

Conservation Team Advice

Date: 19/08/2026

Application Ref: HPK/2026/0273

Site Address: Rock Mill Centre, Rock Mill Lane, New Mills

Proposal: Proposed single storey extension to the Rock Mill Centre which comprises the lower ground floor unit 2 – 4 Union Rd.

Heritage assets affected:		
Designated Heritage Asset(s):	☒	New Mills Conservation Area
Non-Designated Heritage Assets(s) (NDHAs):	☐	

Conservation Advice

Summary of Significance

The Rock Mill Centre is located within the New Mills conservation area. The site is accessed via a pedestrian footpath to the rear of Union Road, this path also provided pedestrian access to the Torrs gorge, Millenium Walkway and Torr Vale Mill.

Assessment and Impact

The application seeks consent to construct a single storey extension within the existing entrance courtyard to the Rock Mill Centre. The proposed extension will be constructed of stone, with a green/sedum roof and a pre-stressed stone archway to the courtyard. An Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) will be installed within the courtyard.

Proposed extension

The proposed extension will be confined within the existing courtyard and finished in a natural stone to match the existing outrigger of the Rock Mill Centre. The extension will have minimal visibility from Rock Mill Lane, as it will be retained within the existing building line. The extension and external alterations will, however, be visible from the predominantly pedestrian lane which provides access to the Rock Mill Centre, the rear of properties facing onto Union Road, and a pedestrian path down to the Torr Vale Mill site. The stone used to should match the colour and coursing of the existing property.

A green, sedum roof is proposed for the extension. Due to the enclosed courtyard layout of the site the sedum roof will not be visible from the public domain and will appear as a flat roof. While flat roofs are not generally considered acceptable within the Conservation Area, the upper floor windows on the Rock Mill Centre prevent the

installation of a pitched roof. As such there are no heritage objections to the flat roof in this case.

The fenestration details will be predominantly viewed from within the courtyard only. Furthermore, the large floor to ceiling windows will be consistent with the commercial character of the internal courtyard, providing access to the café space. Furthermore, the units will be a timber framed in keeping with the character of the conservation area.

The archway which will form the new entrance to the courtyard will be constructed of pre-stressed stone with the Rock Mill Centre name engraved. This is considered to be a complementary addition to the unit providing an updated focal point for the Centre, which is in keeping with the local use of stone. The addition of a large '2027' date to the side of the arch way detracts from the complementary execution of the upper arch due to the scale of the date. Where dates are traditionally carved into building stone, they are a smaller, subordinate addition than that which is proposed. As such the size of lettering proposed for the '2027' date should be reduced substantially, to avoid competing with the Centres signage above.

Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP)

It is proposed to install an ASHP within the courtyard of the Centre. ASHP's are not typically considered acceptable where they can be seen within the public domain of a conservation area as they appear overly utilitarian and unsightly. As such a degree of harm is identified through locating the proposed ASHP in a visible location. However, the constraints of the Centre, are as such that this is the most discreet location available to them to locate the ASHP. Furthermore, the Design and Access statement submitted (pg. 5 and 10) summaries the Centre's aims to decarbonise the Centre and to act as an exhibition of decarbonisation features, they are implementing into the centre. As such there may be some public benefits to the installation of the ASHP proposed (NPPF 2026 HE6 (4)).

Triple Glazing Doors

It is further proposed to replace the existing external door and glazing (west elevation) with a triple-glazed timber framed replacement. The design will be like-for-like in arrangement, however, the use of triple glazing will appear much bulkier. The bulkiness of triple-glazing typically makes them unsuitable for use within a conservation area. however, these doors will be set within the courtyard, back from the public footpath. As the Centre is set back from the main commercial throughfare of New Mills and back from the public footpath this is considered to have no effect on the significance of the conservation area in this unique instance (NPPF 2026 HE5 (2.b)).

Legislation and Policy

Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Section 72(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that with respect to any buildings or land in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of that area.

National Planning Policy Framework (August 2026)

HE5: Assessing effects on heritage assets

2. Assessments of the potential effects of development proposals on the significance of heritage assets (including through effects on their setting) should identify whether proposals would be likely to:

- a. Have a positive effect, which is where the significance of a heritage asset would be enhanced, or better revealed; or
- b. Have no effect on the significance of a heritage asset; or
- c. Result in harm to the significance of a heritage asset, either from work affecting the asset itself or from development within its setting. The degree of harm should be identified: substantial harm would occur where the development proposal would seriously affect a key element of the asset's significance; or
- d. Cause the total loss of the significance of a heritage asset.

HE6: Proposals affecting designated heritage assets

1. When considering the potential effect of a development proposal on the significance of a designated heritage asset, substantial 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 effect amounts to a positive effect, harm, substantial harm, or total loss of its significance.

4. Where a development proposal would harm the significance of a designated heritage asset the effect on the asset and its significance should be weighed against any public benefits resulting from the proposal. Important public benefits can include securing the long-term reuse of a vacant or underused listed building, and enabling energy efficiency and low carbon heating measures to be employed.

HE9: Conservation areas

1. Development proposals within or affecting the significance of conservation areas should:

- a. Retain and conserve buildings and other features which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area where possible; and
- b. Consider the area's special architectural or historic interest (as identified as part of the designation of the conservation area) in the design of development.

2. Not all elements of a conservation area will necessarily contribute to its significance. Where a development proposal would result in the loss of a building or other element which contributes to the character or appearance of a conservation area that is desirable to conserve, the assessment of impact should take into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the conservation area as a whole, and the effects of this considered in accordance with policies HE5 and HE6.

Local Development Framework

Consideration should also be given to the following documents and local development framework policies:

- High Peak Local Plan (Adopted 2016) – EQ7 Built and Historic Environment
- New Mills Conservation Area

Conclusions and Recommendations

In summary, the proposed extension will appear subordinate and in keeping with the conservation area as outlined above. However, the proposed ASHP will appear out of place causing a degree of harm to the appearance of the Conservation Area. However, some public benefit may be present in accordance with NPPF (2026) HE6 (4). If officers are minded to approve the application the following conditions are recommended.

Recommended conditions

- The external facing stone to be used shall be natural stone only, of a colour, texture and coursing to match the existing building.
- Notwithstanding the plans hereby approved details of the text and date to be carved onto the approved archway, including details of the font and text size shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The works shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the agreed details.

Reason(s): In order to preserve the character and appearance of the
Conservation Area

Conservation Officer: Rachel Robinson
High Peak Borough Council