasshouse and the back sheds are currently in a poor state of repair, and will require some rebuilding the intention is to restore and re-use them. The glasshouse and sheds would also be extended to the west, replacing the existing modern garage that currently serves "Gardeners Cottage". This limited extension is aimed at restoring the building to its original form. These elements would not be an inappropriate form of development in the Green Belt.

A new building for the use of the gardeners will be erected behind the sheds in an area currently used for open storage. The building will provide storage for machinery and tools and well as a rest area for the gardeners. This would be an inappropriate form of development in the Green Belt, which would reduce openness to a limited degree.

Finally in the Upper Garden, to the west of the walled section there would be the provision of a temporary structure to provide a café. This would also be an inappropriate form of development in the Green Belt, which would reduce openness.

The reuse of Quarry Bank House.

The re-use of Quarry Bank House would not be an inappropriate form of development in the Green Belt.

Styal Village Properties

The re-use of 13 Oak Cottages and the Village Store Rooms would not be an inappropriate form of development in the Green Belt. The provision of a more formal car parking arrangement within the village is not considered to encroach into the countryside, or conflict with any of the other purposes of including land within the Green Belt, and does not reduce openness as it seeks to reposition the cars that currently park in front of this grassed area. This aspect of the proposal is also not considered to be inappropriate in the Green Belt.

Northern Woods

The works to the Northern Woods amount to repair and maintenance, and are not inappropriate in the Green Belt.

Car Park and Welcome Building

The car park extension is the aspect of the proposals that will have the most significant impact upon the Green Belt. The proposals will change the use of an existing agricultural field to provide an additional 367 car parking spaces. This will reduce the openness of the Green Belt and conflict with one of the purposes of including land within the Green Belt by encroaching into the countryside. The new Welcome Building is considered to be an appropriate facility for outdoor recreation, and is therefore not inappropriate in the Green Belt. It will provide a focal point for visitors in as central a position as possible within the site to allow people to plan their visit effectively.

Summary

The proposed new buildings to provide the gardener's accommodation and, the café, and the engineering works to provide the car park extension are all inappropriate forms of development, which reduce openness, and additional harm arises from the car park by encroaching into the countryside. Inappropriate development should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

Paragraph 88 of the Framework advises that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt. Other material considerations will need to clearly outweigh the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, for very special circumstances to exist.

Material Considerations in favour of the development

Within their planning statement, the applicant has put forward the following material considerations in favour of the development:

- Unique experience provided by Quarry Bank Mill.
- Potential to become a world class tourist attraction.
- Visitor welcome building will significantly improve the introduction to the site.
- Heritage enhancements to three principal areas - the Upper Garden, Quarry Bank House and Styal Village.
- Cumulative heritage benefit arising from interpretation of the whole site.
- Improvements to facilities – reception, toilets and catering facilities are currently limited in number and location

Further justification for the proposed car park has also been submitted within the Transport Assessment. This includes:

- Anticipated increase in visitor number from the present 167,466 per year to 300,000, which will have a corresponding parking demand.
- Existing parking provision does not accommodate parking demand on all days of the year.
- Necessity to utilise overflow parking will vary from year to year, but based on 2013 data, it is assumed to be between 11% and 15% of days.
- Inappropriate and uneconomic to provide permanent car parking sufficient to meet the parking demand on all days of the year.
- Parking provision therefore based on 85th percentile and 90th percentile days for visitor numbers.
- Any shortfall in parking provision relative to demand would be met by using the same overflow parking field that is currently used.
- Dwell time at the site is expected to remain the same. National Trust experience indicates that expanding the visitor offer tends to lead to people making repeat visits in order to experience those parts of the site that were not visited on previous occasions.
- Therefore an assessment of future car park occupancy can be based on the current pattern of arrivals.
- Anticipated visitor numbers at 300,000 - predicted maximum car park occupancy on 90th percentile day would be 624 and on the 85th percentile day it would be 392.
- Proposed permanent car parking provision would be exceeded on the 90th percentile day. This suggests that overflow car parking would be needed on between 11% and 15% of days, as is the existing case.
- Sensitivity test also carried out in the event dwell time increased on the site. This found that the overflow parking use would still fall within the 11% and 15% of days as existing.
- It is therefore concluded that the extended car park would continue to provide sufficient capacity to accommodate parking demand on between 85% and 90% of days, with the overflow car park being used on a similar number of days as is presently the case.

Very Special Circumstances

Since the release of the television series 'The Mill,' interest in Quarry Bank Mill has significantly increased with visitor numbers jumping upwards by 20%. Use of the site's overflow car park has increased as a result. This increased popularity will be compounded by the proposed works, which are anticipated to result in an increase in visitor numbers to 300,000 per year, almost double the existing number.

Policy EG4 of the Submission Version of the Local Plan relates to the protection of Cheshire East's tourist assets, including Quarry Bank Mill, and allows for the expansion and enhancement of existing visitor attractions in sustainable and appropriate locations. In this regard, the Visitor Economy Manager notes that within the Council's Visitor Economy Strategy, there is a commitment to '*Help to increase visitor numbers and improve the overall customer experience*'; to '*Support the development of key projects to enhance the tourism product*' and to '*Support the development of tourism infrastructure, an improved environment and a focus on customer service to ensure a quality visitor experience*'.

The Visitor Economy Strategy makes it clear that 'anchor institutions' are important for the local cultural and Visitor Economy in creating a high quality of place with potential to support the resilience of the local economy. The prospect of substantially adding to and improving an

already high quality establishment family attraction into the locality could lead to increase of visitors either staying in local accommodation or/and spending more time within the local towns, in particular Styal and Wilmslow. Quarry Bank Mill has the potential to be a 'destination level' attraction. The proposal will bring an increase in visitors to the region and would significantly increase the profile for the visitor economy of Cheshire East and surrounding areas. Added to this is the trend for families to 'holiday' in the UK, and in a lot of cases take days out.

Quarry Bank Mill is clearly a unique cultural and heritage asset within the Borough, and the alterations that are proposed as part of this development will only serve to increase the significance of this site and its understanding. Given the nature of the site experience, the many assets of interest are spread across a significant area, whereas the ancillary facilities are currently primarily located within the Mill yard at the southern end of the site. The increased number of visitors will need to be accommodated as they arrive at the site (car parking and visitor centre), and during their visit within the site in terms of the facilities that are available to them across the site, given the geographical spread of the various attractions.

In the Upper Garden, the proposed gardener's building will provide much needed storage for machinery and tools and will provide a rest area for staff and volunteers. The estate has approximately 100 garden volunteers who are crucial to the maintenance of the gardens and landscape. The proposed café will be a temporary feature but will enhance the experience for visitors. The entrance improvements are also a fundamental part of the enhancements to the site. The car park extension is required to accommodate the anticipated increase in visitor numbers.

Overall, there is harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, loss of openness and encroachment. Substantial weight should be afforded to any harm to the Green Belt. However, having regard to the considerations put forward by the applicant in favour of the proposal, and the positive impact upon the significance of the heritage assets and the interpretation of the site as a whole is a substantial public benefit that clearly outweighs the identified harm the Green Belt in this case. Very special circumstances are therefore considered to exist.

In the event that Members are minded to approve the development, it will be necessary to refer the application to the Secretary of State due to the significant impact upon the openness of the Green Belt.

Amenity

Local Plan policies H13, DC3 and DC38 seek to protect the amenity of residential occupiers. Policy DC3 states that development should not significantly injure the amenities of adjoining or nearby residential property due to matters such as loss of privacy, overbearing effect, loss of sunlight and daylight and traffic generation and car parking.

The only development proposed within the vicinity of residential properties is the change of use of the properties within Styal Village. The scale of the buildings will limit visitor numbers in terms of noise arising from within the buildings themselves. With regard to the comments from the Parish Council about loss of privacy, it is accepted that there is expected to be an increase in visitor numbers. However the cottages already form part of the historical context

of the site, part of the experience that visitors come to see. The proposal will not significantly alter this situation and therefore no significant amenity issues are anticipated.

Highways

The Highways issues relate to the reconfiguration and extension of the car park and access details.

It is proposed to provide a total of 542 car parking spaces on the site, this represents an increase of 367 spaces above the existing provision. Not all the car parking spaces are to be permanent surfaced spaces, 92 spaces are semi – permanent construction.

Location	Type	Number
Existing Car Park		
Southerly end	Staff (General)	53
	Staff (Accessible)	2
	Staff (Designated)	1
Southerly end	Coaches	8
Northerly end	Visitor	94
	Visitor (Disabled)	17
Total		175
Car Park Extension		
South of access road	Visitor	329 (including 92 semi-permanent)
North of access road (south of Welcome Building)	Visitor (Designated)	22
North of access road (east of Welcome Building)	Visitor (Accessible)	16
Total		367
TOTAL		542

The location and type of car parking spaces are indicated in the above Table.

The Strategic Highways Manager raises no objections to the proposal, and makes the following comments. Given the mixed nature of the site there is no specific car parking standard relating to the specific use. In support of the application, the applicant has indicated that visitor numbers are likely to increase significantly and therefore car parking demand would increase correspondingly. The amount of parking provision can accommodate the predicted maximum demand on the busiest day without causing parking problems on the site and access roads.

The existing ticket office at the car park entrance will be removed from the site as part of the redevelopment proposals, which will allow vehicles to go directly into the car park without stopping to buy a ticket. This removes the possibility of vehicle queues forming at the entrance and back along the access road. It is now proposed that tickets for the site will be purchased from the welcome building after visitors have parked their car.

The reconfiguration of the main access will be a benefit with an improved alignment into the car park, which eases access into the site.

There are no changes proposed to the main access with the B5166 Styal Road. The junction will continue to operate within capacity even with the additional visitor numbers as the trips to the site are normally outside the usual peak hours and are at their highest at weekends and school holidays where background traffic is lower. As a result the increased numbers can be accommodated on the local highway network.

Overall the improved access arrangements and car parking provision will be a benefit to the site in highways terms and no significant highway safety issues are therefore raised.

Trees

The arboricultural impacts of the proposals for the Upper Garden, the change of use of Quarry Bank House and the Styal Village properties will be negligible. The improvements to paths and bridges within the Northern Woods may involve some localised removal or pruning of vegetation where it currently interferes with safe passage or where space is required to allow for the implementation of access improvements (surface dressing etc). Any such vegetation removal will not include any significant 'high forest' trees. Some removal of invasive Rhododendron and/or Holly may be necessary as part of ongoing management works.

The proposed Welcome Building will be situated at the eastern edge of the car park and will require the direct loss of a mature B Category Oak (T29) and the western section (approx 10 trees) of a group of trees immediately south of the entrance to the Car Park (G16). The position of the building and associated infrastructure (connecting footpaths and realignments of roads) will also impact upon the Root Protection Areas of other trees.

The vegetation removals plan also identifies that the reconfiguration of the existing car park will necessitate the removal of the majority of plantings of semi mature Oak and Red Oak and a section of the plantation located on the raised mound to the east of the car park to facilitate the link between the existing and proposed car park in the eastern field.

The loss of trees to accommodate the Welcome Building will result in some opening up of views of the building and part of the existing car park along the existing vehicular access. Whilst the loss of the mature Oak will have a moderate impact in terms of amenity, the wider impact on landscape and amenity is considered to be less significant. The partial loss of the group G16 comprises mainly of more recent plantings (probably late 1970s). The loss of these trees in terms of the integrity of the remaining group is not considered to be significant in terms of the wider amenity and landscape character, although there is a slightly moderate impact within the immediate vicinity.

Some small sections of hedgerow are also proposed to be removed to accommodate footpaths/reconfigured roads. These are understood to be relatively recent plantings carried out less than 30 years ago and are therefore not deemed 'Important' under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997.

The application is supported by a detailed planting plan that makes provision for 'New Native Planting across the site'. The plan shows proposed plantings within the new car park including Field Maple, Oak, Alder, Hornbeam and a mixed native hedgerow. Similar plantings are also proposed around the new Welcome Building and within the reconfigured existing car

park. Such plantings will provide a reasonable degree of mitigation in the longer term for the anticipated direct losses that have been identified.

No significant landscape impact is identified, given the retention of existing field boundaries and the extent of proposed landscaping. The impact upon the Area of Special County Value is therefore considered to be acceptable. However, the landscape officer notes that the proposed trees should be locally native and where possible large species – rather than small ornamental species. There is also scope for additional tree planting (and possibly some shrubs at the ends of the car park bays). A higher specification for the hedging around the bin store area is recommended for instant screening. Landscape conditions are therefore recommended.

Ecology

The nature conservation officer has made the following comments on the application:

SBI/RIGS

The application site is located partly within the Styal (Regionally Important geological Site) RIGS and Styal Woods Local Wildlife Sites (LWS).

The proposed works within the boundary of the LWS and RIGS are unlikely to have a significant impact on the features for which these sites were designated.

Great Crested Newts

A small population of great crested newts has been identified as breeding at a pond associated with the Upper Garden area. In the absence of mitigation the proposed development would result in an adverse impact upon this species through the loss of the existing pond and associated terrestrial habitat. The works would also pose the risk of killing or injuring any newts present on site when the proposed works were undertaken.

To compensate for the loss of the existing pond and associated habitat the applicant proposes to create a new pond to the north of the upper garden. The new pond would be associated with an area of enhanced terrestrial habitat. To mitigate the risk of great crested newts being killed or injured during the construction phase it is proposed to remove and exclude amphibians from the footprint of the proposed development. This work would be completed under the terms of a natural England license.

Article 12 (1) of the EC Habitats Directive requires Member states to take requisite measures to establish a system of strict protection of certain animal species prohibiting the deterioration or destruction of breeding sites and resting places.

In the UK, the Habitats Directive is transposed as The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. This requires the local planning authority to have regard to the requirements of the Habitats Directive so far as they may be affected by the exercise of those functions.

It should be noted that since a European Protected Species has been recorded on site and is likely to be adversely affected by the proposed development, the planning authority must consider the tests in respect of the Habitats Directive, i.e. (i) that there is no satisfactory

alternative, (ii) that the development is of overriding public interest, and (iii) that the favourable conservation status of the species will be maintained. Evidence of how the LPA has considered these issues will be required by Natural England prior to them issuing a protected species license.

Current case law instructs that if it is considered clear, or very likely, that the requirements of the Directive cannot be met because there is a satisfactory alternative or because there are no conceivable “other imperative reasons of overriding public interest” then planning permission should be refused. Conversely if it seems that the requirements are likely to be met, then there would be no impediment to planning permission in this regard. If it is unclear whether the requirements would be met or not, a balanced view taking into account the particular circumstances of the application should be taken.

Alternatives

As noted above, the proposals seek to enhance the heritage significance of the site. The improvement works relate to existing buildings and structures and provide facilities to support the anticipated increase in visitor numbers where there are currently none. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that there are no satisfactory alternatives.

Overriding public Interest

The development is required to enhance the heritage significance of the site which will have significant educational and cultural benefits, which are considered to be of overriding public interest.

Mitigation

The nature conservation officer advises that the proposed great crested newt mitigation/compensation is acceptable, and will maintain the favourable conservation status of the species.

On the basis of the above it is considered reasonably likely that the requirements of the Habitats Directive would be met.

Bats

Bat surveys have been undertaken of a number of properties at Quarry Bank Mill these include ‘the mill managers house’, ‘retort and stable buildings’, ‘upper garden house and garage’, ‘13 Oak Cottages’ and ‘old village shop’. Pipistrelle bats were recorded emerging from the Mill building opposite the café. However the Mill building is not included within the current application.

No evidence of roosting bats was recorded associated within the buildings subject to this application. The survey was undertaken in 2013 and is so in excess of 12 months old. However, in this instance as the location of bat roosts at Quarry Bank Mill are well known the nature conservation officer is satisfied that sufficient survey information is available for the Council to be satisfied that roosting bats are unlikely to be present or affected by the proposed development.

Reptiles

Grass snakes are known to be present at Quarry Bank Mill. The proposed development is unlikely to result in the loss of any habitat known to be utilised by this species and no

breeding habitat would be lost. The proposed development is therefore not likely to have a significant adverse impact upon grass snakes however there is a low risk that any animals present on the development site may be killed or injured. It is advised that this risk could be mitigated through the implementation of Reasonable Avoidance Measures.

If planning consent is granted it is recommended that the submission of method statement of reptile mitigation measures prior to the commencement of development be secured by condition.

Hedgerows

Hedgerows are a priority habitat and hence a material consideration. A number of hedgerows will be affected by the proposed development. The hedgerows potentially affected by the proposed development however appear to have relatively limited ecological value. It is therefore recommended that suitable replacement planting be secured to compensate for the loss of hedgerows. This matter may be dealt with through a landscaping condition if planning consent is granted.

Breeding Birds

Conditions are also recommended to safeguard breeding birds.

Overall, the proposal is considered to have an acceptable impact upon nature conservation interests. The proposal therefore complies with policy NE11 of the Local Plan and the Framework

Public Rights of Way

The proposed development affects Wilmslow Public Footpath Nos. 16 and 21 (which run north to south through the site) and Wilmslow Restricted Byway Nos. 18 and 22 (which run east to west through the site). The proposed works may affect the surfaces of part of these routes. If the development will permanently affect the right of way, then the developer must apply for a diversion of the route under the TCPA 90 as part of the planning application. If the development will temporarily affect the right of way then the developer must apply for a temporary closure of the route (preferably providing a suitable alternative route).

Archaeology

Quarry Bank Mill is recorded in the Cheshire Historic Environment Record (CHER 2617/1/1) where it is noted that the site was established alongside the River Bollin in 1784 by Samuel Greg. The complex, much of which is Listed as Grade II* and Grade II, saw further development and expansion during the 19th century. The estate is now owned by the National Trust.

The application is supported by a Design and Access Statement, which has been prepared by Buttress Architects and includes an archaeological report (Section 10.1). This has been written by the National Trust's own archaeological staff and assesses the impact of the proposals on known archaeological remains. This is judged to be limited, as is the potential for significant new archaeological deposits to be present, and proposals for a limited programme of archaeological mitigation are included in the report (Table 4).

The Council's Archaeologist advises that the archaeological proposals outline an appropriate programme of archaeological mitigation, which can be secured by condition. Such a condition would also be sufficient to ensure that adequate procedures were in place to deal with any unexpected archaeological discoveries.

Agricultural land

Agricultural land across the application site is classified as grades 3 and 4, which is at the lower end of the land quality spectrum. Grade 3 land is good to moderate quality agricultural land.

The Framework states that:

"Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of higher quality."

The car park extension into an existing agricultural field is required to accommodate the parking demand from the anticipated increase in visitor numbers arising from the proposed works to widen the visitor offer at Quarry Bank Mill. The proposed location is considered to be the optimum position for an extended car park given the position of the access and the existing car park, and the relationship with the many heritage assets within the application site. The proposed development as a whole is considered to result in a positive impact upon the significance of the collection of heritage assets within the site, which allows for enhanced understanding of the site. This is considered to be a substantial benefit that is considered to outweigh the loss of agricultural land in this case.

Other matters

With regard to the comments raised in representation not addressed above, a risk assessment of the proposals is not something that is required for the purposes of a planning application. Similarly, the impact of the development upon the existing tenanted farm is not a material planning consideration in this case.

CONCLUSIONS AND REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The proposals overall are considered to be an inappropriate form of development in the Green Belt, which reduce openness and encroach into the countryside. The only identified harm to heritage assets arises from the temporary catering facility and the proposed car park extension in terms of their impact upon the Styal Conservation Area. This harm is considered to result in less than substantial harm to the significance of this designated heritage asset, and should therefore be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

In terms of public benefits, the restorative aspects of the proposal constitute a positive impact upon the significance of this valuable collection of heritage assets. The conversion of key buildings such as Quarry Bank House and the Styal Village properties to promote public access allows for an enhanced understanding and appreciation of the site and is also a positive aspect of the scheme. The proposal will serve to increase visitor numbers to

approximately 300,000 per year, which will be a benefit to the visitor economy of Cheshire East as a whole.

The considerations in favour of the proposal, including the identified public benefits are considered to clearly outweigh the less than substantial harm to the Styal Conservation Area, and the identified harm to the Green Belt.

The visual amenity of the Green Belt and Area of Special County Value will be adequately maintained. The proposal will not result in any significant injury to the amenity of nearby residential properties. The impacts on ecology have been satisfactorily addressed, and in some cases enhanced. The proposal is not considered to generate any adverse traffic or highway safety issues. The visual and landscape impacts of the development are acceptable. No significant environmental effects have been identified.

The proposal is considered to be a sustainable form of development under the definition of The Framework.

Consequently, for the reasons outlined above, there are not considered to be any significant adverse impacts that would outweigh the presumption in favour of sustainable development in this case. Therefore, the application is recommended for approval subject to consultation with the Secretary of State (due to the scale of the proposal in the Green Belt), and conditions. A full list of conditions will be provided as an update.

In order to give proper effect to the Committee's intentions and without changing the substance of the decision, authority is delegated to the Planning and Enforcement Manager, in consultation with the Chairman (or in his absence the Vice Chair) of Northern Planning Committee to correct any technical slip or omission in the wording of the resolution, between approval of the minutes and issue of the decision notice.

Application for Full Planning: Approve subject to conditions and referral to Secretary of State.

(Note: full list of conditions to be circulated in the update report)

