SUPPORTING STATEMENT
Application for Prior Approval

Installation of 252 panel roof mounted solar array

THE DUNGEON
ALTON TOWERS RESORT
ALTON
STAFFORDSHIRE
ST10 4DB

South Circle Planning and Design
Rob@southcircle.co.uk - 07894863989

June 2024

1.0 Introduction:

1.1 This statement is submitted in support of a Prior Approval application for the installation of a 252 panel, roof mounted solar array at Alton Towers Resort, Alton, Staffordshire ST10 4DB.

1.2 The renewable energy generated from the proposed solar array will be used on site.

2.0 Location and Context:

2.1 Alton Towers extends to approximately 500 acres. The theme park and resort are located immediately to north of the village of Alton and approximately 5 .5km to east of Cheadle.

2.2 Whilst the sites electricity consumption is significant, there are ongoing initiatives across the Resort that aim to reduce its carbon footprint. This includes the installation of a combined heat to power unit at the Waterpark in 2019 that reduced its entire carbon footprint more than 15%. The provision of solar panels within the park is seen as a logical and essential step towards improving the sustainability of the Resort.

2.3 The site is not located within article 2(3) land, as defined by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, and is not within an area at risk from surface water flooding. There are no ecological designations on or near the site of the proposed solar installation.

2.4 The closest dwellings to the proposed installation include Wildwood, located approximately 287 metres to the south west and Croft House, located approximately 330 metres to the south.

2.5 There are numerous listed buildings and structures within the grounds of the Resort. Alton Towers and attached garden walls and gatehouse are Grade 11* listed and located approximately 200 metres to the north of the proposed array. The closest listed structure to the proposed development is the bird Cage, located approximately 175m to the north.

2.6 A large area of the wider Resort is designated as a Registered Park and Garden (Grade 1). This designation excludes much of the modern park development, including the Dungeon attraction.

2.7 A Scheduled Monument (Bunbury Hillfort) is located to the west of the application site.

3.0 Proposal:

3.1 Wessex Eco Energy have been appointed by Merlin Entertainments to install a (127kWp) Photovoltaic (PV) solar system on the roof of the Dungeon attraction. The building which houses the Dungeon attraction is located at the very southern end of the site.

3.2 The proposed system comprises 252 panels arranged across the south facing roof slope as shown on drawing no. WE/ATD/01A dated 6th June 2024. The location of the array is also shown in Photographs 1- 2 below.

Photograph 1 – View from the southwest corner of the Dungeon building looking northeast

Photograph 2 – View from south of the Dungeon building looking north

3.3 The panels to be used are JA Solar 505w Panels. The specification and additional data for the panels is shown in Appendix 1.

3.4 The panels will be mounted using a rail mounting system. Once installed, the proposed panels will project approximately 120mm from the face of the existing roof surface.

4.0 Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015

4.1 The above works are considered to be permitted development (subject to the prior approval of the local planning authority) having regard to the provisions of the Schedule 2, Part 14, Class J(C) of Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015. The relevant sections of the Order are detailed below. Associated commentary, where relevant, is shown in red and italics.

Permitted development

J. *The installation, alteration or replacement of—*

(a) *microgeneration solar thermal equipment on a building;*

(b) *microgeneration solar PV equipment on a building; or*

(c) *other solar PV equipment on the roof of a building,*

other than a dwellinghouse or a block of flats. The proposed solar array exceeds 50kW. Therefore, the proposed development is not 'microgeneration' as defined in Section 82(6) of the Energy Act (2004)) and is classed as 'other solar PV equipment'

Development not permitted

J.1 Development is not permitted by Class J if—

(a) the solar PV equipment or solar thermal equipment would be installed on a pitched roof and would protrude more than 0.2 metres beyond the plane of the roof slope when measured from the perpendicular with the external surface of the roof slope; The proposed solar array will project approximately 120mm from the external surface of the roof.

(b) the solar PV equipment or solar thermal equipment would be installed on a flat roof, where the highest part of the solar PV equipment would be higher than 1 metre above the highest part of the roof (excluding any chimney);

(c) the solar PV equipment or solar thermal equipment would be installed on a roof and within 1 metre of the external edge of that roof; *No part of the array will be within 1 metre of the external edge of the roof as shown on drawing no. WE/ATD/01A.*

(e) the solar PV equipment or solar thermal equipment would be installed on a site designated as a scheduled monument; *NA* or

(f) the solar PV equipment or solar thermal equipment would be installed on a listed building or on a building within the curtilage of a listed building. *The proposed array is not within the curtilage of a listed building. The proposal is a significant distance from the listed building of Alton Towers, separated by non-residential areas, modern buildings and park infrastructure.*

J.4—(1) Class J development is permitted subject to the following conditions—

(a) the solar PV equipment or solar thermal equipment must, so far as practicable, be sited so as to minimise its effect on the external appearance of the building and the amenity of the area; and

(b) the solar PV equipment or solar thermal equipment is removed as soon as reasonably practicable when no longer needed.

(2) Class J(c) development is permitted subject to the condition that before beginning the development the developer must apply to the local planning authority for a determination as to whether the prior approval of the authority will be required as to the design or external appearance of the development, in particular the impact of glare on occupiers of neighbouring land, and the following sub-paragraphs apply in relation to that application.

(3) The application must be accompanied by—

(a) a written description of the proposed development;

(b) a plan indicating the site and showing the proposed development;

(c) the developer's contact address; and

(d) the developer's email address if the developer is content to receive communications electronically; together with any fee required to be paid.

5.0 Design and External Appearance

5.1 The proposed solar array, consisting of 252 panels, would not appear visually disproportionate when taking into consideration the size of the building itself. The existing building has a relatively shallow pitch which significantly limits any potential views of the proposed array. Taking into consideration the low pitch of the existing roof, as well as the location and size of the array, it is considered that the external appearance of the existing building will not be altered to a significant degree.

5.2 The proposed solar array will be sensitively sited, being located within an existing developed area of the Resort but in an area that is not visible from publicly accessible areas. The wider resort is located within an enclosed woodland setting with a significant belt of mature woodland to the east, south and west of the application site. Having regard to the presence of this mature screening, the Dungeon building is not visible from longer distance views across Churnet Valley to the south or from views in the wider landscape.

5.3 The proposed panels incorporate a satin finish coating. Combined with the low angle of the roof and the amount of surrounding screening vegetation, this will ensure that the proposed array will not adversely impact upon residential or visual amenity as a result of glare.

5.4 The presence of mature screening vegetation, the low angle of the roof and context within with the panels will be located, will ensure that the proposed development will not adversely impact upon the landscape character of the locality.

5.5 Having regard to scale and nature of the proposed development, as well as the physical separation between the development and the nearest listed buildings, it is considered that there will be no harm to setting of the listed buildings and structures within the vicinity of the application site.

5.6 The application site is located within close proximity to the Grade I Park and Garden. It is noted that the designation is particularly extensive and surrounds the built development at Alton Towers. The proposal is considered to represent development that is of limited scale and directly connected to the existing contemporary structures within the Resort. In addition, the proposed development is well screened from the surrounding area and has an extremely limited impact on visual amenity and wider landscape character. For these reasons, it is considered that the proposal will not harm the setting or character of the Registered Park and Garden.

5.7 In developing the proposed solar installation, consideration has been given to the siting of the proposed array. Its location and configuration have been chosen to maximise energy production with its associated sustainability benefits. It is considered that the proposed development balances the sensitivities and constraints of the site whilst maximising these sustainability benefits.