

From: [Steve Massey](#)
To: [Jane Curley](#)
Cc: [Planning Comments \(SMDC\)](#)
Subject: SMD/2024/0064 - Alton Towers - new ride at former Ripsaw/current Funk n Fly site
Date: 25 April 2024 16:01:53
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Jane,

Summary: no objection to this application on grounds relating to: existing tree loss/impact; impact on Ancient Woodland; landscape and visual impact; new landscaping. Conditions requested.

I have the following comments on this application:

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Existing Trees

A tree constraints survey plan and schedule has been submitted, but seemingly not the complete arboricultural impact assessment report that would normally accompany a planning application where trees are present and need to be taken into account. Notwithstanding this, and with assistance from the existing/proposed landscaping plans, certain key information can be derived.

The tree survey plan shows that there are only 2 trees of any note within the application site, these being denoted T8965 and T9966, both early-mature Sweet Chestnuts around 7m tall and both assessed as retention category C (low arboricultural value/amenity significance); they are evidently both part of previously planted ornamental landscaping rather than components of the underlying historic/natural landscape structure of the resort. It can be deduced that both these trees would need to be removed to accommodate the proposed development, and this is confirmed in the Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA). The LVA also notes that a third tree, a Holly again of low quality/significance, would also be removed but the proposed landscape scheme seems to suggest that it would in fact be retained.

In any event, the loss of 2 (or 3) low grade trees would not have a significant impact within the site and would be more than compensated in the longer term by proposed new planting.

There are also existing trees at various points outside but close to the application site boundary, but given suitable temporary protection during construction there should be no significant harmful impact on these.

Ancient Woodland

The existing mature woodland beyond (south of) the old Deer Wall along the southern edge of the application site is registered as Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW). Ancient Woodland is regarded as an irreplaceable natural habitat, and there are strong national and local policies which would oppose development proposals which would lead to the loss or deterioration of Ancient Woodland. In this instance, the application site is outside the extent of ASNW and there would be no direct harmful impact on it or its trees.

Natural England and Forestry Commission standing advice on Ancient Woodland also advises that a buffer zone of minimum 15m around Ancient Woodland is kept free of development, and ideally managed as semi-natural habitat, and it is also appropriate to have regard to potential indirect impacts such as disturbance. However, in the case of Alton Towers Resort, there are numerous locations where development and intensive operational and visitor activity (including noise, crowds of people, lighting etc) occurs immediately adjacent to the Ancient Woodland – this would include existing and previous rides on the current application site itself. It is therefore considered that given this long established existing situation, it would not be reasonable or justified to expect or require full compliance with the standing guidance as the proposed development would not create any new or particularly intensified impacts.

Landscape and Visual Impact

The application site is partly developed and partly landscaped. The proposed development would change the character of some of the existing landscaped areas within the site by introduction of ride structures and queue line etc, and would also introduce new landscaping, but this would be within the context of the existing resort/theme park.

The development and its associated infrastructure/landscaping would obviously be in clear public view from within the theme park, but again this would be in keeping with existing character.

The submitted LVA demonstrates that the proposed development would be completely screened in views from key viewpoints in the surrounding area external to the resort, and so would have no visual impact from outside the resort.

New Landscaping

The application is supported by a proposed landscaping scheme. This includes 16 new standard trees of species appropriate to the planted estate landscape setting of Alton Towers, together with areas of dense native understorey planting. This would more than compensate for the loss of 2 (or 3) existing trees and some existing shrub planting.

Conclusion & Conditions:

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No objection to this application on grounds relating to: existing tree loss/impact; impact on Ancient Woodland; landscape and visual impact; new landscaping. I would request that the following conditions be imposed in the event that planning permission is granted:

1. No trees, shrubs or hedgerows shall be removed other than those whose removal is directly required to accommodate the approved development, unless otherwise approved by the LPA. There shall be no removal of any trees, shrubs or hedgerows during the bird nesting season (nominally March to August inclusive), unless otherwise agreed by the LPA and in this case only following careful inspection by a competent person immediately prior to removal in order to establish that such trees, shrubs or hedgerow are not in active use by nesting wild birds.

2. The first action on commencement of development, prior to any further action (including any demolition, site clearance, site stripping, site establishment or formation/improvement of temporary/permanent access) shall be the erection of temporary tree protection barriers and advisory notices for the protection of the existing trees to be retained, in accordance with guidance in British Standard 5837:2012 *Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction – Recommendations*, and these barriers and notices shall be retained in position for the duration of the period that development takes place, unless otherwise agreed by the LPA. In particular, the temporary tree protection barriers shall be sited so as to prevent any access into the Ancient Woodland, and to protect the Ancient Woodland from any construction-related effects arising from the development hereby approved. Within the fenced areas there shall be no excavation, changes in ground levels, installation of underground services, provision of hard surfacing, passage of vehicles, storage of materials, equipment or site huts, tipping of chemicals, waste or cement, or lighting of fires unless otherwise agreed by the LPA.
3. The planting scheme shown on Andrew Nichols "Site Landscape Plan Proposed" Drg. No. 373/106/2 shall be fully implemented before the end of the first available dormant season (November to February inclusive) following completion of the development hereby approved. The trees, shrubs etc planted in accordance with this landscaping scheme shall be properly maintained for a period of 5 years following planting. Any plants which within this period are damaged, become diseased, die, are removed or otherwise fail to establish shall be replaced during the next suitable season.

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Development Services

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