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Planning. Design. Economics.

Design and Access Statement

Alton Towers Resort: Heritage Fencing

Merlin Attractions Operations Ltd.

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1.0

Introduction

1.1

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared by Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners (NLP) on behalf of Merlin Attractions Operations Ltd. It accompanies the following applications:

- a A planning and listed building consent application for outdoor safety fencing at the Alton Towers Resort in the Splash Battle area and Bridge/Dam area; and
- b A planning and listed building consent application for outdoor safety fencing at the Alton Towers Resort in the White Bridge area and the Lower Gardens.

1.2

It should be noted that these applications follow the submission of applications for outdoor safety fencing in other parts of the gardens, namely:

- a 13/00136/FUL and 13/00137/LBC – the erection of outdoor safety fencing at Alton Towers Resort in the Splash Battle area, White Bridge area, Towers area and Gothic Prospect Tower. Planning permission and listed building consent were granted, subject to conditions, on 5 April 2013.
- b 13/00138/FUL and 13/00139/LBC – the erection of outdoor safety fencing at Alton Towers Resort in the Upper Gardens. Planning permission and listed building consent were refused on 4 April 2013.

1.3

This document should be read in conjunction with the Heritage Impact Assessment and the suite of application drawings.

2.0

The process

Assessment

2.1

Alton Towers Resort is located in the Churnet Valley to the north of Alton Village. 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 Resort's development from the surrounding area.

2.2

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 Historic Parks and Gardens. In addition the site is located within the Alton and Farley Conservation Area and is within an area that is designated as a Special Landscape Area. The woodland to the south and meadows to the north-east are registered Sites of Biological Importance.

- 2.3 The accompanying Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) provides a more detailed analysis of the application sites and their surrounds, identifying its heritage and landscape significance. This assessment has informed the design and siting of the proposed fencing.

Involvement

- 2.4 These applications have been prepared in consultation with officers from Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and English Heritage.
- 2.5 More specifically, the following meetings have been held:
- a 12 December 2012 – meeting and site visit with Gill Bayliss (SMDC and Alan Taylor (English Heritage);
 - b 18 January 2013 – meeting and site visit with Gill Bayliss (SMDC) and Alan Taylor (English Heritage); and
 - c 31 January 2013 – ATR heritage meeting.
- 2.6 As a result of these meetings, the following issues have been agreed in principle:
- a The need for safety fencing to ensure continued public access to, and enjoyment of, the landscaped gardens of the Alton Towers Resort; and
 - b The proposed locations for the fencing and their relationship with designated heritage assets and the wider landscape.
- 2.7 During the course of these meetings, the fence typologies were also discussed. The proposed fences, as shown in drawing 373/82-10, have therefore evolved in response to these discussions.

Evaluation

- 2.8 The proposed development has also had regard to policy and guidance at all levels of the planning hierarchy. This includes:
- a The National Planning Policy Framework (2012);
 - b The saved policies of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan (2001);
 - c The saved policies of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (1998);
 - d The Alton Towers Resort Supplementary Planning Guidance (1988);
 - e The Alton Farley Conservation Area Appraisal (2008); and
 - f The Revised Submission Core Strategy (2011).
- 2.9 The covering letter and Heritage Impact Assessment provide more detail with regards to the policy requirements outlined in these documents.

3.0

The Proposed Development

Introduction

3.1

The proposed development includes the erection of safety fencing in the grounds of the Alton Towers Resort in the following locations (shown in drawings 373/82-1.2, 373/82-1.3, 373/82-2.2 and 373/82-2.3):

- 1 Area 1: The Splash Battle area;
- 2 Area 2: The Bridge/Dam area;
- 3 Area 3: The White Bridge area; and
- 4 Area 6: The Lower Gardens area.

3.2

There are different types of fencing proposed, as 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 sites.

Amount

3.3

The location of the proposed fences has been carefully considered in consultation with Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and English Heritage. Indeed, given the considerable heritage and landscape sensitivities of the application sites fencing has been kept to a minimum, whilst ensuring the health and safety of those visiting and working at the Alton Towers Resort can be secured.

Layout

3.4

The layout and form of each stretch of fencing is clearly shown in the suite of drawings submitted as part of these applications. In summary, the proposed fencing will follow the form of the structural or landscape element to which it will be fixed. As such, the layout of the fencing will ensure that the architectural and landscape qualities of the heritage assets are still easily 'read'.

Scale

3.5

All the new fences will be 1100mm in height to accord with Part K of the Building Regulations.

Landscaping

3.6

The proposed fencing will result in unavoidable, but largely reversible, alterations to the existing landscape, which is a Grade I registered Park and Garden. To mitigate the potential impacts, the fencing has been designed with minimal vertical fixing posts – this will avoid unnecessary interventions to the built and landscaped elements of gardens. The design and finish of the fences

will also ensure that they are viewed as an unobtrusive and subordinate element of views within the garden.

- 3.7 The Heritage Impact Assessment provides a more detailed assessment of the potential impact of proposed fencing on the formal landscaped gardens, including views within the gardens.

Appearance

- 3.8 The fences would be simple both in terms of their design and use of a pared back and high quality palette of materials – all fences will be made of steel and finished in ‘Little Greene’s ‘Invisible Green’ as used and recommended by English Heritage. Their design and appearance have been informed by discussions with Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and English Heritage; the requirements of the building regulations; and their proposed location within the Alton Towers Resort.
- 3.9 In summary, the following fence types are proposed within the areas subject to these applications:
- a Type 1-R with railings – this is a traditional fence with railing posts at 10mm intervals and fixing posts approximately 1800mm apart (although this will vary depending on location and form). The lower rail will be set approximately 50mm from the ground. There will be a continuous handrail.
 - b Type 1-D with diamond trellis – this is a diamond trellis fence with fixing posts at approximately 1800mm intervals (although this will vary depending on location and form). There are three horizontal rails, including a continuous handrail at the top, an intermediate rail and bottom rail set approximately 50mm from the ground.
 - c Type 2 – this fence is of a simpler design with fixing posts at approximately 1800mm intervals (although this will vary depending on location and form). As with Type 1-D, there are three horizontal rails, including a continuous handrail at the top, an intermediate rail and bottom rail set approximately 50mm from the ground.
- 3.10 The simple and high quality design of the proposed fences will ensure that they are viewed as subordinate to the built and natural heritage assets within the Alton Towers Resort. The fences have also been designed with minimal vertical posts to avoid unnecessary physical damage to the historic fabric. In addition, where fences are to be fixed to an existing structure (e.g. an existing retaining wall), the railings or posts will be set into existing joints (where possible) to minimise damage to the stonework.
- 3.11 The accompanying HIA provides a more detailed assessment of the proposed fencing and its potential impact on the special interest of the listed buildings and structures within the Alton Towers Resort, as well as the significance of the wider gardens.

- 3.12 Please note that these applications do not provide a detailed methodology for the erection and fixing of the fences. It is anticipated that this will be dealt with as a condition to the planning and listed building consent application.

Access

- 3.13 The primary objective of the proposed works is to ensure the safety of those visiting and working at the Alton Tower Resort. Indeed, the fencing will enable continued public access and enjoyment of the resort, and will facilitate the wider interpretation of heritage assets, including the listed buildings, follies and gardens.
- 3.14 Importantly, the proposed fencing will also ensure the safety of those working at the Alton Towers Resort and will not impede staff access to the gardens for maintenance purposes.

Conclusion

- 4.0
- 4.1 The proposed fencing subject to these applications has been designed in consultation with Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and English Heritage. It responds to health and safety requirements, whilst ensuring a sensitive design response appropriate to the historic context.