Planning Consultancy of the Year 2011-2014 RTPI

JustGiving Awards Company of the Year 2013

nlp Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners
Planning. Design. Economics.

14 Regent's Wharf
All Saints Street
London N1 9RL

020 7837 4477
london@nlpplanning.com

nlpplanning.com

Jane Curley
Planning Department
Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
Moorlands House
Stockwell Street
Leek
Staffordshire Moorlands
ST13 6HQ

Date 5 August 2016
Our ref 03224/IR/TN/11967480v1
Your ref
Planning Portal reference PP-05388429

Dear Mrs Curley

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council: Maintenance/storage buildings at Alton Towers Resort

On behalf of our client, Alton Towers Resort (ATR), a company forming part of Merlin Attractions Operations Limited, please find enclosed an application seeking planning permission and relevant demolition of an unlisted building in a conservation area for the following works at ATR:

'Demolition of existing maintenance/storage buildings and the erection of replacement maintenance/storage buildings'

The planning application comprises the following:

1 Completed and signed application form;

2 The following application drawings, prepared by Smytheman:

- Site location plan – ref. 2967-101
- Existing site plan, floorplans and elevations - ref. 2967-102
- Proposed site plan/block plan - ref. 2967-103
- Proposed floorplans and elevations – ref. 2967-104

3 Design and Access Statement; and

4 This Covering Letter.

A cheque for **£1,155** made payable to '*Staffordshire Moorlands District Council*' to cover the requisite planning application fee is being provided directly by Alton Towers Resort Operations Ltd under separate cover. This fee has been calculated on the basis of *'where the area of the gross floor space to be created by the development exceeds 75 square metres, but does not exceed 3,750 sqm, £385 for each 75 sqm of that area'* in accordance with the Town and Country Planning

(Fees for Applications, Deemed Applications, Request and Site Visits)(England) Regulations 2012, Schedule 1 Part 2, 2(2)d. The total proposed floor area is **165.5 sqm (GEA).**

Background

Alton Towers Resort is operated by Merlin Entertainments Group. It is the UK's most popular and largest theme park, and is therefore an important generator of tourism. The Resort is also a major employer offering a range of permanent and seasonal contracts.

A planning application has been submitted to Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC) for the installation of a new ride (LPA ref. SMD/2016/0315), a decision for which is currently pending. The new ride will require a storage and maintenance facility and this planning application proposes a new building and storage unit to enable this. It is proposed to implement the new ride during the autumn/winter period when the Resort is closed and the two schemes are proposed to be carried out simultaneously.

Site and Surroundings

Alton Towers Resort is located in the Churnet Valley to the north of Alton Village, and is approximately 195 hectares in size. The main access to the site is from Farley Lane to the west of the Resort. In terms of levels, the main site is located on a plateau from which levels drop into surrounding valleys. There are extensive areas of woodland, particularly on the steep downward slopes of the southern and eastern boundaries. The woodland serves to screen the main part of the park's development from the surrounding area, although there are some limited distant views of structures within the Resort, such as glimpses of parts of the Oblivion ride and existing roof structures (e.g. Hotel). The Resort is broadly rectangular in shape with an east west dimension in excess of 2km and a north south dimension of approximately 1km, albeit varying across the site. The nearest major urban areas are Stoke on Trent, approximately 19km (12 miles) east of the park, and the City of Derby, 29km (18 miles) to the east.

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). The gardens at Alton Towers are listed Grade I on the Register of Parks and Gardens. In addition the resort is located within the Alton and Farley Conservation Area. Abbey Wood and Park Banks are identified as 'Sites of Biological Importance' and 'ancient woodlands'. Beyond the Alton Towers boundary are two SSSIs; Dimmingsdale is located to the west and is approximately 1km from the development site and Saltersford Lane Meadow is located to the south of the development site and is approximately 1km from the development site.

The application site is located towards the northern boundary of the Resort, to the south of the Coach Car Park and to the north of the DUEL – Haunted House attraction. The site occupies an area of approx. 270 sqm and is located on a hard surfaced area. The site is located to the rear of the DUEL attraction and is bound by a woodland area to the north and west; the DUEL maintenance building to the east and it fronts onto a maintenance path to the south. The application site is used as a maintenance/back-of-house area in association with the rides/attractions at ATR and is currently occupied by a maintenance/storage building and three

portacabins, all of which are no longer fit for storage/maintenance purposes and are in a very poor state of condition. Please see Appendix 1 of the Design and Access Statement for images of the existing buildings on site.

The site is located outside of the boundary of the Registered Park and Garden and Site of Biological Importance. There are no listed buildings within the vicinity of the site.

Proposal

The application seeks planning permission for the demolition of a maintenance/storage building and removal of three portacabins and for the erection of a replacement maintenance building and new modular unit to be used in association with the proposed new rollercoaster ride. The use is ancillary to the general theme park use (Use Class D2). The proposal would provide maintenance/storage facility close to the proposed new attraction and would make use of existing internal service roads.

The new maintenance building will be a rectangular, single storey building with powder coated metal vertical sheeting. The dimensions of the proposed building are approximately 13.1m by 10.5m with a height of 5.5m (125sqm GIA floorspace). The new modular unit will be made of two units fixed together and will be approximately 6.1m by 4.9m with a height of 2.6m (27.3 sqm GIA floorspace). The proposed new facilities will be located on an existing hard standing area. The design of these functional buildings blends with existing maintenance facilities on site.

Assessment

The Statutory Development Plan currently comprises the Core Strategy (CS, adopted March 2014). The Churnet Valley Masterplan – Supplementary Planning Document (March 2014) is also a material consideration in the determination of planning applications at the site.

Alton Towers Resort is identified within the Core Strategy as being within the Churnet Valley, an area identified for sustainable tourism and rural regeneration. The promotion of new tourism opportunities within the Churnet Valley area and at Alton Towers Resort is supported by Spatial Strategy SA3 'Encouraging a strong, prosperous and diverse economy' and Core Strategy Policy SS7 'Churnet Valley Area Strategy', CS Policy E3 'Tourism and Cultural Development' and the Churnet Valley Masterplan.

The scheme comprises infill development and is located within an area of existing servicing and support facilities with a back of house function and appearance. As such, development in this part of the site would have no effect on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the maintenance area will continue to be largely screened from guests by existing fencing and landscaping. Therefore, the character and appearance of the Conservation Area will be preserved.

The proposed development will allow ATR to provide a maintenance and storage facility for the proposed new ride. It is consistent with the site's overall use as a theme park and the need for 'back of house' support facilities, including maintenance and storage buildings.

Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners
Planning. Design. Economics.

Trees and Landscaping

The removal of the three existing portacabins will involve the careful dismantling of the existing cabins on site and will not involve any ground works or disturbance which could have any harmful impact to any surrounding trees.

The proposed replacement building and new modular storage unit will be located on an existing hard surfaced area in order to minimise any potential impact on the existing trees. No new landscaping is proposed as part of the proposals.

Transport

The application proposal will not result in an increase in guest numbers and will have no adverse impact on the existing parking/access/servicing or transport arrangements. The existing internal roads already provide good access to the site for maintenance vehicles and will remained unchanged.

Amenity

Given that the proposed development is located within a 'back-of-house'/ maintenance area, it will be screened from external view and clad in powder coated metal sheeting (as used elsewhere at the Resort), it will not have any external impact upon the visual amenity of the area.

In conclusion, ATR is dedicated to enhancing the attractiveness of the Resort which requires 'back of house' facilities to support the successful operation of the visitor attraction. The new buildings will provide maintenance/storage facility for the new proposed ride, which is currently pending decision with the Council. The assessment above demonstrates that the proposed small-scale development is fully in accordance with planning policy and consistent with the site's use as a theme park.

We look forward to receiving confirmation that the enclosed planning application has been registered and validated. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me or my colleague Hannah Whitney if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely

Timea Nacsa
Planner

Copy Neil Walker – Alton Towers Resort
Nathan Stubbs – Smytheman