



Nathaniel Lichfield
& Partners

Planning. Design. Economics.

Alton Towers Resort: New Ride 2016

Heritage Impact Assessment

Merlin Entertainments Group

May 2016

03224/IR/KD

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

nlplanning.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	Introduction	1
2.0	Statutory and Policy Considerations	2
	Staffordshire Moorlands Local Development Framework	2
	Other Relevant Guidance.....	6
3.0	Assessment Methodology	7
4.0	Baseline Conditions	8
	The Site and surroundings	8
	Historic Development.....	9
	Heritage Assets: Baseline Conditions	9
	Computer based Visualisations.....	14
5.0	Potential Effects	15
	Proposed Development.....	15
	Consultation.....	15
	Effects on Heritage Assets.....	16
	Park Views.....	18
6.0	Summary and Conclusions	20
	Effects on Heritage Assets.....	20

Appendices

Appendix 1	Composite Planning Constraints Plan
Appendix 2	Listing Descriptions
Appendix 3	Park View Visualisations

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) has been prepared by Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners (NLP) on behalf of the Merlin Entertainments Group to accompany an application for development at Alton Towers within the Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. The HIA considers the potential direct and indirect (setting) effects of the development on heritage assets.
- 1.2 The application site is situated to the north east of Alton Towers. It is bounded to the north by the Congo River Rapids, to the east by the monorail line, to the south by Haunted Hollow and to the west by the Battle Galleons and Mutiny Bay Burger Kitchen. A cable car system passes over the site.
- 1.3 Currently the site is occupied by a log flume which was constructed in the 1980s and is no longer in use. The site lies within the Alton and Farley Conservation Area and is adjacent to Alton Towers' Grade I Registered Park and Garden. The site is outside the Permitted Development Area within Alton Towers' grounds.
- 1.4 There are a number of listed buildings in the vicinity, including but not limited to: the Corkscrew Fountain, Stables, Stonehenge, Retaining Wall, the Prospect Tower and the Orangery (all Grade II).
- 1.5 The development comprises the demolition of an existing log flume ride which is no longer in service and its replacement with a roller-coaster of wooden construction. The footprint of the proposed attraction would be smaller than that of the current structure enabling the portion of the site which lies within the Registered Park and Garden to be returned to woodland.
- 1.6 The assessment has been informed by a series of photo-montage visualisations prepared by NBW Architects and Landscape Planners (Appendix 3).

2.0

Statutory and Policy Considerations

2.1

Section 66 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires Local Authorities to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural interest which it possesses. Section 72 of the Act requires the Local Authority to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving the character and appearance of Conservation Areas within their area.

2.2

Under the National Planning Policy Framework, World Heritage Sites, Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Registered Parks and Gardens are considered designated heritage assets. Under paragraph 128 applicants are required to describe the significance of heritage assets affected by a proposal, including any contribution made by their setting.

2.3

Paragraphs 132-134 state that great weight should be given to an asset's conservation in a manner appropriate to its historic significance. Significance is defined in the NPPF as: "the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic."

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Development Framework

2.4

The Staffordshire Moorlands Local Development Framework (LDF) is made up of several documents including the Statement of Community Involvement and the Biddulph Town Centre Area Action Plan. It is a District wide development plan replacing the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan. It provides a framework for delivering development up to 2026. A summary of policies relevant to the historic environment is set out below.

Core Strategy Development Plan Document (March 2014)

SS1 Development Principles

2.5

The Council expects developments and land use to make a positive contribution to the improvement of the social, economic and environmental climate. This should be achieved through the provision of, *inter alia*:

- development which maintains the distinctive character of the Staffordshire Moorlands, its individual towns and villages and their settings;
- development that is undertaken in a way that protects and enhances the natural and historic environment of the District and its surrounding areas both now and for future generations;

SS7 - Churnet Valley Area Strategy

- 2.6 The Churnet Valley is identified as an area for sustainable tourism and rural regeneration. Within this area particular support will be given to forms of development and measures which enhance, protect and interpret the landscape character and heritage assets of the Churnet Valley.
- 2.7 The policy requires that all development should be designed to a high standard and to a scale which conserves and enhances the heritage, landscape and biodiversity of the area.

DC1 - Design Considerations

- 2.8 *The policy states that:*
“All development shall be well designed and reinforce local distinctiveness by positively contributing to and complementing the special character and heritage of the area.”
- 2.9 New developments should:
- *“be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area;*
 - *be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance;*
 - *protect the amenity of the area...in terms of satisfactory daylight, sunlight, outlook, privacy and soft landscaping;*
 - *ensure, where appropriate, equality of access and use for all sections of the community.”*
- 2.10 Policy DC2 - The Historic Environment, states that:
- “The Council will safeguard and, where possible, enhance the historic environment, areas of historic landscape character and interests of acknowledged importance, including in particular scheduled ancient monuments, significant buildings (both statutory listed and on a local register), the settings of designated assets, conservation areas, registered historic parks and gardens, registered battlefields and archaeological remains by:*
- 1. Resisting development which would harm or be detrimental to the special character and historic heritage of the District’s towns and villages and those interests of acknowledged importance.*
 - 2. Promoting development which sustains, respects or enhances buildings and features which contribute to the character or heritage of an area and those interests of acknowledged importance through the use of conservation area appraisals, design statements, archaeological assessments, characterisation studies and Masterplanning.*

3. Preventing the loss of buildings and features which make a positive contribution to the character or heritage of an area through appropriate reuse and sensitive development, including enabling development, unless their retention is not viable or there would be substantial planning benefits to outweigh the loss."

Churnet Valley Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (March 2014)

- 2.11 The overarching principle of the masterplan is to sustain and enhance the natural, built and historic environment of the area, through managed change, providing for rural regeneration, which is based largely on sustainable tourism.
- 2.12 The positive aspects of the Churnet Valley should be protected and enhanced by, *inter alia*:
- sustaining and enhancing the Valley's existing, unique qualities and assets
 - ensuring future development is sympathetic and responds to environmental, ecological and landscape limitations, making appropriate management provisions for land, nature conservation, heritage, wildlife and areas of geological interest
 - ensuring an approach to environmental management which integrates benefits for the natural, historic and built environment
 - encouraging an increased awareness and understanding of the area's heritage assets
- 2.13 The Churnet Valley Masterplan aims to deliver quality and sustainable tourism. The aims relevant to this application include the Resort's improvement through, *inter alia*:
- facilitating the Valley's development as a visitor destination whilst respecting its historic and natural environment
 - promoting tourism and economic prosperity without harming the essential qualities of landscape, ecology, heritage and remoteness which make the Valley unique
- 2.14 The **Alton Character Area** is an area of high landscape value, dominated by the Alton Towers Resort. Further development of the Alton Towers Resort will be considered against the guidance set out in the Churnet Valley Masterplan. This is in conjunction with the aims and objectives set out in the Long Term Plan developed by Alton Towers.
- 2.15 The Masterplan states that:

“Any new development at the Alton Towers Resort should comply with the Transport Strategy, Woodland Management Plan, Conservation Plan and Legal Agreement once agreed...All major development proposals will need to consider impact on views, transport, trees and heritage assets. In some proposals the potential noise effects of proposals will also be an important consideration...”

2.16 The Masterplan further states that:

- any new development at the Alton Towers Resort must not conflict with policies in the Conservation Plan to ensure existing heritage assets are conserved
- new development considers the sensitive nature of the Registered Historic Parkland and its setting
- any new development proposals which extend into the wider parkland take account of its setting, and reinforce vegetation structure

2.17 The area’s designated and non-designated heritage assets *“shall be protected and maintained in a state of good repair and enhanced wherever possible... Development proposals shall not cause avoidable harm to any heritage assets...Development should seek to conserve and enhance the historic landscape character of the Churnet Valley.”*

Alton and Farley Conservation Area Appraisal (February 2008)

2.18 Alton Towers and its gardens lie in the centre of the Conservation Area which also includes Farley Hall and hamlet to the north and Alton and Alton Castle to the south; each area has its own character and history. Alton Towers Resort occupies the former deer park.

2.19 The Appraisal notes:

“The boundary between Alton and Farley is the River Churnet, whose steep-sided valley provides a backdrop of dramatic scenery and unspoilt countryside which is largely unsettled...From the late 18th century the area around Alton Towers developed from parkland containing a small lodge and the occasional farmhouse to the setting for one of England’s most important country houses.” The grounds of Alton Towers are described as “...one of England’s finest gardens.”

“The layout of the gardens reflects the 15th earl’s interest in the Picturesque movement fashionable in Regency England. This favoured irregular scenery and contrasting building styles...The Picturesque movement...prized spectacular landscape features, towering rocks, cascading streams and above all saw regularity as dull and uninteresting. The result is a constant series of surprises, a fascinating mixture of plants and buildings, richly deserving its Grade I status on the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.”

“The Conservation Area spans a dramatic section of the Churnet Valley. Here wooded slopes form a key element of the landscape, and tree planting by the earls of Shrewsbury has left an outstanding legacy. In addition the Registered Garden contains fine specimen trees...Sections of pasture in Alton Park and on the fringes of the settlements have been included in the Conservation Area to help maintain the general setting. These are of particular importance on the northwest of Alton Park where unaltered parkland leaves views of Bunbury Hill and Alton Towers in a near perfect state of preservation.”

“Alton and Farley lie on uneven ground to the south of the Weaver Hills, in the northern uplands of Staffordshire where prominently sited buildings can be seen over wide areas of countryside.”

Other Relevant Guidance

Historic England’s The Setting of Heritage Assets Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3 (2015)

- 2.1 This guidance was published in March 2015 and sets out a methodology to use for assessing the effects on the settings of heritage assets. According to this document, the contribution made by an asset’s setting to its historic significance should first be determined, before an assessment is made of the effect on that significance arising from a change to setting.

3.0 **Assessment Methodology**

- 3.1 The assessment of effects on heritage assets has been informed by Historic England's Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment (2008) and the definition of significance provided in the NPPF. Conservation Principles is used by conservation practitioners to understand significance for the purposes of decision-making. Significance is defined as comprising four potential heritage values: evidential, architectural, aesthetic, and communal. Effects on significance as a result of alterations to setting have been assessed following Historic England's Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Settings of Heritage Assets (2015). According to this document, the contribution made by an asset's setting to its historic significance should first be determined, before an assessment being made of the effect on that significance arising from a change to setting.
- 3.2 Computer generated visualisations prepared by NBW Architects and Landscape Planners have been used to assess the nature of any direct changes to heritage assets (the Conservation Area and Registered Park) and indirect effects on the settings of other heritage assets.

Baseline Conditions

4.0

4.1

The baseline analyses in this section describe, classify and evaluate the existing character, quality and sensitivity of the heritage assets, townscape and visual resources at the site and in the surrounding area. Further information on the site and its history is contained in the Design and Access Statement prepared by NLP.

The Site and surroundings

4.2

The following section provides a brief summary of the existing site and surrounding area as the context for the Heritage Impact Assessment.

4.3

Alton Towers is located in the Churnet Valley to the north of Alton Village. The site is located in Staffordshire County Council and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. 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.

4.4

The main site is located on a plateau surrounded by 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.

4.5

The Resort is broadly rectangular in shape with an east west dimension in excess of 2km and a north south dimension of approximately 1km, although this varies across the site. Alton Towers Resort is an established theme park containing a range of rides, attractions, overnight accommodation and ancillary facilities. The resort contains 32 listed buildings and a Scheduled Monument (Bunbury Hillfort).

4.6

The gardens at Alton Towers are a Grade I Registered Park and Garden. In addition the resort is located within the Alton and Farley Conservation Area. This is a broad area identified in the Core Strategy.

4.7

The development site 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).

4.8

The site occupies an area of approximately 2.8 hectares. It is located within the Alton and Farley Conservation Area adjacent to 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.

- 4.9 The closest listed building to the development site is the former Stables Building (Grade II), located approximately 18 metres from the nearest boundary of the development site but around 45 metres from the proposed new ride itself. To the south west of the Stables is the Grade II listed retaining wall which forms the northern boundary to the boating lake – now part of the Mutiny Bay attraction. Within the site, immediately to the south of the proposed ride is a locally listed deer wall and beyond this is a wooded area that continues southwards to the more formal Alton Towers gardens. Woodland has become well established around the log flume ride and the log flume development itself encroaches on the deer wall to the south.

Historic Development

- 4.10 Alton Towers was constructed for the fifteenth and sixteenth Earls of Shrewsbury between c.1810 and 1852. The current house was developed around a small country residence called Alveton Lodge which had been used as an occasional summer retreat by the previous Earls. Portions of the Lodge were incorporated into the design for the Earls' new residence which was renamed Alton Abbey in 1811 and subsequently Alton Towers in 1832.
- 4.11 The architects employed on the project included William Lees, an architect-cum-builder based in Derby; followed by Thomas Hopper, then William Hollins, Thomas Allason, Thomas Fradgley, and finally A.W.N. Pugin and his son E.W. Pugin. The style of the house is generally Gothic, from the fanciful Georgian "Gothick" of Hopper and Hollins to the studious "True Principles" Gothic of the Pugins. The materials are sandstones quarried on or near the site; ashlar with herringbone tooling; and in the West wing, brick with ashlar facing. The roofs were originally entirely of lead, and there was a good deal of structural cast iron, used in wall reinforcements, window-frames and tracery, and roof-trusses.
- 4.12 Apart from the house itself, the Alton estate contains a further 31 separately listed buildings and structures. Those with the potential to be affected by the proposed development will be described in further detail. The numbers in brackets indicate the asset's location on the Composite Planning Constraints Map.

Heritage Assets: Baseline Conditions

- 4.13 A scoping exercise was carried out to determine which heritage assets would have the potential to be affected by the proposed development. The scoping process involved desk-based research. Heritage assets with the potential to have inter-visibility with the proposed development were assessed to be within approximately 150 metres of the application site. The following assets have therefore been scoped into the assessment:
- 1 Alton and Farley Conservation Area
 - 2 Alton Towers Registered Park and Garden (Grade I)
 - 3 Deer Park Wall (non-designated heritage asset)

- 4 The Stables at Alton Towers (Grade II) (101)
- 5 Retaining wall Approximately 10 yards south west of the Stable (Grade II) (102)
- 6 Stonehenge (Grade II) (103)
- 7 The Orangery (Grade II) (104)
- 8 Pool and Fountain Approximately 10 yards south of Orangery (Grade II) (105)
- 9 Fountain, Terrace Walls, Steps, Lions, Urns and Sundial Approximately 30 yards south of the Orangery (Grade II) (106)
- 10 The Conservatory and Attached Wall, Steps and Urns (Grade II*) (111)
- 11 Walls, Gatepiers and Steps defining the north and east sides of the Terraced Gardens south east of the Conservatory (Grade II) (113)
- 12 The Corkscrew Fountain (Grade II) (114)
- 13 The Prospect Tower and Wall and Railings to the south (Grade: II*) (115)

- 4.14 The heritage designations included for assessment are shown on the accompanying plan at Appendix 2.
- 4.15 Heritage assets at a greater distance than those listed have been scoped out of the assessment because they are screened from the proposed development by intervening vegetation or land form.
- 4.16 The assessment of heritage assets includes consideration of the contribution made to their significance by their setting. Listing descriptions are provided in Appendix 3.

Alton and Farley Conservation Area

- 4.17 The Alton and Farley Conservation Area covers parts of both these civil parishes. They are situated in the northern uplands of Staffordshire, an area of varied topography giving rise to a dramatic landscape. The two parishes lie to the south of the Weaver Hills, in the Churnet Valley. Alton village is to the south of the River while Farley is to the north-west. Alton Towers Estate is located between the two.
- 4.18 Alton derives from the Anglo-Saxon for Aelfa's settlement while Farley means a clearing in the woods. In 1086 the Domesday Book described Alton and Farley as 'waste' meaning they were not worth taxing. By the middle ages, Alton had a castle and the parish of Alton consisted of 7,619 acres and four townships. The population has increased steadily, 215 in 1666, 818 in 1801, 1,227 in 1901 and 1,243 in 2001.
- 4.19 The scarcity of medieval buildings in Alton suggests that there was little prosperity in the town at this time. Its economic climax was in the nineteenth century when Alton Towers became the principal seat of the Earls of Shrewsbury. At this time the deer park became central to the estate and the modest hunting lodge was transformed into a rambling country seat, one of the

largest in England. Much visited in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries thanks to the arrival of the railway, it is still one of the UK's premier tourist attractions.

Alton Towers Registered Park and Garden (Grade I)

- 4.20 The Alton Towers Park began life as a dry wilderness but was transformed by the fifteenth Earl of Shrewsbury in 1787, who was determined to make the Alton Estate his permanent home. His successors continued his work and the grounds of Alton Towers have been open to visitors at certain times since 1839 becoming a major attraction during the inter-war years.
- 4.21 There are two gardens within the Alton Towers house complex: the Star Garden, named after its fountain of that shape, and Her Ladyship's Garden which has a raised walk to the east overlooking a lawn, fountain and statuary. To the east of the gatehouse is a walled garden containing several listed buildings. Lawns bounded by conifers lie to the north of the house with the Boating Lake and its associated listed buildings (including Retaining Walls and the Stables) to the north of that. The kitchen garden originally lay to the north-east of the Stables but was removed in the 1990s.
- 4.22 The first component of the main valley garden in the Italian Garden, it contains the Choragic Monument (listed Grade II*), erected in 1830 to commemorate the fifteenth Earl. Views from the Italian Garden stretch to the east along the densely planted valley garden. There are four pools in the centre of the valley. From the third pool the Pagoda Fountain of 1831 rises and forms one of the garden's main focal points.
- 4.23 The majority of the garden's buildings are arranged along the upper north part. Many of these are described subsequently. A number of the garden buildings make a significant contribution to the Park's composition. From the east of the Conservatory several arched yew hedges lead north.
- 4.24 The fifteenth Earl's aim for the garden was to create a place of smells and sounds which would evoke fabled and enchanted places. Water had to be diverted from two miles away to create the new lakes. The sixteenth Earl continued his predecessor's vision and introduced many exotic plant species.
- 4.25 The park element of the Park and Garden consisted of the deer park which extended about one kilometre to the east of the main house and the wooded walks which stretched to the west and south of the house. In relation to the deer park, the wall and its inner ditch remain.
- 4.26 The wooded walks are still in a good condition although many of the views from the walks are obscured by mature trees. The terraced walks run for more than two kilometres and are retained by stone walls. They pass the Flag Tower and continue into the Abbey Wood to the south of the house turning into Rock Walk and the Park Banks. At this point the walks pass several large rocky outcrops associated with nineteenth century structures and viewpoints.

Deer Park Wall (non-designated heritage asset)

- 4.27 The wall which demarcates the boundary of the former deer park (in which the Alton Towers Resort is constructed) is considered an undesignated heritage asset for its historic importance as an element of the Alton Towers estate.

The Stables at Alton Towers (Grade II) (101)

- 4.28 The former Stables lie close to the Resort's main boating lake. Constructed in the nineteenth century, probably 1813-14,¹ they are constructed mainly of brick with plain tile roofs but have an ashlar façade with herringbone tooling. Four ranges form a rectangular courtyard with central entrances on each façade. The ranges are two storeys with the corner turrets being three storeys with crenelated parapets. Most of the windows are pointed lancets, some with Y tracery. It is an important element within the Grade I registered garden.

Retaining wall Approximately 10 yards south west of the Stable (Grade II) (102)

- 4.29 Constructed in the early nineteenth century, the retaining wall forms part of the termination of the boating lake, and supports the carriageway in front of the Stables. It is built of ashlar stone with herringbone tooling, a parapet string, crenelated parapet and square turret-like projections which mimic those of the Stables. It has group value as part of the garden's composition.

Stonehenge (Grade II) (103)

- 4.30 This faux Druidical monument was inspired by Stonehenge. It is constructed of massive rough-hewn stone blocks with three bays and a two tier central bay. It forms an important part of Alton Tower's garden layout.

The Orangery (Grade II) (104)

- 4.31 The Orangery was built c.1824 and is constructed of ashlar with a wrought iron dome. It is thought that architect was Robert Abraham. The structure is derelict and much re-building has taken place since its original construction. It has Classical detailing with rounded segmental arches containing glazed spandrels. The end bays have panelled pilasters and bracketed eaves. The left hand bay is the only one to retain its decorative dome.

Pool and Fountain Approximately 10 yards south of Orangery (Grade II) (105)

- 4.32 This circular stone pool is situated immediately to the south of the Orangery. It is built of ashlar stone with concave sides and a central lead figure holding a basin with a fountain.

¹ Staffordshire County Records Office

Fountain, Terrace Walls, Steps, Lions, Urns and Sundial Approximately 30 yards south of the Orangery (Grade II) (106)

- 4.33 This decorative composition dates from the early nineteenth century. The two terrace walls are approximately 50 yards in length and are constructed of ashlar. The northern wall has a central recess which contains a fountain in the shape of a flight of steps with a solid balustrade with scrolled ends. The central fountain head has a scalloped shell motif. The southern wall has a roughly central staircase flanked by two crouching lions. The wall is surmounted by six urns. Between the two walls is a sundial on a square, stepped base surmounted by a bulbous pedestal which in turn is over-sailed by a square cap with the copper gnomon.

The Conservatory, Attached Wall, Steps and Urns (Grade II*) (111)

- 4.34 The main conservatory was designed by Robert Abraham in 1824. The ashlar building has seven cast iron, glazed domes with pineapple finials (except the central dome which has an earl's coronet). The decorative scheme is Classical with panelled pilasters, bracketed cornices and fluted columns. The low retaining wall is terminated by stone steps flanked by cast iron urns. There are also urns in front of each loggia and one on a stone pedestal to the right hand side of the conservatory. The castings were made by the Britannia Ironworks in Derby and the whole was described in 1857 as: *"the glory and boast of the gardens, with its seven glass domes, coronated around with ornaments of burnished gold."*

Walls, Gatepiers and Steps defining the north and east sides of the Terraced Gardens south east of the Conservatory (Grade II) (113)

- 4.35 The walls are approximately 50 yards in length to the north and 30 yards to the east. Constructed in the early nineteenth century they are ashlar with herringbone tooling. The north wall has a lobed top with a pedestal space for sculptures. The east wall ramps down the hillside and has openwork motifs. The gatepiers are surmounted by crouching lions.

The Corkscrew Fountain (Grade II) (114)

- 4.36 The ashlar fountain was constructed in the early nineteenth century and features four tiers of shelves with squat spiral fluted columns which diminish in size upwards. It was described by Loudon in 1834 as: *"near the base of the rock is a corkscrew fountain, of a peculiar construction"*.

The Prospect Tower, Wall and Railings (Grade: II*) (115)

- 4.37
4.38 The Prospect Tower was designed by Robert Abraham in 1824. It is built of ashlar made to look like cast iron as well as actual cast iron elements. The observation tower is octagonal in plan and its three tiers resemble a Chinese

pagoda but in fact its detailing is Gothic, with flattened “Tudor” arches of stone with slender composite columns on the first two levels; cusped and docketed ogee arches at the top and an encrusted ogee cap. The tower is considered to be one of the most important and significant of the garden buildings, and is an important piece in the layout of Alton Towers Park.

Computer based Visualisations

4.39 Photographs have been taken from representative viewpoints to establish the current role of the site and from where the proposed development could be visible once constructed in relation to the setting of heritage assets within the park.

4.40 The following representative views form the basis of this assessment:

- PV1: View from the Bottom of Towers Street
- PV2: From CBeebies Land Frontage
- PV3: From the Lakeside Path
- PV4: From the Lakeside Golf
- PV5: From the Foot of the Towers
- PV7: Across the Boating Lake
- PV8: On the path to the Courtyard
- G2: From the Swiss Cottage Terrace

4.41 Photographs taken from the above viewpoints and the visualisations are contained in Appendix 3 which is produced as a separate A3 document.

5.0 Potential Effects

- 5.1 This section assesses the potential effects of the proposed development in terms of heritage, landscape and visual amenity. A summary description of the development is provided; a full description of the development is provided in the Design and Access Statement.

Proposed Development

- 5.2 The proposal is to remove the existing log-flume ride, and replace it with a new rollercoaster. The log flume and associated theming and structures will be removed but the footings of the ride will remain in order not to disturb the established trees. The area within the Registered Park and Garden to the south of the Deer Wall currently occupied by the log flume will be returned to natural woodland. The proposed coaster will occupy an existing developed site but will avoid the wooded area. The existing paved area which cuts through the woodland will also be removed.
- 5.3 The structure of the rollercoaster will be made from timber, mostly southern yellow pine, with the railings being of steel and timber. The design seeks to complement the Resort's existing theming and meet the high expectations of the Resort's guests. The materials are intended to complement their surroundings and the dark colouring will minimise their visibility in distant views. Some portions of the ride will be below ground to improve the ride experience and mitigate the impacts of noise.
- 5.4 The new ride development will include a maintenance and station building, shop, games unit and food kiosk. It is proposed to build a new boardwalk linking the entrance to the proposed new buildings. The upper portions of the buildings will be clad in aged, horizontal timbers, while the lower portions will be clad in a combination of grass and earth or sandstone effects. The majority of the buildings will be single storey with a maximum height of 9.9 metres. This is to include a small basement and stepped access to the first floor. The maximum height of the ride will be 10 metres. It is proposed to have two themed features within the ride design with maximum heights of 196.8m AOD and 195.8m AOD.

Consultation

- 5.5 Merlin Entertainments has discussed the proposed development with planning officers at Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, and conducted a site visit with the tree officer. The key objective is to provide a rollercoaster within the previously developed area of the theme park which will have a minimal impact on its surroundings, particularly the Conservation Area, the Registered Park and Garden and the setting of listed buildings.

Effects on Heritage Assets

Alton and Farley Conservation Area

- 5.6 The existing log flume does not contribute to the historic value of the conservation area, and no historic value would be lost through its redevelopment. The site's redevelopment would not significantly alter the character of the conservation area as one ride will be replaced with another.
- 5.7 The proposed development has a much smaller footprint than the existing log flume ride and it remains mostly below the treeline, meaning it is not visible throughout most of the Conservation Area. The proposed development uses natural timber which means it will blend in with the surrounding woodland more effectively than the extant ride. The proposed redevelopment allows some of the Registered Park and Garden, south of the Deer Wall to be returned to woodland. The current paving within this area would also be removed.
- 5.8 The design respects its setting by using natural materials to blend in and be less visible in distant views. It does not disrupt views of the dramatic landscape for which this area is known and is situated amongst extant development associated with the Alton Towers Resort. It respects the surrounding woodland area and seeks to leave the trees around the development as undisturbed as possible.

Alton Towers Registered Park and Garden (Grade I)

- 5.9 A significant portion of the existing log flume is situated within the Registered Park and Garden. The removal of the log flume ride and its replacement with a ride of smaller footprint, outwith the Park, allows some of the Registered Park to be returned to woodland.
- 5.10 Alton Towers Park and Garden is included on the Register for its well-planned garden layout, interesting topography and well placed garden architecture. It is considered to be an excellent, largely intact example of a Picturesque garden which was the popular garden style at the time of its conception.
- 5.11 The proposals do not have any impact on the significance of the Park and Garden as it is largely hidden from views within the landscape by trees and woodland. Where small elements of the proposed development are visible, they are seen amongst other Resort infrastructure, particularly the cable car columns which are far more prominent than the proposed theming envelopes would be in the views. Furthermore, the theming is designed in natural looking materials so that it will blend in with its woodland surroundings.

Deer Park Wall (non-designated heritage asset)

- 5.12 The removal of the log flume would be beneficial to the deer park wall as the current ride encroaches on it. The proposed rollercoaster would be situated much further away from the wall, allowing it to regain some of its significance as a feature of separation between the Garden and the Park.

Listed Building Group: 101 and 102 (Grade II)

- 5.13 This group consists of The Stables (101) and the Retaining Wall, approximately 10 yards south west of the Stable (102). They are both Grade II listed and are assessed together due to their proximity to one another and the similar effects that the proposed development will have on their settings and significance.
- 5.14 Some small elements of the proposed development will be visible within the setting of the Stables and the Retaining Wall. These portions of the proposed development would be seen amongst other infrastructure associated with the Resort, in particular the cable car columns which are far more distinctive than the proposed theming envelopes. Moreover, the theming is designed in natural looking materials which will blend in with its woodland surroundings.
- 5.15 The Stables have evidential value as former stables to a large country house, architectural value for their castellated architecture designed to be seen within the garden landscape. The retaining wall has evidential value as an important structure which supports the artificial Boating Lake. It also has aesthetic value for its castellated architecture designed to complement the Stables. Both structures' aesthetic value is as important elements in the layout of the Alton Towers' park and garden landscape. They have communal value as part of this assemblage but also as a part of the Alton Towers Resort.
- 5.16 The values for which the Stables and the Retaining Wall were listed are not affected by the proposed rollercoaster which aims to respect the established scale of development in the area. The proposals are seen amongst other Resort infrastructure and do not affect the significance of the Grade II listed buildings.

Listed Building Group: Consisting of 103, 104, 105, 106, 113 and 114 (Grade II)

- 5.17 This group consists of: the Orangery (104), Pool and Fountain Approximately 10 yards south of Orangery (105), Fountain, Terrace Walls, Steps, Lions, Urns and Sundial Approximately 30 yards south of the Orangery (106), Walls, Gate Piers and Steps defining the north and east sides of the Terraced Gardens south east of the Conservatory (113) and the Corkscrew Fountain (114). They are all listed at Grade II. They have been grouped because the effects of the development on these heritage assets will be similar in all cases.
- 5.18 The proposed development will not be visible from the heritage assets nor within their settings and their significance is therefore unaltered. Their evidential value lies in their construction as follies and eye catchers within a designed landscape dating from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. They have architectural value for their Classical detailing and careful compositions. They have aesthetic value as carefully designed garden structures inspired by both Classical and Druidical monuments and for their predominant use of carefully crafted ashlar stone. Their communal value is as

garden buildings which can be enjoyed by visitors to the Park and Garden which has been open to the public since 1839.

- 5.19 None of the values for which the monuments were listed is affected by the proposal as they remain a valuable group composition in a well-designed landscape. The development is completely screened by trees and cannot be seen from any of the assets nor within any of their settings.

The Conservatory and Attached Wall, Steps and Urns (Grade II*) (111)

- 5.20 The conservatory and its associated wall, steps and urns have evidential value as part of a carefully planned early nineteenth century garden composition. They demonstrate the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century passion for Picturesque garden landscapes. Their architectural value derives from their Classical detailing, the Conservatory's symmetrical composition and the innovative use of cast iron. Their aesthetic value is in their delicate Classical detailing and their grand glass domes with elegant decoration. This group of monuments has communal value as part of a wider garden layout which has been enjoyed by members of the public for almost two centuries.
- 5.21 The values for which this group was listed are not affected by the development as it is hidden from views from the monuments by a bank of trees and is not visible within their setting for the same reason and due to the topography of the site. Significance attributed to setting would be preserved.

The Prospect Tower and Wall and Railings to the south (Grade: II*) (115)

- 5.23 The Prospect Tower has evidential value as part of an early nineteenth century Picturesque garden composition. Its architectural value derives from its Gothic detailing and clever use of stone made to look like cast iron as well as the innovative use of cast iron itself. Its artistic value is in its painted exterior, octagonal plan and hint to the Chinoiserie aesthetic. It has communal value as part of a wider garden layout enjoyed by many generations of visitors.
- 5.24 The values for which the Prospect Tower was listed are not affected by the development as it is hidden from views from the Tower (at ground level) by woodland and is not visible within its setting for the same reason and due to the topography of the site. The Tower's setting is already compromised by one of several cable car columns directly in front of it. Despite this, the Tower remains an unusual and interesting piece of garden architecture within a wider, well-laid-out Picturesque garden.

Park Views

- 5.25 The visual effects of the scheme from within Alton Towers Resort, and hence the direct and indirect effects of the proposed ride on the designated heritage assets have been assessed in the context of the eight park views listed in Section 4.0. The visualisations are included at Appendix 3. Each view is shown

as existing, with the 3D model of the proposed ride overlaid and finally, showing any element of the ride and theming structure which would be visible from the identified viewing position.

- 5.26 In closer views of the development adjacent to the Stables, small elements of the theming envelopes would be visible through gaps in the trees and in some views, above the treeline. The proposed theming would be in natural looking materials and would therefore blend in with the tree cover relatively well, particularly in comparison to the extant golden tap. The theming would be viewed in the context of the cable car column to the right of the Stables and both theming envelopes would be considerably lower and closer to the treeline than this, and in more sympathetic materials.
- 5.27 There is currently a gap in the trees through which some of the ride and theming envelope would be visible, although it is likely to be obscured by the theming envelope to be constructed on top of the extant roof. It is proposed to plant more trees in this area which would eventually screen this element from these views. The theming and the highpoint of the roller coaster would be much less visible in summer due to leaf cover but would be somewhat visible in winter before the trees have grown.
- 5.28 In longer views from within the Resort, the proposed development is largely screened by trees and the intervening topography resulting in nil or negligible changes from the representative viewpoints. Consequently, there are no wider material effects on the identified heritage assets. Similarly, as confirmed in the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, there would be no material effects on key views, and hence the designated heritage assets, from beyond the Resort boundary.

6.0

Summary and Conclusions

6.1

A detailed assessment has been undertaken of the proposed development's effects in terms of the area's heritage assets. The following provides a summary of the assessments and outlines the conclusions drawn.

Effects on Heritage Assets

6.2

The assessment has identified the heritage assets which would be likely to be affected by the proposed re-development of the log flume site. The potential effects on significance have been established, including impacts arising through effects on setting.

6.3

The proposed development would replace an existing log flume ride of no historic interest with a new wooden rollercoaster. The development has been designed with careful reference to the scale of surrounding infrastructure and in materials which are sympathetic to its location. It is proposed to remove the current log flume from the Registered Park and Garden south of the Deer Wall and return this area to natural woodland. The trees in this area are considered to be an important element of the Conservation Area as well as the Registered Park. The proposed rollercoaster would not occupy any land within the Registered Park, and would have a smaller footprint than the current ride.

6.4

The effects on most of the surrounding listed buildings would be negligible or nil because the development is not visible from the buildings nor within their settings. Where it is discernible from the listed buildings or within their settings, the development is viewed amongst other infrastructure associated with Alton Towers Resort and is not considered to adversely affect their significance.

6.5

Considered against the statutory provisions in the Act, the proposal would at least preserve, but also enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the Registered Park and Garden through the reinstatement of trees, the reduction in the extent of development within the Registered Park and the more sympathetic materials to be employed. The significance of all of the designated heritage assets would be conserved. Similarly, the settings of the heritage assets would be preserved.

Appendix 1 Composite Planning Constraints Plan