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Our ref 03224/IR/HW/RB/3705253v1
PP ref PP-02448729

Dear Sir/Madam

SMDC: Erection of safety fencing at Alton Towers Resort - Upper Gardens

On behalf of our client, Merlin Attractions Operations Ltd, please find enclosed an application for planning permission and listed building consent for the erection of new outdoor safety fencing at the Alton Towers Resort in the Upper Gardens (shown in drawings 373/82-1.1 and 373/82-2.1).

This covering letter sets out the background to the proposed development, the nature of the proposed works and the details of the enclosed application documents.

The application comprises the following documents:

- 1 Planning Application Form (signed and dated);
- 2 Certificate B and Notice served on the freehold owner of the site (signed and dated);
- 3 Agricultural Holdings Certificate (signed and dated);
- 4 Design and Assessment Statement prepared by Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners;
- 5 Heritage Impact Assessment prepared by Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners; and
- 6 Planning Application Drawings (see list at appendix 1 to this letter).

The application has been submitted via the Planning Portal (ref: PP-02448729) and a cheque for £195, made payable to 'Staffordshire Moorlands District Council', to cover the requisite planning application fee is being provided under separate cover.

Background

Alton Towers Resort is operated by Merlin Entertainments Group Ltd. 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. It is essential, therefore, that access to and circulation within the gardens is safe for both visitors and staff.



Site and Surroundings

Alton Towers Resort is located in the Parish of Farley in Staffordshire, some 19km west of Stoke on Trent and approximately 29km west of Derby. 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. The 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.

The Resort is located within the Alton-Farley Conservation Area and is designated as a Special Landscape Area. To the south of the site Abbey Wood and Park Banks are identified as 'Grade 1 County Sites of Biological Importance' and 'ancient woodlands'. The meadows to the north-east are also identified as 'Grade I County Sites of Biological Importance'. Towards the centre of the site is the Grade I historic gardens which incorporates several listed structures and buildings, including the Grade II* Towers. The Bunbury Earthworks, located to the south west of the Towers, is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Proposals

This application seeks planning permission and listed building consent for the erection of safety fencing at the Alton Towers Resort in the Upper Gardens (area 5, shown in drawings 373/82-7).

Please note that a separate planning and listed building consent application has been submitted via the Planning Portal (ref: PP-02448721) for outdoor safety fencing in the following locations:

- Area 1: Splash battle;
- Area 2: Bridge/Dam;
- Area 3: White Bridge;
- Area 4: Towers area;
- Area 6: Lower Gardens area; and
- Area 7: Gothic Prospect Tower.

All the proposed fencing requires planning permission. Given the heritage sensitivities of the application site (Upper Gardens), some stretches of proposed fencing also require listed building consent. Appendix 1 includes a schedule of proposed works, clarifying the permissions and consents sought for each stretch of fencing.

The different types of proposed fencing are shown in drawing 373/82-10. These typologies respond to both health and safety requirements and the inherent heritage and landscape sensitivities of the application site.

Please note that the proposed fencing will impact both Grade II and Grade II* listed structures. For the purposes of section 11 of the application form, 'Grade II*' has been checked.



Consultation

Merlin Attractions Operations Ltd. and its consultant team have undertaken consultation prior to the submission of this application with officers at Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and English Heritage. These meetings provided a valuable opportunity to agree, in principle, the need for safety fencing and the proposed locations. The proposed fencing typologies were also discussed and reviewed.

Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (2012) states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development (para.6), which includes the environmental duty of *'protecting and enhancing our... built and historic environment'*. Applicants are required to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by a proposal, including any contribution to the significance made by their setting. More detailed guidance in relation to 'substantial harm' and 'less than substantial harm' is provided in paragraphs 133 and 134. These paragraphs are particularly relevant given the many heritage assets in the Alton Towers Resort.

The statutory development plan comprises the "saved" policies of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan (2001) and the "saved" policies of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (1998). The Alton Towers SPG (1988) and the Revised Submission Core Strategy (2011) have also been considered in this planning and listed building consent application.

The Local Plan contains four specific policies (Policy R21 - R24) in connection with Alton Towers. These policies highlight the importance of conserving and enhancing the conservation area, protecting heritage assets and the peripheries of the resort from visual and aural intrusion, and ensuring that new development meets the highest design and landscaping standards. Policy B13 provides additional guidance in relation to design, stating that proposals should respond appropriately to their surroundings, whilst making adequate provision for safety and security. Finally policies N8 and N9 state that new development should not detract from the high quality of the landscape because of its siting, scale, design or materials.

Policies within the Local Plan relating to conservation areas and listed buildings have not been saved. However guidance is provided at a national level within the National Planning Policy Framework (2012), which identifies a presumption in favour of sustainable development – this includes the environmental duty of *'protecting and enhancing our... built and historic environment'* (para. 7). This is reiterated within the saved policies NC2, NC17A/B, NC18 and NC19 of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan (2001).

Reference has also been made to the emerging Core Strategy (Revised Submission Document, December 2011). Of particular relevance are policies DC1 and DC2, which encourage design of the highest quality that will reinforce local distinctiveness and help create accessible and safe public environments. The importance of safeguarding our historic environment is also highlighted.

Summary

The design of the proposed fencing at the Alton Towers Resort has been sensitively designed to respond to its surroundings, both in terms of the built heritage and formal landscaped gardens –



this accords with saved policy B13 of the adopted Local Plan and policy DC1 of the Revised Submission Core Strategy. Indeed, the fences are simple both in terms of their design and use of a pared back and high quality palette of materials.

Whilst the accompanying Heritage Impact Assessment has identified that some stretches of fencing will have a moderate impact on the special interest of designated heritage assets, cumulatively it is considered to constitute less than substantial harm as defined in paragraph 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

The simple design and finish of the proposed fences will ensure that they sit appropriately within the formal landscaped setting of the Gardens, without detracting from the high quality of the historic landscape, or the character or appearance of the Alton-Farley Conservation Area (policies N8 and N9 of the Local Plan and policy DC2 of the Revised Submission Core Strategy). Where possible, fixing points to listed structures will be minimised, ensuring that proposals preserve the special architectural or historic interest of these designated heritage assets (policy DC2 of the Revised Submission Core Strategy).

The wider public benefits of the proposed works are considerable – the proposed fencing will ensure the safety of visitors at the Alton Towers Resort, enabling the continued enjoyment and interpretation of important heritage assets. If this safety fencing is not erected, there is a danger that parts of the gardens could be closed to the public. The formal gardens are an important part of the experience of many visitors to Alton Towers Resort. The maintenance of a successful visitor attraction supports investment in the heritage assets, including listed building, the gardens and the woodlands.

The health and safety of those working at Alton Towers Resort will also be secured, particularly those involved in the regular maintenance of the gardens often working at height.

We trust the enclosed documents are sufficient to enable the application to be validated and look forward to receiving your decision as soon as possible. In the meantime, if you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me or my colleague, Rebecca Barrett.

Yours sincerely,

Hannah Whitney
Associate Director

Copy	Jane Curley	SMDC (A3 set of drawings)
	Gill Bayliss	SMDC (A3 set of drawings)
	Mark Kerrigan	Alton Towers Resort (full set)
	Terry Dunn	Alton Towers Resort (electronic copy)
	Ian Crabbe	Alton Towers Resort (electronic copy)
	Tony Nicholls	Alton Towers Resort (electronic copy)
	Andy Nichols	Nichols Brown Webber (electronic copy)



Appendix 1
Schedule of proposed works

Area 5: Upper Gardens Area

Works	Planning permission	Listed building consent	Comments
5.01	Y	Y (fountain, terrace walls, steps, lions urns and sundial Grade II listed. Listing ref 106)	
5.02	Y	Y (fountain, terrace walls, steps, lions urns and sundial Grade II listed. Listing ref 106)	
5.03	Y	Y (fountain, terrace walls, steps, lions urns and sundial Grade II listed. Listing ref 106)	
5.04	Y	Y (wall and basin enclosing the Italian Garden Grade II listed. Listing ref 106)	
5.05	Y	Y (wall and basin enclosing the Italian Garden Grade II listed. Listing ref 106)	
5.06	Y	Y (wall and basin enclosing the Italian Garden Grade II listed. Listing ref 106)	
5.07	Y	Y (Conservatory Grade II* listed. Listing ref 111)	
5.08	Y	N	
5.09	Y	Y (Conservatory Grade II* listed. Listing ref 111)	
5.10	Y	Y (Summerhouse and retaining wall Grade II listed. Listing ref 112)	
5.11	Y	Y (Summerhouse and retaining wall Grade II listed. Listing ref 112)	
5.12	Y	Y (walls, gatepiers and steps Grade II listed. Listing ref 113)	
5.13	Y	Y (walls, gatepiers and steps Grade II listed. Listing ref 113)	
5.14	Y	Y (walls, gatepiers and steps Grade II listed. Listing ref 113)	



5.15	Y	Y (Loggia and terrace wall Grade II listed. Listing ref 107)	
5.16	N	N	Existing fence
5.17	Y	Y (Loggia and terrace wall Grade II listed. Listing ref 107)	
5.18	N	N	Existing fence
5.19	N	N	Existing fence
5.20	Y	Y (Le Refuge and retaining wall listed. Listing ref 109)	
5.21	Y	Y (walls, gatepiers and steps Grade II listed. Listing ref 113)	
5.22	Y	Y	
5.23	Y	Y (walls, gatepiers and steps Grade II listed. Listing ref 113)	
5.24	Y	Y (walls, gatepiers and steps Grade II listed. Listing ref 113)	Fencing adjoins listed wall (listing ref 113) therefore subject to listed building controls.
5.25	Y	Y (walls, gatepiers and steps Grade II listed. Listing ref 113)	
5.26	Y	Y (retaining wall Grade II listed. Listing ref 108)	
5.27	Y	N	
5.28	Y	Y (Bath and terrace wall Grade II listed. Listing ref 110)	Existing wall attached to listed Bath and terrace therefore subject to listed building controls.
5.29	Y	Y (Bath and terrace wall Grade II listed. Listing ref 110)	
5.30	Y	Y (retaining wall Grade II listed. Listing ref 108)	
5.31	Y	Y (retaining wall Grade II listed. Listing ref 108)	
5.32	Y	Y (retaining wall Grade II listed. Listing ref 108)	
5.33	Y	Y (retaining wall Grade II listed. Listing ref 108)	
5.34	Y	N	
5.35	N	N	Existing fence



Appendix 2 Drawing Schedule

Planning Application Drawings	Drawing Reference	Scale
Location Plan	373/82-1.1	1:2500 @ A1 1:5000 @ A3
Block Plan and Key Plan	373/82-2.1	1:800 @ A1 1:1600 @ A3
Upper Gardens Area	373/82-7	1:125 @ A1 1:250 @ A3
Heritage Fencing Types	373/82-10	NTS

Illustrative material

Illustrative material	Reference	Scale
	Detail 5.10	NTS
	Detail 5.11	NTS
	Detail 5.11 X-ray	NTS
	Details 5.12 and 5.13	NTS
	Detail 5.20	NTS