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Planning Design Economics

Design and Access Statement

Installation of Art Work Feature

Alton Towers Resort

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1.0 Introduction

Purpose of the Statement

1.1 This Design and Access Statement has been prepared on behalf of Alton Towers Resort Operations Limited (Alton Towers Resort). It accompanies a full planning application for the installation of art work (in the form of a coaster track structure) at the Alton Towers resort admissions area.

1.2 This report responds to the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure)(Amendment)(England) Order 2006 (the "GDPO") for planning applications - apart from some exceptions - to be accompanied by a Design and Access Statement that explains:

- the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the development; and,
- how issues relating to access to the development have been dealt with.

1.3 The structure and content of the statement has been informed by DCLG Circular 01/2006 "Guidance on Changes to the Development Control System" (12 June 2006) and "Design and Access Statements: How to Write, Read and Use Them" (CABE 2006). Together these provide advice on what a Design and Access Statement should include. In essence, there is a need to:

- i provide a review of the site's immediate and wider context in terms of its physical, social and economic characteristics and relevant planning policy and guidance;
- ii provide a rationale for the scheme's design based on (i);
- iii explain and illustrate the design principles in terms of the development's layout, density, scale, landscape and visual appearance;
- iv explain how future users of the site will be able to access the development from the existing transport network and why the main access points to the site and the layout of access routes have been chosen; and,
- v explain how the development will meet the local authority's planning and urban design objectives.

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10 [unclear]

2.0 Description of Proposals

- 2.1 The proposals are for the installation of art work (in the form of a coaster track structure) located at the Alton Towers Resort admissions area (refer to Key Plan, ref 373-71-1). The coaster track previously formed part of the corkscrew coaster at Alton Towers. Planning permission for a replacement coaster was approved on 6 November 2009 (ref. 08/02030/FUL). The new coaster includes part of the corkscrew coaster site. The corkscrew ride structure has therefore been removed to make way for the new coaster. The coaster track will be visible by guests in the vicinity of the admissions area and will add to the overall theme park character enjoyed by guests.
- 2.2 The proposed coaster track structure will comprise 3 curves, rising to the highest point of 11 metres above ground level at two locations at either end of the coaster structure. The middle curve of the structure is the lowest section and is proposed to be surrounded by 2 metre fencing (the application does not seek permission for the fencing as it falls within Class A (b) of the General Permitted Development Order 1995, Schedule 2 Part 2). The structure is proposed to be held in place above ground level by six columns (stanchions) at various heights (refer to Plan as Proposed, ref. 373-71-4).
- 2.3 The proposed artwork structure located at the Alton Towers Resort admissions area would not operate as such and would not result in any mechanical/ride noise at the resort. The proposals are in keeping with the character of the resort and will add to the theme park experience for visitors.

3.0 Assessment

Planning Policy Considerations

- 3.1 Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and Historic Environment (1994) provides a Statement of Central Government policy for the protection of the historic environment.
- 3.2 West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (WMRSS 2008, including the Phase 1 Revision) identifies that art work structure should be promoted within the region (Policy QE3).
- 3.3 Paragraphs 4.14 to 4.20 of PPG15 set out guidance on planning powers within conservation areas. Paragraph 4.19 states that *“preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area”* must be a high priority and there would be a *“strong presumption against the grant of planning permission”* if proposals conflict with that objective. Paragraph 4.20 clarifies that preservation can be achieved by positive development or by *“development which leaves character and appearance unharmed”*.
- 3.4 The Council’s saved Local Plan Policies R21 (Alton Towers Leisure Park), R22 (Alton Towers Leisure Park), R23 (Alton Towers Leisure Park) and R24 (Alton Towers Access Road) relate specifically to the Alton Towers site. The policies seek to conserve and enhance the conservation area, and to protect the amenity of residents living close to the Alton Towers site, including protection from visual and aural intrusion. The policies also seek to protect the main traffic routes surrounding the site. The policies also require a high standard of landscaping, materials and finishes as part of new developments and support a new vehicular access to the site from the east towards Denstone.

Response to Context

- 3.5 Alton Towers Resort is located in the Churnet Valley to the north of Alton Village. For administrative purposes the site is located in Staffordshire County Council and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. 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.
- 3.6 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.
- 3.7 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.

The smaller towns of Leek, Ashbourne and Uttoxeter are located to the north-west, north-east and south respectively. The nearest major urban conurbations are at Manchester to the north and Birmingham to the south, both approximately 64km (40 miles) from the site.

3.8 The Alton Towers Resort contains a number of listed buildings and a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Bunbury Hillfort). The gardens at Alton Towers are listed Grade I on the Register of Parks and Gardens. Development which has a harmful effect on the character, setting or appearance of a Registered Historic Parks or Garden will not be permitted (Policy B20).

3.9 In addition the site is located within the Alton and Farley Conservation Area. Within Conservation Areas the Council's policies allow development which can be shown to preserve or enhance the appearance and character of the area. Policies encourage the retention of trees and buildings which make a positive contribution to conservation areas (Policies B10-12).

3.10 Development should promote a high standard of design (policy N9) and should not detract from the high quality landscape (Policy N8).

Use

3.11 The site is a theme park and falls under Use Class D2 (Assembly and Leisure). The proposed artwork structure will not result in a change of use and is ancillary to the operation of the site as a theme park.

Amount

3.12 The proposals will result in no additional covered floorspace.

Layout

3.13 The coaster track art work feature is proposed to be located to the north of the admissions area ticket kiosks and to the south of the existing monorail station building (refer to Plan as Proposed, ref. 373-71-4).

Scale

3.14 The proposed coaster track structure will comprise 3 curves, rising to the highest point of 11 metres above ground level at two locations at either end of the coaster structure. The middle curve of the structure is the lowest section and is proposed to be surrounded by 2 metre fencing (the application does not seek permission for the fencing as it falls within Class A (b) of the General Permitted Development Order 1995, Schedule 2 Part 2). The structure is proposed to be held in place above ground level by 6 columns at various heights (refer to Plan as Proposed, ref. 373-71-4).

3.15 The proposed art work feature at the admissions area is not located in close proximity to any listed buildings at the Alton Towers Resort and it is considered

that there will be no impact on the setting of the Listed Buildings and structures within the Alton Towers Resort.

- 3.16 Within the Resort the art feature will be viewed within the context of the existing monorail station building and office building. The existing office building tower measures 12 metres in height and the monorail building tower measures 8.22 metres in height (refer to Elevation AA BB as Proposed, ref. 373/71/6).
- 3.17 Glimpses of Alton Towers Resort can be seen from some long range viewpoints. The viewpoints include (1) view looking south east from Farley corner towards Alton Towers, approximately 690 metres from the site, (2) view looking south from Ramshorn Road towards Alton Towers, approximately 1,750 metres from the site and (3) view looking south west from Gander Well towards Alton Towers, approximately 1,680 metres from the site (refer to Key Plan for views 373/71/10).
- 3.18 An illustrative photographic assessment showing existing and proposed views from the above viewpoints accompanies the application (refer to 373/71/11, 373/71/12 and 373/71/13). The photographic assessment identifies that the existing office building tower (measuring 12 metres) marginally exceeds the height of the tree belt when seen from the viewpoints and as with the tower structure there would be glimpses of the highest point of the coaster track structure (measuring 11 metres) when viewed from viewpoints 12 and 13 using a telephoto lens.
- 3.19 There are existing glimpses in these views of structures at the Alton Towers Resort (e.g. office tower). The images demonstrate that there will only be marginal glimpses of the coaster track structure and that these glimpses will be seen in the context of the existing structures at the Alton Towers Resort. It is concluded that there will be no adverse visual impact arising from the proposals in accordance with Local Plan policies R21-24.

Landscaping

- 3.20 There will be no impacts on existing landscaping as part of the proposals.

Appearance

- 3.21 The coaster track structure was part of the corkscrew coaster at the resort, a popular ride at Alton Towers Resort for guests. The structure is steel and is proposed to be finished in a dark purple colour (PANTONE 274C). The stanchions are proposed to be finished in a gold colour (RAL 1001). The proposed finishes have been carefully selected to ensure that the art work feature blends with the surroundings.
- 3.22 The coaster track structure matches the appearance of other coasters within the resort and will help to guide guests to the ticket kiosks/turnstiles at the admissions area for this nationally important theme park. The coaster track will

be located at the admissions area and will be limited to 11 metres in height. The coaster track will not operate and there will be no mechanical noise as a result. The structure will be seen in the context of the existing buildings, including the office and monorail building towers. It is therefore considered that the proposals will preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area, consistent with national and local planning policy. There will be no impact on the setting of the Listed Buildings or gardens within the Alton Towers Resort.

Access

- 3.23 The coaster track will be held in place by 6 supporting columns and will not affect or obstruct existing pedestrian flows to the admissions area. Only a small area of the coaster track will be fenced off for health and safety purposes.

Transport

- 3.24 Once within the Resort, the proposed coaster track feature will guide guests to the admissions area. The feature will not result in any additional admissions to the site, but will merely add to the sense of arrival at the admissions area. It is therefore concluded that there will be no impact on traffic generation.

4.0 Summary and Conclusions

4.1 This statement has assessed the following issues in connection with the design approach for the proposed art work feature at the Alton Towers Resort admissions area:

- Use;
- Amount;
- Layout;
- Scale;
- Landscaping;
- Appearance; and
- Access

4.2 The proposals meet the relevant planning policy requirements and will preserve the character and appearance of the Alton and Farley Conservation Area.

4.3 The design of the proposed coaster track art work structure is in keeping with the surrounding coasters and rides at Alton Towers and the proposals seek to enhance the appearance of the Alton Towers admissions area for guests.

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