

Conservation Team Advice

Date: 17th October 2025
Application Ref: SMD/2025/0392
Site Address: Alton Towers, Farley Lane, Alton
Proposal: Installation of stage and associated canopy structure.

Heritage assets affected:		
Designated Heritage Asset(s):	☒	- Alton Towers and attached garden walls and gatehouse – Grade II* (listing ref: 1374685) - Alton Towers – Grade I Registered Park & Garden (listing ref: 1000191) - Alton & Farley Conservation Area - Stables at Alton Towers – Grade II (listing ref: 1374704)
Non-Designated Heritage Asset(s):	☐	

Conservation Advice

Summary of Significance

The proposal would be situated in Alton & Farley Conservation Area, within the Grade I Registered Park & Garden and within the courtyard of the Grade II listed stables for the wider setting of Alton Towers (Grade II*).

Alton Towers (Grade II*) is a former country house dating c.1810-40, built for the fifteenth and sixteenth Earls of Shrewsbury. The building is constructed in ashlar stone and slate roofs, designed in an asymmetrical plan form and castellated Gothic style. The estate for the hall was sold in the early-20th century, and the site was used as a major attraction and amusement park from the 20th century onwards. The significance of the building derives from its historic association as an early- to mid-19th century country house, connection with the Talbot family, designs by various notable architects including Wyatt and Pugin, dramatic Gothic design and retention of historic fabric, internal décor and plan form.

The former country house is situated in a Grade I Registered Park & Garden, which comprises an outer deer park, woodland, lake, gardens and pleasure grounds. The immediate setting of the parkland has been somewhat diminished by the development

of the amusement park and car parking, nevertheless, it still retains its grandeur which accentuates the designed importance of the principal Listed Building.

The former stables (Grade II) in the Alton Park estate date from the early-19th century. The stables are arranged in a squared courtyard layout, with a stone Gothic revival turret and crenelated entrance to the southwest and brick ranges to the rear.

Alton & Farley Conservation Area covers the hamlet of Farley to the north and the village of Alton south, along with Alton Towers parkland in the middle. The significance of the Conservation Area relates to the medieval origins of both settlements, historic association with the Talbot family, retention of 17th and 18th century buildings, predominant construction of buildings in stone, large areas of wooded slopes and the dramatic views of Alton Castle along the skyline.

Assessment and Impact

The proposal seeks consent for the construction of a temporary stage within the courtyard of the former stables (Grade II). As set out in the supporting documents, the structure of the stage would be approx. 12m (W) x 8.8m (D) x 6.6m (H). It would be constructed with a black metal frame and finished in a grey PVC coated polyester fabric shell. It was noted on the site visit (14/10/25), that the stage is currently in situ.

The shape, form and palette of materials of the structure would be overtly contemporary which would contrast with the designed style of the stables and surrounding designated heritage assets. Its placement within the courtyard would infill this courtyard and diminish the appreciation of the openness and aesthetic interest of the former stables, thus result in harm to the immediate setting of the stables building.

The position of the structure within the courtyard would mean this would be well screened from wider views in the Registered Park & Garden and from the principal listed house, thus have a negligible impact on the setting and significance of these assets.

The covering letter mentions that the proposed stage would be erected from September to February to cover seasonal events. The temporariness of the structure would reduce some of the extent of harm caused to the setting of the stables. In addition, it is recognised that the immediate setting and significance of the stables has already been harmed by some of the amusement park alterations, such as the bow windows alterations and the courtyard marquee. The wider setting and significance of the country park estate has also been dramatically altered by the theme park use.

Overall, the proposal would result in a minor-moderate level of harm to the setting of the listed stables due to the proximity, its stark visual contrast in form and materials and the structure will diminish visual appreciation of the design of the building and the openness of the courtyard. However, clear justification has been provided for the structure as it would not involve the loss of any historic fabric/be physically attached to the listed building, the level of impact would be somewhat reduced by the

temporariness of the structure, its impact would be reversible should the amusement park use cease and the structure forms part of the wider operational use/optimum viable use of the site.

Legislation and Policy

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

The local planning authority should have a desirability of preserving the setting of the Listed Buildings (s. 66) and preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Area (s.72).

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024

In determining applications, local authorities should take account of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation, the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality, the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness (par.210).

Any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within the setting), should require clear and convincing justification (par.213).

Where a proposed development would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use (par.215).

Local Development Framework

Consideration should also be given to the following documents and local development framework policies:

- Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (Adopted 2020) – DC2 The Historic Environment
- Alton & Farley Conservation Area Appraisal (2007)

Conclusions and Recommendations

In summary, the proposal would result in minor-moderate level of harm to the setting of the listed stables and negligible impact on the setting of the other listed buildings, registered park and garden and negligible impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. This would fail to satisfy the provision of s.66 for the listed stable but would satisfy the provisions of s.72 of the Act. With reference to the planning policies, this would be ‘less than substantial harm’ to the designated heritage asset (par.215 of NPPF and policy DC2 of the local development framework).

As set out above, clear justification has been provided for the structure (par.213 of NPPF) as it would not involve the loss of any historic fabric/be physically attached to the listed building, the level of impact would be somewhat reduced by the temporariness of the structure, the structure forms part of the wider operational use/optimum viable use of the site (par.215 of NPPF) and its impact would be reversible should the amusement park use cease.

There are no objections to the proposal from a conservation perspective, but for any approval granted we would suggest that the months/period of time for the erection of the structure is conditioned to ensure that the heritage harm is minimised. It would also be recommended that consideration is given to a condition that would either create a temporary consent period (e.g. 10 years) or restrict the proposed development for the lifetime of the amusement park, to ensure that the structure would not be 'permitted development' if the theme park use of the site ceased.

Conservation Officer: Megan Atkinson