



Nathaniel Lichfield
& Partners

Planning. Design. Economics.

Alton Towers Resort: New Ride 2016

**Landscape and Visual Impact
Assessment**

Merlin Attractions Operations Limited
(Alton Towers Resort)

May 2016

03224/IR/ADn

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been prepared by Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners to examine the landscape and visual impact of the development proposals. The proposals are for a new ride development in the northern section of Alton Towers Resort, currently occupied by the log flume.

1.2 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.

1.3 While the assessment has also taken into consideration the heritage receptors in the vicinity of the site, including conservation areas and listed buildings which may be affected by the development proposals, specific consideration of the impact of the proposed development on heritage assets is set out in the Heritage Impact Assessment.

1.4 This report assesses the potential impact of the development on long-range views from outside of the Alton Towers Resort; views from within the Resort are considered in the Heritage Impact Assessment.

1.5 The report is structured as follows:

- 1 Section 2 sets out the policy context for the assessment.
- 2 Section 3 describes the methodology.
- 3 Section 4 sets the baseline for the assessment.
- 4 Section 5 assesses the effects of the development on landscape character and the visual impact.
- 5 Section 6 summarises the report.

2.0 Policy Context

Site Designations

2.1 A review of national, regional and local policy has been undertaken to establish the policy baseline for the proposed development in relation to landscape character and views. Various landscape and heritage designations apply to the site (see Appendix 1) and can be summarised as:

- 1 Alton Towers Resort is located within the countryside and planning policies seek to protect and enhance valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils (paragraph 17, NPPF).
- 2 The gardens at Alton Towers Resort are listed Grade I on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England. The southern part of the site is located within the Alton Towers Registered Park and Garden. Registered Parks and Gardens are a material consideration in determining planning applications and great weight should be given to their conservation. The gardens incorporate several listed structures and buildings, including the Grade II* listed Alton Towers and nearby Grade II listed stables and retaining wall, located to the west of the site. These elements are all designated heritage assets (NPPF).
- 3 The estate and site are located within the Alton and Farley Conservation Area (designated 1971).
- 4 The Resort and site were previously designated as a Special Landscape Area. The Core Strategy states that these are no longer “...*considered sufficiently sensitive to local landscape characteristics and it is proposed to address local landscape impact through the use of a Landscape Character Assessment instead. The Council has undertaken a Landscape Character Assessment in order to identify character features in the District which should be used to inform planning decisions...*” (para 8.6.12).
- 5 The Bunbury hillfort, located to the south west of the Towers and the site, is a Scheduled Monument.
- 6 There are ‘Sites of Biological Importance’, located to the east and south of the site. A small part of the south of the site is located within ancient woodland and a Nature Conservation Site. The effects of the development on the nature conservation value of the site are considered in the separate Ecology Report.

Relevant Planning Policy

2.2 National and local level policy and guidance relating to landscape protection have also been reviewed. Of particular relevance is the following:

Local Planning Policy and Guidance

SMDC Core Strategy Development Plan Document (Adopted 26 March 2014)

- 1 Spatial Objectives:
 - SO7 – To support and enhance tourism opportunities for residents and visitors.
 - SO8 – *“To promote local distinctiveness by means of good design and the conservation, protection and enhancement of historic, environmental and cultural assets throughout the District.”*
 - SO9 – *“To protect and improve the character and distinctiveness of the countryside and its landscape, biodiversity and geological resources.”*
- 2 Policy SS1 - Development Principles. This states that the development and use of land should contribute positively to the social, economic and environmental improvement of Staffordshire Moorlands to deliver a number of outcomes including tourist facilities and
“...a healthy, safe, attractive and well-maintained environment...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...New development will make the best use of previously developed land and buildings...”
- 3 Policy SS1a - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development.
- 4 Policy SS6a – Larger Villages Area Strategy. New development should reflect and enhance each village’s special character and heritage by
“...giving priority to the reuse and regeneration of existing redundant, underused or surplus sites and premises for new development... protecting and enhancing the setting of individual settlements.”
- 5 Policy SS6c – Other Rural Areas Area Strategy.
“These areas will provide only for development which meets an essential local need, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside.” The quality of the countryside will be enhanced and conserved by *“Giving priority to the need to protect the quality and character of the area and requiring all development proposals to respect and respond sensitively to the distinctive qualities of the surrounding landscape...”* *“Supporting sustainable tourism developments and measures in the Churnet Valley in accordance with Policy SS7...”*
- 6 Policy SS7 – Churnet Valley Area Strategy. This is identified as an area for sustainable tourism and rural regeneration. Support will be given for *“...the expansion of existing tourist attractions and facilities and the provision of compatible new tourist attractions and facilities; measures to*

enhance, protect and interpret the landscape character and heritage assets of the Churnet Valley...

“Any development should be of a scale and nature and of a high standard of design which conserves and enhances the heritage, landscape and biodiversity of the area and demonstrate strong sustainable development and environmental management principles. The consideration of landscape character will be paramount in all development proposals in order to protect and conserve locally distinctive qualities and sense of place and to maximize opportunities for restoring, strengthening and enhancing distinctive landscape features.”

Development at Alton Towers will be considered against the Churnet Valley Masterplan.

7 Policy E3 – Tourism and Cultural Development.

“New tourism and cultural development will be assessed according to the extent to which it supports the local economy and promotes the distinctive character and quality of the District and enhances the role of Staffordshire Moorlands as a tourism and leisure destination having regard to the Area Strategies in Policies SS5, SS6 and SS7...new...attractions and facilities should: be of a scale and design which can be easily assimilated into the local area in a sustainable manner... exceptionally, may be new build where it is required to support or complement existing accommodation, facilities or attractions and there is an identified need which cannot be met in other ways. Preference will be given to buildings which are non-permanent in nature.”

“All development shall be of an appropriate quality, scale and character compatible with the local area, protect the residential amenity of the area, enhance the heritage, landscape and biodiversity of the area and shall not harm interests of acknowledged importance.”

8 Policy DC1 – Design Considerations.

“All development shall be well designed and reinforce local distinctiveness by positively contributing to and complementing the special character and heritage of the area in line with the Council’s Design SPD.”

Detailing and materials should be appropriate to the character of the area and should be of a high quality design which respects the site and surroundings and promotes *“...a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance...”*

9 Policy DC2 – The Historic Environment. The Council will protect, and where possible enhance, the historic environment and areas of historic landscape character as well as the settings of designated heritage assets. Development will be resisted which would harm or be detrimental to the special character and historic heritage of towns and villages. Development will be promoted which sustains, respects or enhances

- buildings and features which contribute to the character of heritage of an area.
- 10 Policy DC3 – Landscape and Settlement Setting. The Council will protect and, where possible, enhance local landscape and the setting of settlements by resisting development that would harm or be detrimental to the character of local and wider landscape, setting of a settlement or important views into/out of a settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment. Development will be supported which respects and enhances local landscape character and the setting of settlements, as detailed in the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment. Materials and sustainable building techniques which are sympathetic to the landscape will be supported. Development should not adversely affect the wider setting of the Peak District National Park.
- 11 Policy C3 – Green Infrastructure. *“Contribute to the diversification of the local economy and tourist development through the enhancement of existing, and provision of new facilities.”*
- 12 Policy R1 – Rural Diversification.
“Appropriate development should not harm the rural character and environmental quality of the area or any sites designated for their nature conservation, or historical interest by virtue of the scale, nature and level of activity involved and the type and amount of traffic generated or by other effects such as noise and pollution.”

Churnet Valley Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (Adopted March 2014)

- 2.3 The vision for the Churnet Valley (para 4.1) includes that
“It will sustain its unique qualities of a diverse and varied environment which is rich in wildlife, heritage, landscape and tourist attractions. It will be a landscape maintained by sensitive land management...The Churnet Valley will be widely recognised, locally, regionally and nationally for its high quality landscape and its heritage and wildlife interest and for its varied tourism offer... The area will be a fine example of sustainable, low carbon development that is of a high quality design and in-keeping with the landscape character of the area.”
- 2.4 *“The overarching principle is one of sustaining and enhancing the natural, built and historic environmental quality of the area, its settlements and its hinterland through managed change which provides for rural regeneration largely based on sustainable tourism.”* (para 5.2.1).
- 2.5 Other Masterplan principles include to respect, enhance and protect the positive aspects of the Churnet Valley and to deliver quality and sustainable tourism.
- 2.6 Alton Towers Resort is located within the Alton Character Area and Alton Towers Resort is identified as a key opportunity site and gateway. The Character Area is defined as:

“This is an area of high landscape value dominated by Alton Towers Resort. There are significant impacts arising from Alton Towers Resort on the area but it is also a significant generator of visitors to the area and employment. It is important to ensure continued support for Alton Towers Resort and investment in tourism, economy, transport infrastructure, heritage and landscape, maintaining Alton Towers Resort as a leading resort attraction...There will be continued investment by Alton Towers Resort in transport, woodland and heritage...” (para 7.7.1.1).

2.7 The Masterplan recognises the *“Continued sensitive expansion of Alton Towers Resort in line with Concept Statement...Further measures to mitigate impact of Alton Towers Resort on road network and conserve heritage/landscape of site in line with Alton Towers Resort Long Term Plan...”* (para 7.7.3).

2.8 In regards to the Alton Towers Resort Opportunity Site Concept Statement (para 7.7.6):

- 1 Constraints identified include *“Noise and visual intrusion from rides”*.
- 2 The Development Strategy includes new rides.
- 3 It is noted any new development should comply with the Woodland Management Plan and major development proposals would need to consider the impact on views.
- 4 The site is located within ‘Zone 3 – Redevelopment Area’. It is detailed as a *“Potential redevelopment area for leisure use. Consideration should be had for the impact on trees within the area.”*
- 5 It is a requirement that proposals for major new development are *“...accompanied by a detailed Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment to identify and assess the effects on the site’s landscape, heritage character and quality and the effects on the wider landscape character and setting.”* Development should not be harmful to the landscape within the site or wider area. *“Any new development will also be required to respect the site’s landscape, heritage character and quality and to minimise the impact on the local landscape character outside the resort’s boundary.”*
- 6 New development should take into account the Registered Park and Garden and its setting and *“Development that substantially alters the remaining historic landscape within the site should seek to maintain the character of the parkland landscape, retaining and reinforcing parkland trees.”* Development within the wider parkland should take account of the parkland setting.
- 7 Potential impacts on landscape should be avoided as far as possible, mitigated and compensated for.

2.9 Development and Management Principles include:

- 1 The Natural Environment: *“The protection and enhancement of the natural beauty of the Churnet Valley is the overriding requirement for any*

- development. Land uses and the siting and scale of development should respect and enhance the valued characteristics of the Churnet Valley and the local landscape character informed by the Churnet Valley Landscape Character Assessment.” (para 8.1).*
- 2 Heritage: Development should conserve and enhance the historic landscape character of the Churnet Valley (para 8.2).
 - 3 Sustainable Tourism: *“The scale and nature of new and extended tourist attractions should reflect the role and key activities of the individual character areas in which they are located. They should have particular regard for the natural environment and heritage of the Churnet Valley and demonstrate strong sustainable development principles.” (para 8.3).*
 - 4 Green Initiatives: *“The use of sustainable construction methods and materials shall be encouraged that will blend into the landscape in order that development has a minimal impact on its surroundings.” (para 8.6).*
 - 5 Design Principles: *“High quality design of all new development in the Churnet Valley will be promoted having been assessed by reference to how it respects the valued characteristics of the Churnet Valley in terms of it's [sic] site context, including the wider setting, density, massing and scale, impact on close and distant views, impact on streetscape and materials.”* The design quality of proposals will be assessed against a number of criteria including the relationship to the wider setting; impact on close views and wider vista; materials; height and local distinctiveness. (para 8.7)

Alton and Farley Conservation Area Appraisal (Adopted 23 February 2008)

- 2.10 Alton Towers and its gardens lie in the centre of the Conservation Area. The other areas are 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 was created in the former deer park (para 2.7).
- “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.” (para 3.4).* The grounds of Alton Towers are described as *“...one of England’s finest gardens.”* (para 5.3).
- “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 earl’s views were influenced by the Picturesque movement, which 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.” (para 5.8).*

“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...Trees form an important element within the settlement at Alton, particularly in the area between Dimble Lane and Cheadle Road, and tree lined roads enter Farley to the north, and follow the western edge of Alton Park.” (para 6.1).

“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.” (para 6.2).

“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.” (para 8.1).

- 2.11 Map 8 within the Appraisal shows the principal viewpoints and gateways.

Landscape Character Assessments

- 2.12 A number of landscape character assessments have been produced which cover Alton Towers Resort and its surroundings. The most relevant assessments are detailed below and these range from assessment at national level to county, district and local level. As detailed below, for the purpose of this report the county level assessment (2001) has been used for the identification and description of landscape character areas to be assessed.

Natural England, National Character Area Profiles (2014)

- 2.13 This provides a national-level assessment of National Character Areas (NCAs); Alton Towers Resort and the site are located in the ‘Potteries and Churnet Valley’ NCA. Key characteristics of this NCA are running and still water habitats; a wooded character; ancient wood pastures; a sense of enclosure (hedgerow banks, sunken lanes and squatter enclosures) and parklands and their designed landscapes offer views across the wider area (National Character Area profile: 64. Potteries and Churnet Valley, 2015, p.3).
- 2.14 The profile includes Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEO) (National Character Area profile: 64. Potteries and Churnet Valley, 2015, p.4):
- 1 SEO1 includes to *“Manage, expand, link and buffer the characteristic semi-natural woodland and protect the ancient woodland, for example in the Churnet Valley...”*
 - 2 SEO3 recommends to *“Manage and expand areas of characteristic unimproved grassland pastures in the Churnet Valley and heathland and moorland of the Staffordshire Moorlands...while enhancing the recreational and experiential qualities of the NCA.”*

- 3 SEO4 recommends to *“Protect and manage historic landscape character and associated heritage assets...and find sustainable solutions to manage visitor pressure at popular attractions, for example Alton Towers...thus supporting the tourist economy and maintaining a high level of public access to enjoy the wealth of recreational experience that the NCA offers.”*

Staffordshire County Council, Staffordshire Landscape Character Assessment: Planning for Landscape Change (SLCA) (2001)

- 2.15 This Assessment considered landscape character at a more detailed county level, rather than at the national level of the NCA profiles above.
- 2.16 This Landscape Character Assessment has been used as the basis for the landscape descriptions within this report and the landscape character areas plan at Appendix 2 as it covers landscape areas outside of Staffordshire Moorlands district which may be affected by the proposed development. There have been additional landscape character assessments since this report (see below); however, these have largely been based on this initial report. There are some differences between the landscape character area boundaries/classification in the County Council Assessment and the Churnet Valley Landscape Character Assessment. However, these are not considered to materially affect the assessment in this LVIA and therefore the boundaries and character areas identified within the County Council Assessment have been used for the purpose of this report.

Wardell Armstrong, Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2008)

- 2.17 This Assessment only covers the SMDC planning area.
- 2.18 The Assessment states that in terms of the landscape character areas within the ‘Staffordshire Landscape Character Assessment: Planning for Landscape Change’ *“It was considered that the landscape types identified in the SPG for Staffordshire Moorlands were still applicable. Although local distinctiveness is of particular importance it was considered inappropriate to change the names of the landscape types to reflect local areas or landmarks, in order to remain consistent with the landscape types for the rest of the Structure Plan area.”* (para 2.23). The relevant landscape character areas identified in this Assessment are largely comparable to those identified in the 2001 Staffordshire County Council Assessment, above.

Wardell Armstrong, Churnet Valley Landscape Character Assessment (2011)

- 2.19 This Assessment builds upon the County Council landscape assessment and the 2008 Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment and focuses on the Churnet Valley.

2.20

This Assessment uses the character types identified within the County Council assessment and identifies sub-areas based on landscape character type. Alton Towers Resort and the site are located within sub-area 1a: Alton and Oakamoor which is an area of dissected sandstone cloughs and valleys. There are some differences between the landscape character area boundaries/classification between the County Council Assessment and the Churnet Valley Landscape Character Assessment. However, these are not considered to materially affect the assessment in this LVIA and therefore the boundaries and character areas identified within the County Council Assessment have been used for the purpose of this report. The character areas in the County Council report rather than the sub-areas identified in the Churnet Valley Assessment have been used for this LVIA.

Other Relevant Guidance:

- 1 Woodland Management Plan 2011-2019 (2011)
- 2 Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment, Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd edition (2013), which has informed the assessment methodology in this report.
- 3 Landscape Institute - Advice Note 01/11, Photography and photomontage in landscape and visual impact assessment (2011).

3.0 **Assessment Methodology**

Approach to Assessment

3.1 This study has been undertaken using a methodology for landscape and visual impact assessment based on wide experience of analysing the effects of developments in urban and rural areas and devising measures to mitigate potential effects. The methodology is in general conformity with the approach set out in the guidelines prepared by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment. This is based on the third edition but calibrated to be more proportionate to the scale of the works proposed.

3.2 This report comprises two interrelated assessments:

- 1 An assessment of the impact, or change, on the character and quality of the landscape; and
- 2 An assessment of the visual impact of development on views, viewers and visual amenity.

3.3 Landscape and visual impacts generally, but do not necessarily, coincide.

3.4 The assessment comprises a three-stage process:

- 1 a desk-based study of the site and surroundings (the information gathering stage - the baseline);
- 2 analysis of the information gained to establish the character of the site and the surrounding landscape, the existing impact of the site and the views and viewers likely to be affected by the proposed development; and
- 3 an assessment of the impact on the character and quality of the surrounding landscape and impact on views, viewers and visual impact due to the proposed development.

3.5 The effect on the landscape and/or visual resources is a function of the sensitivity (a combination of value and susceptibility to change) of the affected landscape and visual receptors and the magnitude of change that they will experience. The resultant effects on the landscape and visual resources can be beneficial, neutral or adverse.

3.6 The assessment considers the effects in the long term when the development is in use. In addition to the indirect effect the development would have on the wider landscape it also considers the direct effects on the existing landscape within the site.

3.7 The extent of survey and analysis for the assessment of landscape value and character has been based on the landscape and visual assessment work already undertaken in connection with the Alton Towers Long Term Plan. This identifies landscape character areas and key views. The replacement of the log

flume with a new ride forms part of the Long Term Plan and its effects are confined to a sub-set of the views identified in the Plan.

Landscape Assessment Methodology

- 3.8 Landscape is a product of the interaction between a range of physical characteristics (e.g. topography, vegetation and buildings) and human activity (e.g. land use, human culture and history).
- 3.9 The assessment of landscape effects requires the existing characteristics and quality of the application site and the surrounding area to be considered. The relative quality and value/sensitivity of the surrounding landscape is defined and quantified in order that the proposed development and its effects can be evaluated. Sensitive landscape components include landscape designated areas and in this case, the Alton and Farley Conservation Area and listed buildings and structures (specifically the listed buildings on the Alton Towers site).
- 3.10 Landscape impact assessments require a balance of objective and subjective techniques. Objective techniques usually involve measurement and quantification of the various components which make up the environment. These techniques establish the “character” of the area. Subjective approaches, on the other hand, rely on the judgement and responses of the surveyor. They are generally more descriptive and seek to evoke the aesthetic characteristics of the landscape and the reactions of people to it. They establish the “quality” of the area.
- 3.11 For each character type/area identified, the key characteristics which give the area its distinct sense of place are listed. These are usually positive features but can also be negative and are important indicators of the current character of the landscape. If the key characteristics identified were to be lost or changed, there would be consequences for the current character of the landscape. This would normally be negative but can be positive where the original feature had a negative influence on the character, as is often the case in urban fringe locations. Key characteristics are therefore seen as sensitive receptors that could be directly or indirectly affected by the proposed development.
- 3.12 The assessment of landscape character/type comprises a factual description of the overall character for each character type/area, with reference to landform, land cover, land use and settlement and how these interact together. Comments on condition, or quality, are included as appropriate. This is followed by a judgement of the value/sensitivity, or importance, of each character type/area and the potential for improvement which, combined, are an indicator of the ability of a landscape to sensitively accommodate new development. The assessment of the value/sensitivity of is based on the criteria given in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1 Landscape Value/Sensitivity

Value/Sensitivity	Typical Criteria
Very high (Exceptional)	Strong positive landscape character/structure or visually coherent groups of well-designed buildings/streets and spaces Distinctive/rare/unique features worthy of conservation Strong sense of place May be protected by national or international landscape or heritage designation (world heritage site/National Park/AONB) No detracting features Sensitive to inappropriate change
High	Strong positive landscape character/structure or coherent groups of well-designed buildings/streets and spaces Distinctive/rare/unique features worthy of conservation Strong sense of place May be protected by national or regional landscape or heritage designation (National Park or Conservation Area) Occasional detracting features Sensitive to inappropriate change
Medium	Recognised landscape character/structure or relatively coherent grouping of buildings reasonably well-related to the public realm Some features worthy of conservation Sense of place Some detracting features Potentially sensitive to inappropriate change
Low	Distinguishable landscape character/structure Buildings of limited visual interest with poor spatial definition Some features worthy of conservation No particular sense of place Some detracting features Scope for positive change
Poor	Weak landscape character/structure or undistinguished area lacking sense of place No features worthy of conservation Frequent detracting features Frequent scope for positive change
Very Poor	Degraded/damaged landscape character/structure or poor townscape lacking cohesive form and structure with very little or no visual interest Extensive detracting features Significant scope for positive change

3.13

The magnitude of landscape and townscape effects is set out in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2 Definition of Magnitude of Change to Landscape/Townscape

Classification	Magnitude
High	Total loss or major alteration to key elements, features or characteristics of the baseline and/or or totally out of character with the receiving landscape
Medium	Partial loss or alteration of one or more key elements, features or characteristics and/or introduction of elements that may be prominent but not substantially uncharacteristic when considered in the context of the receiving

	landscape
Low	Minor loss or alteration of one or more key elements, features or characteristics of the baseline and/or introduction of elements that may not be uncharacteristic in the context of the receiving landscape
Negligible	Very minor loss of one or more key elements, features or characteristics of the baseline and/or the introduction of elements that are very similar to the existing landscape

Visual Assessment Methodology

- 3.14 The assessment of the visual impact of the development relates to the changes that will occur in views as a result of the development, viewers' responses to those changes and the effect the changes have on visual amenity. The existing situation - the baseline - has been recorded, establishing the components, character and amenity of the existing scene. Analysis of the effects of the proposed development on those views has then been undertaken with reference to the application plans, photographs of the existing situation and the visualisations produced by Nichols Brown Webber Architects.
- 3.15 To establish the visual role of the study site, a desktop assessment was carried out using GIS software followed by fieldwork to identify key public viewpoints and to confirm the site's "visual envelope". This term refers to the zone within which the study site is currently visible. The extent of the visual envelope is influenced by three main factors. These are:
- 1 obstacles between the viewer and the site, (vegetation, mounds or buildings);
 - 2 topography; and,
 - 3 weather conditions.
- 3.16 The result of the GIS assessment and fieldwork led to the identification of a number of key views in the Alton Towers Long Term Plan. From this more general work, 12 views have been selected as ones which could be affected by the proposed new ride development (see Appendix 3) and are described further below.
- 3.17 The field survey was undertaken on a number of dates in order to identify both summer and winter visibility. As the establishment of visibility and important views is constrained by the levels of public accessibility, the study considers visibility from roads, public footpaths beyond the site and public open space. The effect of the development on walkers using the footpaths crossing the Alton Towers Resort is considered under Landscape Character.
- 3.18 Visual effects relate to changes in available views of the landscape and the effects of those changes on people. Visual impact assessment is concerned with:
- 1 direct effects (adverse or beneficial) due to proposed development upon representative views through intrusion or obstruction;

- 2 the reactions and numbers of viewers who may be affected; and,
- 3 the overall effects on visual amenity.

3.19

The effect on a view is a factor of the sensitivity of the view and the magnitude of the change to it. The sensitivity of visual receptors to change is categorised according to a number of factors: the quality and sensitivity of the landscape, the activity and expectations of the receptors and the importance of the view. Sensitivity to change is rated as set out in Table 3.3 below.

Table 3.3 Sensitivity of Receptors of Views

Classification	Sensitivity (capacity of people, at particular locations - the visual receptors - to accept change).
High	Public open spaces where focus is on views/ public rights of way through highly valued landscapes, immediate setting of elements of national cultural heritage value that are not compromised, residential properties with good visual amenity
Medium	Public rights of way through landscapes of moderate scenic/ value, setting for elements of local cultural heritage value or national value whose settings are already compromised, residents with compromised visual amenity
Low	Observer within area of low landscape quality, or medium landscape quality where significant elements detract, people at work or transient views receptors such as motorists.
Negligible	Observer within area of very low landscape quality (e.g. industrial areas/busy main roads) that has very few positive characteristics

3.20

The magnitude of the change (which may relate to scale, extent and duration impacts) to representative views has been predicted using the visualisations which provide an understanding of the distribution of land use, heights and location of structures set out on the application plans. The magnitude of change is categorised as negligible, low, medium or high and these are set out in Table 3.4 below:

Table 3.4 Definition of Magnitude of Visual Effect

Classification	Magnitude
High	Very large change to the view. Development comprises major new component in the view. No/limited screening.
Medium	The proposals are a visible and recognisable new element within the scene and would be readily noticed. May replace existing development. Screening of some but not all elements.
Low	The proposals can be seen but would comprise a minor component in the view. Awareness of the proposals would not have a major effect on the scene. Significant screening
Negligible/Nil	Nil to very slight change to views.

Significance Criteria

- 3.21 The significance of the effect on the landscape or view is categorised as being high, medium, low or negligible. The nature of the change to the landscape or view is categorised as being beneficial, neutral or adverse, dependent upon the character of the existing scene/area and the new development's role within it. The matrix for identifying these effects is shown in Table 3.5 below. Those cells shaded grey represent landscape or visual effects which are likely to be environmentally significant:

Table 3.5 Matrix of Effect Significance

Magnitude of Change /Effect	Sensitivity of Receptor/Receiving Environment to Change/Effect				
		High	Medium	Low	Negligible
High		Major	Moderate to Major	Minor to Moderate	Negligible
Medium		Moderate to Major	Moderate	Minor	Negligible
Low		Minor to Moderate	Minor	Negligible to Minor	Negligible
Negligible		Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

- 3.22 It is important to note that while the matrix above provides a tool for assessing the effects of the development, professional judgement will need to be applied in reaching conclusions rather than a mechanistic application of the formula.

Consultation

- 3.23 The representative views contained in this assessment have been agreed with officers at Staffordshire Moorlands District Council as part of the pre-application process.

Summary of Proposals

- 3.24 The proposed development is located with an existing developed area of the Resort and comprises the removal of the log flume ride (maximum height of 194.54m AOD) and its replacement with a new ride between Katanga Canyon and Mutiny Bay. Whilst the log flume and associated theming and some buildings will be removed, the footings to the log flume will be retained in order to not adversely affect the existing trees which are now well established in this area. Whilst the existing log flume crosses the deer wall, the proposed new buildings and ride (including footings) will be concentrated to the north of the deer wall.
- 3.25 The proposed redevelopment of the site for a new ride will be in keeping with the built up character and nature of this part of the theme park and will reduce the amount of built development in the area to the south of the deer wall and

within the Registered Park & Garden, allowing for the area where the existing ride would be removed from to be returned to natural woodland.

- 3.26 The ride development would include a maintenance building, station, shop, games unit and food kiosk. Most buildings will be single storey and have pitched roofs. The buildings will have: thatched effect roof tiles, the upper sections of walls will have aged and weathered effect horizontal timber cladding and the lower sections of walls will have grass and earth effect and sandstone effect wall bunding. The maximum height of the proposed buildings to the north will be to a maximum of approximately 192.20 metres AOD and over two metres lower than the existing log flume ride of 194.54m AOD.
- 3.27 As shown on the application drawings, the maximum high point for the proposed ride track has a spot height of 201m AOD which is broadly in line with the scale of development parameters for the site included in the Long Term Plan (197.7-200.5 AOD); the height of the rest of the ride will conform to this parameter. This is similar to heights of other attractions in the Resort; Nemesis which has a high point 202.62 m AOD and Oblivion which has a high point of 197.79m AOD. In addition to the general ride track a number of tunnels are proposed to assist with the ride experience and to mitigate noise impacts as well as themed structures up to a maximum spot height of 196.8 metres; the locations of these features are shown on the application drawings. The ride structure, sound tunnels and screens would be dark stained timber. The detail of the themed structures would be agreed by condition but the structures would be made of dark stained forest thinnings. Therefore, the proposed materials would be appropriate for the rural setting of Alton Towers Resort.
- 3.28 As detailed in the Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) submitted with the planning application, 56 trees are proposed for removal as part of the development and one tree would be removed on safety grounds. The AIA states that most of the trees to be removed are relatively young trees which were planted as part of the landscaping of the Log Flume and Rapids Ride. They have been planted fairly closely together to provide screening and therefore are not particularly good individual specimens. Most of the trees (46) are Category C (Low), 9 trees are Category B (Moderate) and one tree is Category A (High) (T222 Oak). The retention of the Category A tree is impossible due to the required changes in ground level. T231 Horse Chestnut is the only original parkland tree proposed for removal; this tree has been put in to Category U as it is in very poor condition with severe decay and decline in the upper crown. A standing dead stump of Horse Chestnut S2 will also be removed as part of the proposed development. Further details are contained within the AIA.
- 3.29 The proposals include landscaping to mitigate the loss of trees; this features new indigenous canopy trees with 50% evergreen component and new indigenous understorey and ground cover planting. The proposals also include new and existing grassed areas which are to be maintained as wildflower meadows. The area to the south where the existing log flume is to be removed

from will be returned to natural woodland. Further information is contained in the application drawings.

- 3.30 The visualisations in Appendix 4 have taken into account those trees to be removed as part of the proposals for a realistic impression of the effect of their removal and on screening.
- 3.31 A full summary of the proposals is set out in the cover letter and Design and Access Statement.

4.0 **Baseline**

- 4.1 The Alton Towers Resort site occupies a small ridge above the wooded valley along the River Churnet to the south and a minor tributary stream to the north. The topography ranges from 140m AOD to the north east to around 188m AOD to the west at the highest point. The southern half of the Resort is predominantly mature woodland. To the north east of the Resort the land cover is more open with meadows and areas of car parking – the Alton Towers Hotel and Splash Landings Hotel are located in this area. To the western side of the Resort there are the themed areas of the park, the Towers and original Gardens.
- 4.2 The most visible structures in the Resort include the Towers (Grade II*), the Flag Tower (Grade II), the Alton Towers Hotel and Splash Landings Hotel. Several of the more recent rides have elements reaching approximately 20-25m above ground level. The existing trees range in height, on average, from 15m to 20m tall. However, there are several notable specimens of up to 30m in height.
- 4.3 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) and is partially bisected to the south-west by the cable car ride (the support column is approximately 199.71m AOD). The site occupies an area of approximately 2.8 hectares. It is located within the Alton and Farley Conservation Area and the southern part of the site is located within the Alton Towers Registered Park and Garden, ancient woodland and Nature Conservation Site. 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. Within the site, immediately to the south of the proposed ride is a 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 the deer wall to the south.
- 4.4 Due to screening from trees, the site is well contained in terms of views from beyond the Alton Towers Resort site boundary.
- 4.5 As detailed at section 2.0, Alton Towers Resort is located within an area subject to a number of landscape specific designations. These have been considered as part of establishing the sensitivity of landscape change.

Landscape Character Baseline

- 4.6 The landscape character areas identified below and shown on the map at Appendix 2 and their descriptions are based on those identified in the Staffordshire County Council, Staffordshire Landscape Character Assessment: Planning for Landscape Change (SLCA) (2001). Within the SLCA the Alton

Towers Resort is identified within the dissected sandstone cloughs and valleys: parkland sub type and this has been divided into sub-character areas by NLP.

Table 4.1 Landscape Character Baseline

Character Area	Description	Receptors	Character Area Value/Sensitivity
1. Alton Towers - Woodland and Registered Park and Garden	This area includes the main Towers building, the wooded valley sides and mature broadleaf woodland in the Alton Towers Resort. The average tree height is approximately 20m with some notable examples of Redwood and Pine reaching 27-30m (approx. 212m AOD). A variety of additional woodland species both native and non-native have been added to the Registered Park & Garden through its history as a country residence and park visitor attraction. Within this Character Area is an Iron Age hill fort. A small part of the existing log flume is located within this Character Area.	Registered Park and Garden, Iron Age hill fort, and listed buildings. Within the Alton and Farley Conservation Area. Nature Conservation Site, ancient woodland and Site of Biological importance.	High - Preservation and enhancement of heritage and biodiversity encouraged. Direct and setting effects on listed buildings
2. Alton Towers - Car park	Open area with little built form. Predominantly large areas of hard standing used as car parking as well as grassed areas east of the Alton Towers Hotel and Spa. In this area there are lodges and approval was recently granted for phase 2 of the lodges.	No biological receptors. Within the Alton and Farley Conservation Area. Footpath bisects land to east of Alton Towers Hotel.	Low - Potential for improvement.
3. Alton Towers - Meadow / Overflow car park	Landform in this Character Area comprises open grass land (used as overflow parking), individual mature and veteran trees.	A Site of Biological Importance. Within the Alton and Farley Conservation Area.	Medium - Potential for improvement.

4. Alton Towers - Attractions and themed areas and Hotel	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 site is primarily located within this Character Area.	The setting of The Towers and other listed buildings. Within the Alton and Farley Conservation Area.	Low - Potential for improvement.
5. Alton Village	Small village sheltered within a dip in the landscape to the south of the steep wooded valley of the Churnet. This Character Area predominantly has brick and sandstone residential development with notable buildings of Alton Castle and St Peter's Church.	Alton Castle, St Peter's Church and listed buildings. Within Alton and Farley Conservation Area.	Medium - setting of historic buildings should be protected.
6. Landscape to south of the Churnet (Dissected sandstone uplands)	Flat open fields with hedgerows and some mature trees. Dispersed villages on smoothly undulating upland pasture. Narrow lanes follow boundaries of late 18 th century field enclosure in regular rectangular pattern.	Countryside character. No specific heritage receptors.	Medium/high – Potential for hedgerow improvement.
7. Landscape to the north of the Churnet (Dissected sandstone cloughs and valleys, sub type forest)	Hills give clear views across the lower plateau to the south. There are deeply dissected stream and river valleys. Small winding sunken lanes and large broadleaf woodlands. Land use is primarily pasture with substantial field boundaries, although some are in need of repair.	Countryside character. No specific heritage receptors.	Medium/high – removal of landscape detractors encouraged.
8. Highland fringes of limestone, gritstone and dissected sandstone	Land rises above the Churnet to peaks at Cauldon and Weaver Hills. Hill tops are covered by open grassland allowing long views across the surrounding landscape. Detractors to the character include quarries extracting limestone.	Countryside character. No specific heritage receptors.	Medium/high – removal of landscape detractors encouraged.

Source: NLP

- 4.7 No representative viewpoints have been identified within the riparian alluvial lowlands Character Area and therefore this Character Area has been excluded from assessment.
- 4.8 The Character Areas above identify that the landscape to the north and south of the Alton Towers Resort has a medium/high value/sensitivity to change, with existing detracting features such as quarries and degraded hedgerows. Although these areas are 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 value/sensitivity to change in this assessment.
- 4.9 The Alton Towers Resort is divided into four distinct sub Character Areas; (1) the Towers, woodland and Registered Park and Garden, (2) the car park, (3) the meadows/overflow car park and (4) the attractions and hotels. The site is mainly located within the attractions and hotels Character Area which is identified as having a low value/sensitivity to change and part of the south of the site is located within the woodland and Registered Park and Garden Character Area which is of high value/sensitivity.
- 4.10 While the whole of the Alton Towers Resort area is within the Alton and Farley Conservation Area, the value/sensitivity to change varies according to the nature, presence or proximity of existing development. Areas of the Alton Towers Resort site are therefore considered to vary from low - high in relation to their value/sensitivity to change.

Visual Impact Baseline

- 4.11 The scope of visual impact assessment includes 12 viewpoints which have been assessed in connection with the proposed development. Each view is classified in terms of its receptors and sensitivity. The numbering is based on the Long Term Plan Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. These numbers will be used in all site specific visual assessment work in order to achieve consistency and avoid confusion. In this summary table, the existing role of the site is identified, as this sets the baseline for future development on the site. Photographs for each view (as existing and proposed) are contained in Appendix 4.

Table 4.2 Baseline View Sensitivity

View	Role of Alton Towers/view descriptions	Receptors	Sensitivity
1a	The Towers and Flag Tower are visible above existing woodland on the site to the right of the view. The Rita and Smiler rides are just discernible but they are barely noticeable. Mobile masts are also visible. The view is dominated by fields and woodland. The application site is not visible.	Walkers	High
2	The Towers and Flag Tower are visible above existing woodland on the site. Parts of the Rita,	Walkers	High

	Th13teen, Smiler and Oblivion rides are just discernible. Mobile masts and the farm are also visible. The view is dominated by fields and trees. The application site is not visible		
3	The view is dominated by fields and woodland. The Towers and Flag Tower are visible above the tree line of existing woodland. Parts of the Th13teen and Oblivion rides are just discernible. The application site is not visible.	Walkers	High
4	In the middle ground the Towers is clearly visible amongst dense woodland. To its right the Flag Tower is also visible above trees within the Alton Towers Resort. No other theme park elements are visible. The view is dominated by woodland. The application site is not visible.	Walkers	High
5	The open meadows are visible in the middle ground and woodland is visible in the distance and middle ground. The Towers and Flag Tower turret are visible above the tree line. Parts of the Rita, Th13teen and Oblivion rides are just visible. Cable car columns are also visible. The application site is not visible.	Walkers	High
6	The meadows are clearly visible in the middle ground. Hills and woodland are visible in the distance. To the right the Towers are visible and part of the Flag Tower is visible above the tree line of the woods on the site. The entrance road is seen to the left of the view and part of the Rita ride is just discernible. The application site is not visible.	Walkers	High / Medium
9	Rolling hills and woodland are key features within the view as well as the wooden structures in the foreground. The Splash Landings Hotel is glimpsed as a red and white roof line amongst the existing woodland. The turret of the flag tower is glimpsed on the tree line as well as small parts of the Alton Towers Hotel. No other built form within the park is visible. The application site is not visible. A mobile mast and light tower are visible in the distance.	Walkers	High
10	Alton Castle is prominent in the view as well as the buildings within Alton. Woodland and hills are key features within the view. The Air coaster is visible in the middle ground of the view to the right of Alton Castle. A mobile mast and light towers are also visible. The application site is obscured by trees.	Walkers / Drivers	High
13A	View from Town Head (2) footpath. The view is dominated by woodland. Parts of the Air ride and	Walkers	High

	Nemesis camera are just discernible as well as a light tower and cable car column. The application site is not visible.		
16	The field is prominent in the foreground. The very top of the Towers are visible on the skyline above the mature trees and parts of the Oblivion ride are visible through the trees. The application site is not visible.	Walkers	High
20	Fields, trees and woodland are prominent in the view. The structure of the Oblivion drop and a support column for the cable car are visible set well below the skyline within woodland. Parts of the tops of the Towers and Flag Tower are also visible. The application site is not visible.	Walkers	High

4.12

The numbered views are a subset of those identified in the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment produced for the Long Term Plan. These have been selected as a representative of views for assessment. In other views the application site is not visible due to topography or other screening or due to the direction of the view.

5.0 **Assessment**

5.1 The baseline assessments identify the value/sensitivity of the relevant surrounding landscape character and identified views of the application site. The sensitivity is used to assess the potential impacts of the proposed development on the character and quality of the surrounding landscape and impact on views, viewers and visual impact.

5.2 The visual assessment and assessment of the effects on landscape character outside of Alton Towers Resort, below, is based on a series of visualisations produced by Nichols Brown Webber Architects and set out at Appendix 4. For each viewpoint, the visualisation sheet shows:

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

Effects on Landscape Character

5.3 The proposed development is largely within the Alton Towers – Attractions and themed areas and Hotel Character Area which is identified as a character area of low value/sensitivity. The predicted effects on the Character Area are as follows:

- 1 Visibility of parts of the new ride from the public footpath which passes through the Alton Towers Resort and immediately around the new ride. Viewpoint PV1, included in the Heritage Impact Assessment, shows that no part of the ride would be visible and viewpoint PV2 shows that the tops of the theming envelopes would just be visible through the trees.
- 2 Views of the ride would largely be localised and around the ride which would replace an existing attraction. Although the proposed ride would be more prominent than the existing log flume ride, the Character Area is typified by modern rides, ancillary buildings and trees. The proposals would retain this character and be a characteristic addition. The height of the ride is comparable to some of the other rides in the Resort.
- 3 The ride would be made from timber and similar materials and those of a rustic nature; it would therefore complement the rural location and surroundings of the proposed ride.
- 4 New trees and planting will be added to this area to mitigate against the proposed loss of some existing trees.

5.4 The southern part of the site is located within the Alton Towers – Woodland and Registered Park and Garden Character Area. This is identified as a character area of high value/sensitivity. The following summarises the potential landscape effects on this Character Area:

- 1 The removal of the log flume from the Registered Park & Garden would have a beneficial effect on its character as it would allow this area to be returned to natural woodland. This would have a positive effect on the

Registered Park & Garden, ancient woodland and Nature Conservation Site.

- 2 The new ride would be on the edge of the Registered Park & Garden. Its setting currently includes the modern theme park but the predominant use of timber and similar materials in the design would be sympathetic to the Garden and woodland.
- 3 The Garden views included in the Heritage Impact Assessment (viewpoints PV5 and G2) confirm that the proposed ride would not be visible from these parts of the Registered Park and Garden to the south and south-west of the site as well as nearby heritage assets, provided that existing cover trees are retained. Viewpoint PV3 shows that in winter a small part of the development would be seen from behind the trees. Proposed planting would gradually fill in the gap in the foreground tree cover. The use of timber and related materials in the design would minimise the impact on the Registered Park & Garden. Viewpoints PV4, PV7 and PV8 show that a small part of the theming envelope would be visible above the trees and in gaps between them. The use of timber and similar materials would help to minimise the impact of the very small part of the development visible from these part of the Character Area, the setting of which is already the theme park. In viewpoints PV7 and PV8, proposed planting would gradually fill the gap in the foreground tree cover. There are likely to be views of the development from the part of the Registered Park and Garden near to the site but its current setting includes the theme park and the rustic nature of the materials for the proposed ride will help to minimise any effect as a result of this, particularly as it would only affect a small part of the Registered Park and Garden near to the ride.
- 4 Based on these visualisations, the effects on this Character Area are likely to be localised to the site and immediately around it.
- 5 Only one original parkland tree is proposed for removal and additional trees are proposed within this area.

5.5

The table below summarises the potential landscape effects as a result of the proposed development. The assessment of the landscape effects within Alton Towers Resort are largely based on the visualisations produced by Nichols Brown Webber Architects for views within the Resort (included in the Heritage Impact Assessment) and the assessment of landscape effects of surrounding character areas are based on the visual impact assessment below and the accompanying long distance views (Appendix 4).

Table 5.1 Summary of Landscape Effects

Character Area	Value/Sensitivity	Magnitude	Significance of Effect	Comment
1. Alton Towers - Woodland and Registered Park and Garden	High	Negligible	Negligible beneficial	See details above.

2. Alton Towers - Car park	Low	Nil	Nil	There are unlikely to be any views of the development from this Character Area.
3. Alton Towers - Meadows / Overflow car park	Medium	Nil	Nil	There are unlikely to be any views of the development from this Character Area.
4. Alton Towers - Attractions and themed areas and Hotel	Low	Low	Minor neutral	See details above.
5. Alton Village	Medium	Nil	Nil	There are unlikely to be any views of the development from this Character Area.
6. Landscape to south of the Churnet (Dissected sandstone uplands)	Medium/High	Nil	Nil	The assessment below for viewpoints 9,10 and 13A, within this Character Area, have confirmed that the development would not be visible.
7. Landscape to the north of the Churnet (Dissected sandstone cloughs and valleys, sub type forest)	Medium/High	Negligible	Negligible neutral	Viewpoints 4, 5, 6, 16 and 20 fall within this Character Area and can be used to determine the landscape effects within this Character Area. Viewpoints 4, 16 and 20 confirm that the proposed development would not be visible. Viewpoints 5 and 6 show that very small parts of the development would be visible but not noticeable; the timber and similar materials proposed would ensure the development would largely blend into the woodland.
8. Highland fringes of limestone, gritstone and dissected sandstone	Medium/High	Negligible	Negligible neutral	Viewpoints 1a and 2 in the visual impact assessment show that very small parts of the proposed development would be visible. The timber and similar materials would minimise any impact on views from this Character Area and the small parts of the development which would be visible would not detract from any of the key characteristics of the Character Area. Viewpoint 3 (at the boundary of the Character Area) shows that the development would not be visible from this part of the

				Character Area. Views of the development would therefore only be available from parts of the Character Area and would be very minor. The timber and similar materials of the design would minimise any impact on views.
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5.6 The visualisations at Appendix 4 and visual assessment below show that any views of the proposed development, will, at worst, be negligible from long distance views, confirming that the trees proposed for removal would not have any significant effect on screening or landscape character for the surrounding landscape character areas. For the landscape character near to the site (Alton Towers – Woodland and Registered Park and Garden and Attractions and themed areas and Hotel Character Areas), the proposed new trees, planting and landscaping along with the rustic materials proposed for the ride and associated structures would mitigate against the proposed loss of trees. In some cases, as identified above, proposed planting would eventually fill in gaps.

5.7 The above assessment has shown that the potential landscape effects of the proposed development would either be nil, negligible neutral, minor neutral or negligible beneficial. There would be no adverse effects on landscape.

Visual Impact

5.8 The impact of the proposals on the 12 key views has also been considered in terms of the visual impact of the proposed development. A summary of the visual effects is provided below. The assessment has been made using the visualisations included at Appendix 4.

Table 5.2 Summary of Visual Effects

View	Sensitivity	Magnitude	Significance of Effect	Comment
1a	High	Negligible	Negligible neutral	Only the handrail at Highpoint 1 would be visible against the backdrop canopy but most of the proposed development would sit below evergreen tree cover. The timber would be dark and non-reflective in all daylighting conditions and therefore less noticeable than the Rita and Smiler rides. The development would almost be imperceptible and would not encroach on views of the Towers. The materials would be complementary to the woodland surroundings.
2	High	Negligible	Negligible neutral	The highpoint of the ride would just be visible against the background canopy, lower themed structures would sit behind the deciduous tree cover line and the buildings would sit

				behind the evergreen cover. The timber would be dark and non-reflective in all daylight conditions and will be less noticeable than the other rides in the view. The timber construction of the ride would be complementary to the woodland surroundings and features in the view. The view of the ride would also be a small part of the overall view and contained to an area with existing rides. The ride would be seen separately to the Towers and Flag Tower.
3	High	Nil	Nil	As confirmed by the visualisation, no part of the ride would be visible as long as existing cover trees are retained.
4	High	Nil	Nil	As confirmed by the visualisation, no part of the ride would be visible; it would be obscured by the landform and woodland.
5	High	Negligible	Negligible neutral	In winter, a small part of the highpoint of the ride would be visible below the treeline but will be barely perceptible. The wooden structure would blend into the rural scene. The rest of the development would be screened by trees.
6	High / Medium	Negligible	Negligible neutral	In winter, a small part of the highpoint of the ride would be seen below the treeline but would be barely perceptible. The timber structure would blend into the surroundings. The rest of the development would be screened by trees.
9	High	Nil	Nil	As confirmed by the visualisation, no part of the ride would be visible as long as existing cover trees are retained.
10	High	Nil	Nil	As confirmed by the visualisation, the ride would not be visible due to screening by woodland.
13A	High	Nil	Nil	As confirmed by the visualisation, the ride would not be visible due to screening by woodland and trees.
16	High	Nil	Nil	As confirmed by the visualisation, no part of the ride would be visible as long as existing cover trees are retained.
20	High	Nil	Nil	As confirmed by the visualisation, the ride would not be visible due to topography and woodland.

5.9

The visualisations at Appendix 4 show that any views of the proposed development, would, at worst, be negligible neutral, confirming that the trees proposed for removal would not have any significant effect on screening of long range views.

5.10

Overall, it is concluded that the proposed development would have a nil or negligible neutral effect on long range views.

6.0 **Summary and Conclusion**

- 6.1 The assessment has considered the landscape and visual effects of the proposed new ride development. The proposed development would replace an existing ride. The current ride is partly located within the Registered Park and Garden but the proposals would mean that the new ride would not be located within the Registered Park and Garden allowing this area to be returned to natural woodland. The proposed materials for the ride, associated buildings and themed structures largely include dark stained timber, thatched effect roof tiles, timber cladding and dark stained forest thinnings. The design would therefore be complementary to the rural and woodland surroundings of the site and Alton Towers Resort, minimising any impact on landscape character and views.
- 6.2 In terms of landscape character effects, the proposed development would be seen in the context of the existing theme park and the new ride would replace an existing ride within a developed area of the Resort. The assessment above has shown that landscape 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 would be returned to natural woodland.
- 6.3 The visual assessment has shown that the proposed development would have a nil-negligible neutral effect on the identified representative views. 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. The design and materials of the proposed ride would ensure the effect on views would be minimal and not harmful.
- 6.4 Overall, the proposed new ride would not result in any materially adverse effects on landscape character or key views. The proposed development would comply with local policy, including Core Strategy Spatial Objectives SO7, SO8 and SO9 and policies SS1 and SS6c. In particular, the proposals would comply with Core Strategy Policies: SS7 as landscape character would be protected; E3 as the development would be of an appropriate quality, scale and character compatible with the local area; DC3 as it would not be harmful to the character of the local and wider landscape, would respect local landscape character and the materials would be sympathetic to the landscape; R1 as it would not harm the rural character of the area; DC2 as the development would protect the Registered Park and Garden and enhance a small part of it and DC1 as the proposed materials would be appropriate to the character of the area.

Appendix 1 Plan Showing Landscape Policy Designations