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Date 24 July 2015
Our ref 03224/IR/9199313v1
Your ref PP-04284361

Dear Jane

SMDC: Application for an Extension to the Alton Towers Hotel and Associated Works at Alton Towers Resort

On behalf of our client, Alton Towers Resort, a company forming part of Merlin Attractions Operations Limited, please find enclosed an application for minor demolition works and the development of an extension to the existing Hotel including additional bedrooms, a restaurant and associated facilities, access, car parking, and landscaping at Alton Towers Resort.

The application comprises:

- 1 Application form (signed and dated);
- 2 Application drawings, prepared by Nichols Brown Webber and The Manser Practice (see Appendix 1 of cover letter);
- 3 Design and Access Statement, prepared by The Manser Practice;
- 4 Ecological Assessment, prepared by Staffordshire Ecological Services;
- 5 Arboricultural Assessment, prepared by Tree Heritage;
- 6 Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Statement, prepared by Simpsons;
- 7 Services Strategy, prepared by Elementa;
- 8 Sustainability Statement, prepared by Elementa;
- 9 Operational Assumptions, prepared by Alton Towers;
- 10 Noise Assessment, prepared by Cahill Design Consultants Ltd;
- 11 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, prepared by Nichols Brown Webber and NLP (see Appendix 3 of cover letter);
- 12 Heritage Impact Assessment, prepared by Archaeological Research Services;



- 13 Transport Assessment and Travel Plan, prepared by John Taylor; and
- 14 Construction Management Plan, prepared by Stace.

A cheque for £21,809, made payable to “*Staffordshire Moorlands District Council*”, to cover the Council’s application fee has been submitted under separate cover.

Background

Alton Towers Resort is the UK’s most popular and largest theme park, making it an important generator of tourism and a major employer within the local economy, offering a range of permanent and seasonal contracts. To continue to attract visitors and meet their diverse demands, the Resort must continuously enhance and improve its existing facilities, as well as introducing new attractions and facilities. This proposal will enhance the existing Alton Towers Hotel by improving the range of bedrooms and facilities, as well as re-theming the hotel. In turn, the proposed development will encourage visitors to extend their stay at the site which will ensure that the Alton Towers Hotel and Resort remains competitive both nationally and internationally.

Relevant Planning History

In December 2006, planning permission was granted for an extension to the existing Alton Towers Hotel (ref. 06/01004/FUL_MJ). The approved extension comprised 36 ‘double’ suites and two additional bedrooms (effectively 74 bedrooms). The scheme was designed to complement the existing hotel and included the provision of 74 new car park spaces to the north of the existing hotel car park, as well as landscaping to the north and south of the extension.

An application for an extension of time to this permission was approved in August 2011 (ref. 11/00402/REM1MJ) allowing a further 3 years for the implementation of the development. All pre-commencement planning conditions attached to the consent have been discharged. In addition, in January 2014, the Council approved a Non Material Amendment application (ref. NMA/2013/0005) to replace the approved balconies with Juliet balconies and to reduce the height of the roof by 375mm.

Planning permission was granted on 8 May 2014 for an extension to the east of the existing spa, including a reception area and spa garden with associated hard and soft landscaping works (ref. SMD/2014/0144). The permission was subject to eight conditions which have not been discharged and the permission has not been implemented. Alton Towers Resort has made the commercial decision not to progress with the development.

In April 2015, an application for a Lawful Development Certificate (LDC) was submitted to the Council (ref. SMD/2015/0223) in connection with the commencement of the development of the hotel extension. The application sought confirmation that a lawful start had been made on site through the undertaking of material operations prior to the expiry date of the permission. SMDC approved the application to issue a Lawful Development Certificate on 15 June 2015. The hotel extension can therefore be completed as approved without any further planning approvals. However Alton Towers Resort now proposed changes to the design which require a separate planning permission. The extant consent is of course a fall back and material consideration.



The Proposals

Application Site

The application site measures approximately 0.98 hectares and is similar in size and positioning to that of the approved hotel extension. The proposed hotel extension will be positioned to the south of the existing Alton Towers Hotel and spa. To the west lies the conference centre and the new lodge development (The Enchanted Village) is located to the east (ref. SMD/2014/0107, as amended). To the south, the application site is bounded by the Grade 1 Registered Park and Garden and Abbey Wood Site of Biological Importance. The site currently comprises an area of open grassland with an access road on the eastern side.

In order to allow the development of the new hotel extension, the existing conservatory extension on the south west façade will be demolished and doorways will be bricked up and replaced with high level glazing. In addition, two small buildings ancillary to the existing spa will also be demolished. The buildings to be demolished are of no historic interest.

Proposed Hotel Extension

The proposed extension will comprise a total floorspace of approximately 5545sqm (GEA). This will include provision for no. 74 additional bedrooms, a restaurant, café, reception and back of house areas. It will be four storeys in height, including lower ground level and will maintain the same height as the approved hotel extension prior to the NMA application which reduced the height by 375mm (ref. NMA/2013/0005). The building footprint will be larger than the approved scheme, however the southern building line will be in accordance with the approved extension. To the north, the footprint will extend approximately 4m beyond the approved extension building line. The restaurant, café, reception and back of house areas will be located on the lower ground floor and guest accommodation will be located on ground, first and second floor. The hotel extension will be accessed via the main entrance on the east elevation which will lead to the reception area from the car park and 'drop off' arrival area. The hotel accommodation will provide for up to 6 guests per room and the mix will comprise:

- 1 No. 63 standards rooms
- 2 No. 3 accessible rooms
- 3 No. 6 standard suites
- 4 No. 2 accessible suites

Please refer to the Design and Access Statement for a typical indicative layout of the proposed bedrooms.

In accordance with the approved hotel extension scheme and the existing Alton Towers Hotel and Spa, the proposed extension will be finished in an 'English Colonial' style. The façade will consist of four types of brick work to match the existing including 'redmulti', 'redstock', 'orange stock' and 'dorset red'. The roof will be finished with black tiles to match the existing whilst the windows and doors will be surround white UPVC with reconstituted stone Portland MC surrounds, as per the existing hotel and spa. In accordance with the 'English Colonial' theme, white shutters will be installed on the east elevation and colonial style details will be applied to the external escape stair on the west elevation. To shield the plant machinery from view, it will be screened with grey acoustic louvres. Samples of these materials were approved as part of the hotel extension and



have therefore not been resubmitted. In addition, the proposed extension will be subject to theming in the form of themed entrance signage and themed features on the roundabouts. It is proposed that the detailed design of the themed features is agreed via condition.

The plant and refuse store will be located in the south west corner of the hotel extension. Beyond this will be a service yard that will comprise a new tarmacked area enclosed by a 2.4m close boarded fence to screen it from view. It will be accessed via a new access road to the south of the existing conference centre where it will link into the existing internal road network. A pedestrian access will be provided from the north.

Landscaping and Car Park

The proposed hotel extension will be accompanied by an associated landscaping scheme. This will focus upon the installation of a 'sunken' garden to the north of the extension and can be accessed from the hotel extension through the restaurant from the south and from the east. It will comprise the provision of new turfed areas and footpaths with thematic planting on the boundaries. A rock retaining wall is proposed to form the northern boundary of the garden with thematic planting and erratic stones beyond to border a new footpath. It is proposed to install a new waterfall feature in the north east corner of the garden.

To the east of the hotel extension, an 'Entrance Garden' is proposed which will comprise a roundabout with a themed feature at the centre. This area will serve as a 'drop-off' area for the hotel. The theming will help mark the entrance in a similar way to the existing hotel water feature. A footpath will be installed to connect this entrance area to a car park, to the east, which will comprise a total of 88 car parking spaces, of which five will be accessible car parking bays. Of the 88 spaces, 14 spaces on the eastern boundary have been approved as part of the lodge development. Consequently, the hotel extension scheme will consist of an uplift of 74 car parking spaces, which is in accordance with the approved hotel extension scheme. The car park will be accessed from the north via the existing internal road network and will benefit from a one-way system. The car park will be landscaped with new indigenous planting in the form of trees and shrubs to soften its appearance and screen it from view of the proposed hotel extension to the west and the lodge development to the east.

Pre-Application Consultation

A pre-application meeting to discuss the proposals with SMDC planning officers was held on 20 May 2015. It was verbally agreed that the principle of a 74 bed extension in this location had been accepted given the approved scheme. However, as a result of changes proposed, a fresh planning application would be required.

Planning Assessment

The Statutory Development Plan for Staffordshire Moorlands District Council comprises the Core Strategy (CS, adopted March 2014). The Churnet Valley Masterplan (March 2014) is also a material consideration in the determination of planning applications at the site.

The development of a hotel extension to the existing Alton Towers Hotel and Spa has been established in this location by the approved hotel extension (ref. 11/00402/REM1MJ) which could be built without any further consent needed. The proposed development constitutes a scheme of



similar positioning, footprint, scale, height and appearance to that of the approved scheme and therefore is considered to be acceptable in principle.

In addition, the development of long stay visitor accommodation within the Churnet Valley area and at Alton Towers Resort itself is supported by CS Policy SS7 'Churnet Valley Area Strategy', CS Policy E3 'Tourism and Cultural Development' and the Churnet Valley Masterplan.

Design

As mentioned, the overall design of the proposed hotel extension reflects the characteristics of the approved hotel extension and corresponds with the appearance of the existing hotel and spa. The scale of the proposed extension corresponds to the surrounding structures with a ridge level of +170.800, as per the approved hotel extension, compared to the existing hotel with a ridge level of +171.140. It has also been strategically designed to be beneath the height of the tree canopy at the woodland edge, thus screening views (see drawing ref. 1308_525 for detail). Likewise, the design aspiration focused upon reflecting similar characteristics to the existing hotel; therefore it will be finished in an 'English Colonial' style similar to the hotel and spa with associated minor theming elements. Accordingly, the proposal will respect the character and appearance of its immediate surroundings as required by CS Policy DC1 'Design Considerations'.

In its wider context, the extension has been sensitively designed to ensure that it does not detrimentally impact views of the surrounding landscape and Conservation Area. It has been designed to ensure it does not exceed the originally approved height of the hotel extension which has been accepted by the Council. In addition, on the southern elevation, where a small portion of the roof will be visible in winter, pilasters have been omitted and window surrounds and gutters will be dark in colour. Indeed, this is considered to improve the view compared to the existing and approved hotel extension, which had two cupolas on the roof and pilasters on the south elevation. Therefore the proposals are considered to protect and enhance the character of the surrounding landscape in accordance with CS Policies DC1 and SS7, and the Churnet Valley Masterplan.

Economic and Tourism Benefit

Alton Towers Resort is operated by Merlin Attractions Operations Limited which operates over 107 attractions world wide and has almost 26,000 employees. The Resort is the UK's largest and most popular theme park and is one of the largest employers within the district. In total, it is estimated that Alton Towers generates around £43 million income within the local economy and over £87 million within the regional economy.

Alton Towers Resort is directly and indirectly responsible for approximately 3,220 jobs in the local area and 4,050 jobs in the West Midlands region. In addition to this, it is estimated that the proposed hotel extension will result in an additional c.30 jobs (both part-time and full-time employment roles) which in turn will create wider direct and indirect spending effects within the local area. The proposed hotel extension will further support the local economy in accordance with CS Policy C3 'Tourism and Cultural Development' and Churnet Valley Masterplan.

In accordance with the Churnet Valley Masterplan the proposed hotel extension will extend the range of overnight accommodation available at the Resort, thus encouraging visitors from further away and to prolong their stay in the local area. Moreover, the provision of units for five to six visitors will encourage family groups to visit the Park as part of a multi-day break, rather than a single day visit.



Overall, therefore, the proposed hotel extension will directly and indirectly support the local economy through the attraction of additional overnight guests and increased employment opportunities. As such, the development is in accordance with local policies in economic terms.

Heritage Conservation

The site is located within the Alton and Farley Conservation Area and within the wider setting of the Alton Towers Grade II* Listed building, other listed buildings, and the Grade 1 Registered Park and Garden which is located to the south of the application site. CS Policy DC2 'Historic Environment' states that the Council will support the safeguarding and enhancement of the historic environment and its settings. In addition, the Churnet Valley Masterplan notes that any new development should take account of the sensitive nature of the Registered Park and Garden and should seek to maintain the character of the landscape, retaining and reinforcing parkland trees.

The proposed hotel extension will be a similar height and scale to the approved hotel extension and has the same relationship at its southern boundary with the Registered Garden. It is considered that the scale and appearance of the hotel extension is acceptable and will not detrimentally impact upon the character or appearance of the Conservation Area or Registered Park and Garden. In addition, the development will only require the removal of four poor quality trees, and will retain all trees on the woodland edge. Therefore, the proposals will not impact the character or setting of the Registered Park and Garden. The application site is located a considerable distance away from the listed buildings at Alton Towers and therefore is not considered to impact upon their setting.

Natural Environment

Given that the site is located adjacent to the woodland edge and within the vicinity of the Abbey Wood Site of Biological Importance (SBI), the proposals have been designed to ensure that it will not result on a detrimental impact on the natural environment, and will conserve landscape character and local biodiversity (CS Policy NE1 'Biodiversity and Geological Resources' and Churnet Valley Masterplan Policy 8.1 'Natural Environment'). Accordingly, the development will result in the removal of only 4 Category U trees (in a poor condition and recommended for removal) and therefore will have minimal impact on the nature and appearance of the SBI and woodland edge. In addition, as detailed in the Arboricultural Report, the presence of the Deer Park wall acts as a barrier to tree roots spreading north of the wall, and as a result the development will not impact upon this. Moreover, the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal concludes that the development will have low/negligible impact on the local wildlife. Bat surveys will be conducted to inform the design of the exterior lighting scheme to ensure that there will be no detrimental impact.

Amenity

The proposed development will comprise an extension to the existing hotel and therefore will not have a significant increased noise impact. Indeed, the Noise Report identifies that the operational impact of guests is expected to remain unchanged from existing conditions. In addition, the plant is not expected to result in significant adverse impacts.

With respect to transport, the Transport Assessment confirms that the small percentage of additional traffic resulting from the proposal can be accommodated on the existing highways network. Moreover, the proposed hotel extension will result in more guests arriving and departing outside of peak hours.



Consequently, the residential amenity, in terms of noise, transport and visual impact, of neighbouring properties is not considered to be adversely affected as a result of the proposed hotel extension.

Summary of Technical Assessments

Ecological Assessment

Staffordshire Ecological Services has prepared a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal which assesses the impact of the proposals on statutory and non statutory designated sites, great crested newts, on site habitats, badgers, bats and nesting birds. The report concludes that the proposals will have a low impact on onsite habitats, bats and nesting birds and a negligible impact on designated sites, great crested newts and badgers. Reasonable Avoidance Measures are recommended in relation to nesting birds, amphibians and badgers.

With respect to the impact on bats, it is recommended that three transect surveys are conducted along the woodland edge to inform the design of an appropriate lighting scheme. However, it is not considered necessary for the surveys to be conducted prior to the submission of a planning application and will be undertaken prior to the implementation of a lighting scheme. This approach has been agreed with SMDC officers.

Arboricultural Assessment

Tree Heritage has produced an Arboricultural Assessment. In summary, 93 trees were surveyed including a section of the woodland edge to the south of the application site. It was concluded that four Category U trees should be removed as part of the development on grounds of safety due to their poor condition. The proposal will have no impact on the tree roots of the woodland edge as the Deer Park Wall acts as a barrier preventing the roots spreading north. All retained trees will require protection and consequently the report identifies a series of tree protection measures in Section 5.

Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Statement

Simpsons Associates has prepared a Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy which assesses the extent and nature of flood risk, including fluvial flooding, sewer flooding and surface water and overland flooding. The application site is located in Flood Zone 1, denoting low probability of flooding. It is therefore concluded that the development is acceptable in terms of flood risk.

A surface water drainage strategy has been developed for the scheme which proposes SUDs in the form of gravel filled filter drains and underground pipework which will drain into a below ground geocellular storage crate soakaway. As a result, the development is not considered to increase the flood risk at the site or of neighbouring areas.

Overall, therefore, the proposed development is considered to be acceptable in terms of flood risk and drainage.



Services Strategy

Elementa has prepared a Building Services Strategy which sets out the proposed building services design for the hotel extension. It provides an overview of the ventilation, heating and cooling, electrical services and lighting, and public health services strategy.

Sustainability Statement

The Sustainability Statement, prepared by Elementa, provides an overview of the sustainability features proposed as part of the hotel extension. It notes that a holistic approach to the reduction of carbon and sustainability will be taken by ensuring a fabric first approach to reduce energy consumption. Passive design features and energy efficient measures have been used to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. An assessment is provided of potential Low and Zero Carbon (LZC) technologies considered as part of the development, however it is concluded that the use of passive design and energy efficient measures is sufficient to meet Building Regulations and planning policy requirements.

Transport Assessment

A Transport Assessment has been prepared by John Taylor, which concludes that there are no valid reasons for refusing the proposal on highway or transportation grounds. There will be no additional significant traffic impact. Indeed, the scheme will result in transport benefits as follows:

- 1 Reduce peak period traffic movements: The arrival and departure of visitors using the accommodation will be spread throughout the day and will therefore not conflict with day visitors.
- 2 Accommodation for long distance travellers: the availability of accommodation will enable visitors to share their travel over more than one day and ultimately avoiding peak hours or routes.
- 3 Visitors will have additional time to visit other local attractions.
- 4 Encourage visitors to use public transport as it will allow visitors to travel at off-peak times.

Noise Assessment

The Noise Assessment, prepared by CDC Limited, assesses the proposed development with regards to the potential construction impacts, noise resulting from mechanical and electrical services and operational noise impacts. In summary, the report concludes that the proposed development will comply with the adopted criteria and there will be no significant impact to defined receivers. In addition, an acoustic consultant will be consulted during the detailed design and construction stages to ensure that noise impacts continue to be considered as the development progresses.

Heritage Impact Assessment

A Heritage Impact Assessment has been prepared by Archaeological Research Services Ltd. It identifies that there are no significant archaeological remains within the application site that would be affected by the proposed development. It is concluded that given that the site has previously been disturbed by construction works associated with the existing Alton Towers Hotel and the commencement of the approved hotel extension, there is low potential for buried archaeological remains. Overall, therefore, no further archaeological mitigation is considered necessary. In



addition, the proposal is considered to have a neutral or slight impact on the Alton and Farley Conservation Area.

Construction Management Plan

Stace has prepared a Construction Management Plan which provides the programme and arrangements for working on site. In summary:

- 1 Construction will start in the first quarter of 2016 for a 67 week period
- 2 Construction traffic will use the existing internal road network and will be closely supervised. Where possible, deliveries will be scheduled for outside the park opening hours and to avoid peak times. Throughout the construction period all roads and footpaths will be kept clear of mud and debris.
- 3 The site compound (including offices and welfare facilities) will be located to the east of the proposed site and will be securely fenced to ensure no unauthorised access. All material will be stored within the site compound. The entrance to the compound will have a wheel washing system to clean vehicle wheels on exit from the compound.
- 4 Construction hours will be from 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday. It is intended to avoid works at the weekend.
- 5 Any noisy works will be monitored at all times and to monitor noise and site cleanliness, regular health and safety inspections will be conducted.
- 6 Opportunities to re-use, recycle and recover construction, demolition and excavation material will be maximised where possible.
- 7 All reasonable endeavours will be made to minimise noise, vibration, dust and smoke disturbance from the site.
- 8 The works will be undertaken in three phases (see Section 14 for detail).
- 9 The public footpath through the site will remain open throughout construction. A banks man will be kept on site to ensure public safety on the footpath, which will be gated throughout the construction period.

Environmental Impact Assessment

Consideration has been given to the relevance of this application to the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment, EIA) Regulations (2011, as amended). The application site area measures 0.97ha and therefore exceeds the 0.5ha threshold for hotel complexes and theme parks for the Council to consider if the proposal will require an EIA. Given that the proposed development is similar in scale, massing and appearance to the approved hotel extension, we do not consider that an EIA will be required. In addition, the proposed extension has been assessed with regards to flooding, ecology, noise, visual impact, heritage impact and transport and is not considered to give rise to significant environmental effects requiring a formal EIA. Notwithstanding the above, it would be appreciated if RBC could confirm in writing that they agree with the view that the proposed scheme is not an EIA development.



Conclusion

The proposed development will complement the existing accommodation offer at Alton Towers Resort by meeting the needs of guests and will support the continued enhancement of existing facilities at the Resort. The nature and extent of the proposed extension is no greater than the previously approved and implemented planning permission granted in 2011 (ref. 11/00402/REM1MJ).

As evident from the planning assessment, the principle of a hotel extension in this location has been established by the approved hotel extension permission. The proposal has been designed to correspond to the character, scale and appearance of the existing buildings in this location and will be finished in an 'English Colonial' style. It will protect and enhance the character and appearance of the surrounding landscape in terms of views, and also with respect to trees of which only four will be removed as part of the development. In addition, the proposal is considered to be acceptable in terms of economic benefits, residential amenity, heritage conservation and impact on the natural environment. Overall, the development is in accordance with the relevant local planning policies and will constitute an enhancement of the existing accommodation offer at Alton Towers Resort.

We trust that we have provided you with sufficient information to validate and determine the application. Should you require any additional information or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or my colleague Tor Barrett.

Yours sincerely

Hannah Whitney
Planning Director

Copy	Suzie Atkinson	Merlin Entertainments
	Mark Kerrigan	ATR
	Janet Gurr	ATR
	Erwin Alders	Stace
	Thomas Lewis	Stace
	Chris Jeffcoate	The Manser Practice
	Guy Duhig	The Manser Practice
	Andy Nichols	Nichols Brown Webber
	John Taylor	Transport Consultant
	Richard Pearce	Staffordshire Ecological Services Ltd
	David Glossop	Elementa
	Hugh Williams	Tree Heritage
	Mark Craddock	Simpsons Associates
	Michelle Burpoe	Archaeological Research Services Ltd
	Ben Cahill	Cahill Design Consultants



Appendix 1 Application Drawings

Drawing Title	Reference	Scale
Key Plan	373_50.3_1	1:2500@ A1/ 1:5000@ A3
Block Plan as Proposed	373_50.3_2	1:500@ A1/ 1:1000@ A3
Site Plan as Existing	373_50.3_3	1:250@ A1/ 1:500@ A3
Site Plan as Proposed	373_50.3_4	1:250@ A1/ 1:500@ A3
Garden Plan as Proposed	373_50.3_5	1:250@ A1/ 1:500@ A3
Siteworks Edges and Walls	373_50.3_10	1:20@ A3
Siteworks: Pond Headwell & Waterfalls	373_50.3_11	1:20@ A3
Siteworks: Fences & Handrails	373_50.3_12	1:20@ A3
Site Location Plan	150724-A-1308_501	1:1250 @ A0
Demolition Plan	150724-A-1308_502	1:200@A1
Existing Site Plan	150724-A-1308_508	1:500 @ A1
Existing Lower Ground Floor Plan	150723-A-1308_1.04_509	1:100@ A0
Existing Ground Floor Plan	150723-A-1308_1.04_510	1:100@ A0
Existing First Floor Plan	150723-A-1308_1.04_511	1:100@ A0
Existing Second Floor Plan	150723-A-1308_1.04_512	1:100@ A0
Existing Roof Plan	150723-A-1308_1.04_513	1:100@ A0
Existing Site Sections	150723-A-1308_1.04_514	1:100@ A0
Existing North and East Elevations	150723-A-1308_1.04_515	1:100@ A0
Existing South and West Elevations	150723-A-1308_1.04_516	1:100@ A0
Proposed Site Plan	150724-A-1308_518	1:500 @ A1
Proposed Lower Ground Floor Plan	150723-A-1308_1.04_519	1:100@ A0
Proposed Ground Floor Plan	150723-A-1308_1.04_520	1:100@ A0
Proposed First Floor Plan	150723-A-1308_1.04_521	1:100@ A0
Proposed Second Floor Plan	150723-A-1308_1.04_522	1:100@ A0
Proposed Roof Plan	150723-A-1308_1.04_523	1:100@ A0



Proposed Site Sections A-A and B-B	150723-A-1308_1.04_524	1:100@ A0
Proposed Site Sections C-C and D-D	150723-A-1308_1.04_525	1:100@ A0
Proposed North and East Elevations	150723-A-1308_1.04_526	1:100@ A0
Proposed South and West Elevations	150723-A-1308_1.04_527	1:100@ A0
Proposed External Theming	150724-A-1308_530	1:50 @ A1

Appendix 2 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Viewpoints

Drawing Title	Reference	Scale
Viewpoints Key Plan	373_50.3_20	1:12500@ A3
Viewpoint 2	373_50.3_21	N/A
Viewpoint 5	373_50.3_24	N/A
Viewpoint 9	373_50.3_25	N/A
Viewpoint 12	373_50.3_26	N/A
Viewpoint 13A	373_50.3_27	N/A
Viewpoint 13B	373_50.3_28	N/A
Viewpoint 13C	373_50.3_29	N/A



Appendix 3 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

The consideration of the landscape and visual impacts of the proposals involves two separate but inter-related assessments:

- 1 Consideration of the impact on the character and quality of the landscape in the vicinity of the site; and
- 2 An evaluation of the visual impact of the development on views, viewers and visual amenity.

The policy context guiding the above assessments includes the following:

- 3 Site Designations:
 - i The gardens at Alton Towers Resort are listed Grade I on the Register of Parks and Gardens and incorporate several listed structures and buildings, including the Grade II* listed Towers. These elements are all designated heritage assets (NPPF)
 - ii The estate is located within the Alton-Farley Conservation Area (designated 1971) the character and appearance of which should be preserved or enhanced. The site is also within a Special Landscape Area.
 - iii The Bunbury Earthworks, located to the south west of the Towers, is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.
 - iv The area of woodland to the south of the application site is identified as 'Grade I County Site of Biological Importance.' The effects of the development on the nature conservation value of the site are considered in the separate Ecology Report.
- 4 Local Planning Policy and Guidance:
 - i SMDC Core Strategy (2014)
 - ii Churnet Valley Masterplan (2014)
 - iii Alton/Farley Conservation Area Designation (1971)
- 5 The following Landscape Character Assessments have also been considered:
 - i Natural England Character of England Project (2005, updated from 1996 Map)
 - ii Staffordshire Landscape Character Assessment: Planning for Landscape Change (SLCA, 2001)

Landscape Character Baseline

In accordance with the Character Areas allocated within the Long Term Plan, the proposed hotel extension is within Character Area 4 'Alton Towers – Themed attraction areas and hotel'. The following description is provided:

"Visitor rides and attractions are interspersed with mature trees and ancillary visitor and service buildings. Attractions are connected with pedestrian walkways. Built form in this Character Area is predominantly between one and two storeys with an average height of approximately 192m AOD. Theme park rides in this Character Area are up to 201m AOD in height (Rita)."

The receptors are identified as the setting of The Towers and other listed buildings, and the Alton/Farley Conservation Area. The Area is noted as being of 'low sensitivity' with potential for development.

With respect to the wider landscape, the landscape to the north and south of the Alton Towers Resort has a medium/high sensitivity to change, with existing detracting features such as quarries



and degraded hedgerows. Although the Staffordshire Landscape Character Assessment identifies these areas as very sensitive to change they are not classed as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty or any other national designation. As a result, they are considered to have a medium/high sensitivity to change in this assessment.

Visual Impact Baseline

The scope of visual impact assessment includes seven viewpoints selected as representative views which have been assessed in connection with the proposed development, each classified in terms of receptors and sensitivity. These views are a subset of those identified in the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment produced for the Long Term Plan.

Table 1. Baseline View Sensitivity

View	Role of Alton Towers/view descriptions	Receptors	Sensitivity
2	The Towers and Flag Tower are visible above existing woodland on the site. Glimpses of the north car park are available between hedgerows marking the southern boundary of the meadows. The JCB test track is just visible.	Walkers	High
5	The Alton Towers northern meadows are visible in the middle ground.	Walkers	High
9	The Splash Landings Hotel is glimpsed as a red and white roof line amongst the existing woodland on and surrounding the site. The turrets of the flag tower are glimpsed on the tree line. No other built form within the park is visible.	Walkers	High
12	View from Town Head (1) footpath. Glimpses of Glimpses of Splash Landings, ATH, mobile masts and light masts.	Walkers, horseriders	High
13A	View from Town Head (2) footpath. Glimpses of Glimpses of Splash Landings, ATH, mobile masts and light mast.	Walkers, horseriders	High
13B	View from Town Head (3) footpath. Glimpses of Glimpses of Splash Landings, ATH, mobile masts and light mast. The application site is not visible	Walkers, horseriders	High
13C	View from Town Head (4) footpath. Glimpses of Glimpses of Splash Landings, ATH, mobile masts and light mast.	Walkers, horseriders	High

Assessment

The assessment below is based on a series of visualisations produced by Nichols Brown Webber, submitted as part of the application, and listed in Appendix 2 of this letter. For each of the seven numbered viewpoints, the visualisation sheets show:

- 1 The view as existing (winter views)
- 2 The view as proposed showing the development as green wirelines

With respect to landscape character, the site is located within a Character Area considered to be of low sensitivity given that it is a developed area of the Resort. The effects on this Character Area will primarily relate to the loss of the existing grassland and visibility of parts of the development from the public footpath leading from north to south to the east of the existing hotel. The proposal comprises an extension to the existing hotel and spa and is similar in scale and massing to the approved hotel extension (ref. 11/00402/REM1MJ). It will be seen within the surrounding context of

the existing hotel and spa, and the Enchanted Village development to the east, and will be accompanied by associated landscaping to screen the view of the proposed car park area. Therefore, the cumulative effect of the development proposals, in the context of the wider Resort, is not considered to significantly affect the Landscape Character or the views of existing walkers. The public footpath continues to the south of the application site, leading west through the woodland. Views from this part of the footpath will be obscured by the existing woodland.

The impact of the proposals on the seven key views has also been considered in terms of the visual impact of the development. A summary of the visual effects is provided below.

Table 2. Summary of visual effects.

View	Sensitivity	Effect	Comment
2	High	Nil	No part of the hotel extension development is visible
5	High	Nil	No part of the hotel extension development is visible
9	High	Nil	No part of the hotel extension development is visible
12	High	Nil	No part of the hotel extension development is visible
13A	High	Minor improvement	A two metre section of roof will be visible in front of the existing cupola on the Alton Towers Hotel. It will therefore constitute a slight improvement on the existing view as part of the cupola will be screened and the proposed elevation will have dark colour window surrounds and gutters, with pilasters omitted to reduce the visual impact.
13B	High	Negligible	A three metre section of roof will be visible between the tree cover. The elevation will have dark colour window surrounds and gutters, with pilasters omitted resulting in no material change from the existing view.
13C	High	Minor improvement	In the existing view, windows, gutters, roof hips and cupolas on the existing hotel are visible. The proposed hotel extension will screen the majority of these features, except the cupolas. Instead, a five metre section of roof and a new window will be visible. The elevation will have dark colour window surrounds and gutters, with pilasters omitted to reduce visual impact. The overall effect would be a reduction in the noticeable elements

Overall, with the proposed mitigation measures, the effects of the proposed hotel extension would range from nil/negligible (no change) to minor improvement in the case of Views 13A and 13C.

With respect to night time visual impact, the proposed external lighting strategy will be based on low level lighting which will be sensitive to the potential for bats in the area. Lux levels will therefore be relatively lower than existing sources at the resort. Accordingly, it is not considered that the proposals would lead to any landscape character or visual harm as a result of the introduction of additional sources of artificial light.

Conclusion

Given the surrounding context of the proposed development, within an already developed area of the Resort, and in light of the approved hotel extension which is similar in scale and massing, the proposed development will result in a negligible effect on the landscape character. With respect to the long range views of the site from beyond the Resort boundary, the hotel extension will largely be screened by existing woodland. However, where the proposed development will be visible, it will constitute a minor improvement on the existing view.