



Nathaniel Lichfield  
& Partners

Planning. Design. Economics.

**Alton Towers Resort: New Ride 2016**

**Design and Access Statement**

Merlin Attractions Operations Limiter  
(Alton Towers Resort)

May 2016

03224/IR/TN

Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners  
14 Regent's Wharf  
All Saints Street  
London N1 9RL

**[nlpplanning.com](http://nlpplanning.com)**

This document is formatted for double sided printing.

© Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners Ltd 2016. Trading as Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners.

All Rights Reserved.

Registered Office:

14 Regent's Wharf

All Saints Street

London N1 9RL

All plans within this document produced by NLP are based upon Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown Copyright reserved. Licence number AL50684A

## Contents

---

1.0	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
	Purpose of the Statement .....	5
	Alton Towers Resort.....	5
	The application site .....	6
	Description of Proposals .....	6
2.0	<b>Assessment</b>	<b>7</b>
	Planning Assessment.....	7
	Proposed New Ride 2016 .....	7
3.0	<b>Summary and Conclusions</b>	<b>1</b>



## 1.0 Introduction

### Purpose of the Statement

- 1.1 This Design and Access Statement has been prepared on behalf of Merlin Attractions Operations Limited (Alton Towers). It accompanies the application for planning permission for the demolition of existing Log Flume structure and associated buildings, and the installation of a new rollercoaster, construction of associated buildings, groundworks and landscaping at Alton Towers Resort.
- 1.2 This statement responds to the requirements of Article 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 for planning applications to be accompanied by a Design and Access Statement. It has also been prepared in accordance with Communities and Local Government '*Guidance on information requirement and validation*' published in March 2010 (as amended).
- 1.3 The statement covers the key design principles and concepts applied to the proposed development. It should be read in conjunction with the planning application submission.

### Alton Towers Resort

- 1.4 Alton Towers is located in the Churnet Valley to the north of Alton Village, and is approximately 195 hectares in size. The main access to the site is from Farley Lane to the west of the Resort. In terms of levels, the main site is located on a plateau from which levels drop into surrounding valleys.
- 1.5 There are extensive areas of woodland, particularly on the steep downward slopes of the southern and eastern boundaries. The woodland serves to screen the main part of the park's development from the surrounding area, although there are some limited distant views of structures within the Resort, such as glimpses of parts of the Oblivion ride and existing roof structures (e.g. Hotel). The Resort is broadly rectangular in shape with an east west dimension in excess of 2km and a north south dimension of approximately 1km, albeit varying across the site. The nearest major urban areas are Stoke on Trent, approximately 19km (12 miles) east of the park, and the City of Derby, 29km (18 miles) to the east.
- 1.6 Alton Towers Resort is an established theme park containing a range of rides, attractions, overnight accommodation and ancillary facilities. The resort contains 32 of listed buildings and a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Bunbury Hillfort). The gardens at Alton Towers are listed Grade I on the Register of Parks and Gardens and Abbey Wood and Park Banks are identified as 'Sites of Biological Importance' and 'ancient woodlands'. The Resort is located within the Alton and Farley Conservation Area.

---

## **The application site**

- 1.7 The application site occupies an area of approximately 2.8 hectares and is located in the northern section of the Resort and is currently occupied by the log flume (maximum height of 194.54m AOD which is 7m above adjacent ground level) and is partially bisected to the south west by the cable car ride (the support column is approximately 199.71m AOD which is 16m above adjacent ground level).
- 1.8 The application site is located within the Alton and Farley Conservation Area and the southern part of the site (to the south of the Deer Wall) is located within the Registered Park and Garden Boundary. To the north east of the site is the Congo River Rapids Ride (station building maximum height of 197.85m AOD which is 7.4m above adjacent ground level), to the north west is the listed Stable building, forming part of a themed area known as Mutiny bay, beyond which is Towers Street.
- 1.9 Photographs of the existing site are contained at Appendix 1.

## **Description of Proposals**

- 1.10 To enhance the offer at the Resort, it is proposed to remove the now dated Log Flume attraction and install a new rollercoaster to the west of the Congo River Rapids ride. The proposed new coaster will be contained outside of the woodland area (located to the south of the application site) on a previously developed area.
- 1.11 As part of the proposals, the Log Flume and associated theming will be removed; however its footings will be retained in order to not adversely affect the existing trees which are now well established in this area. Following the removal of the Log Flume structures, this area will be returned to natural woodland.

## 2.0 **Assessment**

### **Planning Assessment**

- 2.1 The Statutory Development Plan currently comprises the Core Strategy (CS, adopted March 2014). The Churnet Valley Masterplan – Supplementary Planning Document (March 2014) is also a material consideration in the determination of planning applications at the site. National planning policy guidance is also of relevance.
- 2.2 Alton Towers is identified within the Core Strategy as being within the Churnet Valley, an area identified for sustainable tourism and rural regeneration. The promotion of new tourism opportunities within the Churnet Valley area and at Alton Towers Resort is supported by Spatial Strategy SA3 ‘Encouraging a strong, prosperous and diverse economy’ and Core Strategy Policy SS7 ‘Churnet Valley Area Strategy’, CS Policy E3 ‘Tourism and Cultural Development’ and the Churnet Valley Masterplan.
- 2.3 With respect to site designations, the proposed rollercoaster is located within the Alton and Farley Conservation Area. The southern part of the site is located within the boundaries of a Registered Park/Garden, Ancient Woodland and Nature Conservation Site; however the proposed new ride will be predominantly excluded from these designations, with only limited paths and queue lines within the wooded area. In addition, following the removal of the existing Log Flume structures, the area to the southern part of the site will be returned to natural woodland.

### **Proposed New Ride 2016**

- 2.4 It is proposed to demolish the existing Log Flume structure and associated buildings, and install a new rollercoaster, along with the construction of associated buildings, groundworks and landscaping at Alton Towers Resort.

### **Use**

- 2.5 The application site is located in the wider Alton Towers Theme Park Resort which is characterised as Use Class D2 (Leisure).

### **Amount**

- 2.6 The existing Log Flume coaster structure will be demolished together with a total floorspace of 166sqm of existing buildings on site, including the Mexican Cantina, photo hut and queuing kiosk buildings.
- 2.7 The new ride development will include a maintenance and station building, shop, games unit and food kiosk, which will have a combined maximum GIA floorspace of 1,223 sqm or 1,346sqm of GEA floorspace.

## Layout

- 2.8 The positioning of the new rollercoaster and associated buildings and structures are shown on drawing ref. 373/95-4 and 373/95-7. In addition to the general ride track, some sections of the proposed track will be positioned below the existing ground level to assist with the ride experience and to mitigate noise impacts.
- 2.9 Alton Towers has discussed the proposed development with planning officers at Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, including a site visit with the tree officer. The key objective has been to provide a rollercoaster within the existing developed area of the Park that will have a minimum impact on its surroundings, including the Registered Park and Garden.
- 2.10 The proposed new ride will be restricted to the northern part of the site and will be predominantly excluded from the woodland area to the south of the site, which falls within a Registered Park/Garden, Ancient Woodland and Nature Conservation Site.

## Scale

- 2.11 The majority of the buildings will be single storey (maximum height of 9.9 metres), but the proposed maintenance and station building will also include a small basement and stepped access to first floor to provide access for maintenance purposes. Drawing 373/95-4 shows the proposed location of the new buildings and also identifies the following indicative spot heights for the proposed ride track, these include the maximum high point of the ride which rises from adjacent ground level to 10 metres to the top of the track (spot height 201m AOD):
- 1 High Point 1 = 201m AOD (10 metres from adjacent ground level)
  - 2 High Point 2 = 193.4m AOD (9 metres from adjacent ground level, with the tunnel extending 2m above this level)
  - 3 High Point 3 = 191.4m AOD (9.9 metres above adjacent ground level)
  - 4 High Point 4 = 186.8m AOD (4.3 metres above adjacent ground level)
  - 5 High Point 5 = 189.6m AOD (3.4 metres above adjacent ground level)
  - 6 High Point 6 = 184.6m AOD (2 metres above adjacent ground level)
  - 7 High Point 7 = 185.8m AOD (0.2 metres below adjacent ground level)
- 2.12 In addition, two themed features are proposed to be incorporated into the ride design (Theming Envelope 1 at a maximum height of up to 14.6 metres from existing ground level and Theming Envelope 2 at up to 16m above adjacent ground level). The locations and indicative spot height of these features are shown on drawing 373/95-4.
- 2.13 The planning application is accompanied by a photographic assessment showing views as existing and proposed. For full details please refer to the



long and short views contained in the Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) and Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA).

- 2.14 In summary, the visual assessment has shown that the proposed development would have a nil-negligible neutral effect on the identified representative views. The LVIA concluded that the height of the proposed ride is in general conformity with the parameters set out in the Long Term Plan (its highest point is only 0.5m above the recommended maximum height) and therefore the impact on views would be minimal and not harmful. Any impact on views would not affect visual amenity or block any key features of views.

## **Landscaping**

- 2.15 The proposals will result in the loss of 56 trees, however the majority of these are relatively young trees that were planted as part of the log flume and rapids ride. They have been planted fairly close together and so are not particularly good as individual specimens. In order to mitigate the loss for these trees, a comprehensive replacement landscaping scheme is proposed (see drawings 373/95-8 and 373/95/18).
- 2.16 It is noted that there are approximately 12,000 trees under the control and ownership of Alton Towers, and that Alton Towers has a programme of woodland management within its woodland which has significant benefits to the woodland and to its biodiversity.
- 2.17 The coaster track layout has been carefully designed so that it is located within an existing developed site and avoids the woodland area to the south. The LVIA concluded that landscape character effects would be nil, neutral or beneficial, largely due to the design of the ride and the removal of an attraction from the Registered Park and Garden which would allow this area to be returned to natural woodland.
- 2.18 Overall, given the existing woodland management and proposed landscaping at the site, it is considered that there will be no overall adverse impact on trees or the woodland as a result of the proposed development.

## **Appearance**

- 2.19 The rollercoaster structure, sound tunnels and screens will be made of dark stained timber elements, predominantly made of southern yellow pine. The associated rails will be made of a combination of timber and steel.
- 2.20 With respect to the buildings, the accompanying drawings (prepared by Smytheman Architects) show the maximum size and bulk of the buildings and materials proposed. In summary, the upper section of the buildings will be made of horizontal dark timber boarding with aged and weathered effect, and the lower section of the buildings will be clad in a combination of grass and earth effect and / or sandstone effect. The roof will be made of artificial thatch and distressed profiled metal sheeting.

- 2.21 The design approach for the replacement ride will seek to complement existing theming within the Resort and to meet the expectations of resort guests. Materials have been chosen to complement the rural and woodland surroundings and the proposed dark colour for the coaster track and stanchions will assist to minimise any impact of the proposed structure on landscape character and views.

### **Access**

- 2.22 Drawings ref. 373/95-4 and 373/95-7 show the existing and proposed paving areas to provide access to the new ride and associated buildings. A new boardwalk is also proposed linking the entrance to the proposed new buildings.
- 2.23 Drawing ref. 373/95-5 shows that the existing paved area cutting through the woodland to the south will be removed as part of the removal of the Log Flume ride.
- 2.24 The proposed rollercoaster will not obstruct existing pedestrian flows in the vicinity of the site. Ramps will be installed where there are significant changes in levels and a separate access to the ride will be available for disabled guests. Due to the nature of the proposed ride there will be restrictions on use (this is the case for a number of rides at Alton Towers).

## 3.0 **Summary and Conclusions**

3.1 This statement has addressed the following issues in connection with the design approach for the proposed replacement rollercoaster:

- 1 Use
- 2 Amount
- 3 Layout
- 4 Scale
- 5 Landscaping
- 6 Appearance
- 7 Access

3.2 The proposals meet the relevant policy criteria set out within Section 2.0. The proposals will not have an adverse effect on the character of the Alton and Farley Conservation Area or the settings of listed buildings. In this respect the proposal is in accordance with the statutory requirements laid down by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990, and in national and local heritage policies.

3.3 The design of the new rollercoaster will respect its surroundings and in landscape terms, and the design approach will seek to meet the expectations of resort guests whilst respecting the site and its surroundings.

## Appendix 1 Existing Site Images























Nathaniel Lichfield  
& Partners

Planning. Design. Economics.

**Planning** 2011-2014  
**Consultancy** RTPI  
**of the Year** . ★ ★ ★ .

-  Applications & Appeals
-  Climate Change & Sustainability
-  Community Engagement
-  Daylight & Sunlight
-  Economics & Regeneration
-  Environmental Assessment
-  Expert Evidence
-  GIS & Spatial Analytics
-  Graphic Design
-  Heritage
-  Property Economics
-  Site Finding & Land Assembly
-  Strategy & Appraisal
-  Urban Design

**Bristol**

0117 403 1980

**Cardiff**

029 2043 5880

**Edinburgh**

0131 285 0670

**Leeds**

0113 397 1397

**London**

020 7837 4477

**Manchester**

0161 837 6130

**Newcastle**

0191 261 5685

**Thames Valley**

0118 334 1920

**nlpplanning.com**