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& Partners

Planning. Design. Economics.

Heritage Impact Assessment

Alton Towers Resort: Heritage Fencing

Merlin Attractions Operations Ltd.

8 April 2013

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1.0

Introduction

April 2013 Applications

1.1

This Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) 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

The above applications are referred to as the April 2013 applications.

1.3

As outlined in the accompanying covering letter, all the new stretches of fences will require planning permission. Given the heritage sensitivities of the application sites, some stretches of proposed fencing will also require listed building consent. A schedule of the proposed works is included in Appendix 1, clarifying the permissions and consents sought for each stretch of fencing.

February 2013 Applications

1.4

It should be noted that the April 2013 applications follow the submission of applications in February 2013 for outdoor safety fencing in other parts of the gardens (referred to as the February submission), 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.

2.0 **Planning Policy**

2.1 This section provides a review of policy and guidance at all levels of the planning hierarchy.

Relevant Legislation

2.2 The Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides specific protection for buildings and areas of special architectural or historic interest over and above the protection provided through the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2.3 Under Section 72 of the Act the local planning authority also has a duty to pay special attention to “*the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance*” of conservation areas.

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (2012)

2.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012. It 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*’ (para. 7).

2.5 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, in a proportionate amount of detail (para. 128). Local authorities should take significance into account in order to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal (para. 129).

2.6 More specifically, paragraphs 133 and 134 provide guidance with regards to the impact of proposed development on the significance of heritage assets. These paragraphs state the following:

‘Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- *The nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site;*
- *No viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation;*
- *Conservation by grant-funding or some form of charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and*

- *The harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.*

Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.'

- 2.7 Local authorities are required to look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and within the setting of Conservation Areas and other heritage assets which will enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably (para 137).

Adopted Local Development Plan

- 2.8 Preparation of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Development Framework is ongoing. The Revised Submission Core Strategy was submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination in September 2012 and adoption is anticipated in April/May 2013. For the purposes of these applications, therefore, reference is made to both the emerging Core Strategy and the saved policies in the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan (2001) and the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (1998).

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan (2001)

- 2.9 Alton Towers is located within an area that is designated as a Special Landscape Area - this is a broad area identified in the County Structure Plan. Of particular relevance are the following saved policies:
- Policy NC2 – Landscape Protection and Restoration:* development should be informed by and be sympathetic to landscape character and quality and should contribute, as appropriate, to the regeneration, restoration, enhancement, maintenance or active conservation of the landscape likely to be affected.
 - Policy NC17A/B – Historic Parks and Gardens:* historic parks and gardens and their settings will be protected from development which would cause harm to their character or appearance.
 - Policy NC18 – Listed Buildings:* there will be a presumption in favour of preserving Listed Buildings and protecting their settings and historic context.
 - Policy NC19 – Conservation Areas:* New development within or adjacent to Conservation Areas should respect, protect and enhance their character and appearance with respect to its height, scale, intensity and materials, and only generate levels of activity which will support their preservation and economic viability.

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (1998)

- 2.10 The Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan was adopted in 1998. Some of the policies have subsequently been saved. Saved policies of particular relevance to these applications include:
- a *Policies N8 and N9:* in Special Landscape Areas new development should not detract from the high quality of the landscape because of its siting, scale, design or materials.
 - b *Policy B13:* new development must be of the highest quality design, responding to the local surroundings. This policy also highlights the need to make provision for safety and security.
- 2.11 Policies R21-R24 specifically relate to Alton Towers. R21 highlights the importance of conserving and enhancing the conservation area and the amenity of local residents. R22 seeks to protect heritage assets and the peripheries of the estate from visual and aural intrusion. R23 states that where planning permission has been granted, planning conditions will require a high standard of landscaping, materials and finishes.

Alton Towers Resort Supplementary Planning Guidance (1988)

- 2.12 The District Council prepared and adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance for Alton Towers Resort in 1988. This includes a broad range of policies for the site. The main principles are to allow the economic development of the site as a visitor attraction of national importance whilst conserving and protecting its heritage interest and preventing external impact beyond the park.

Alton and Farley Conservation Area Appraisal (2008)

- 2.13 The Alton and Farley Conservation Area was designated in 1971. The Appraisal provides a detailed description of the historic development and distinctive character of Alton Towers and the surrounding estate. Section 9.0 of the Appraisal recognises both the benefits and drawbacks of the Alton Towers theme park within the conservation area. The careful consideration of new proposals is therefore encouraged to ensure that the theme park maintains its market share, whilst preserving the significance of valuable heritage assets. The Appraisal also encourages separate paying visitors to the gardens.

Revised Submission Core Strategy (December 2011)

- 2.14 The Revised Submission Core Strategy provides more up to date policies for the Staffordshire Moorlands area. Policies of particular relevance to these applications include:
- a *Policy DC1 – Design considerations:* all development should be well designed and reinforce local distinctiveness. It should be designed to the highest standards; respect its surroundings in terms of scale, siting and appearance; and help to create accessible and safe public environments.

- b *Policy DC2 – Historic environment:* development should safeguard and, where possible, enhance the historic environment, areas of historic character, interests of acknowledged importance, the settings of designated assets, conservation area and registered historic parks and gardens.

3.0 **Site and Surrounds**

Introduction

3.1 This section provides a brief overview of the heritage significance of the Alton Towers Resort, together with each of the areas where fencing is proposed. This includes:

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

Alton Towers Resort

3.2 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 park's development from the surrounding area.

3.3 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.

4.0

Summary of Significance

The Gardens

4.1

The Conservation Plan for Alton Towers prepared in 2010 summarises the significance of the gardens as follows:

The collection of garden buildings at Alton is quite extraordinary. There is a very large number of them, concentrated into a small space. Such juxtapositions provoked adverse criticism in the nineteenth century from garden architects such as J.C. Loudon (1783-1843) and Nesfield. More recently, Pevsner said “far too many building, in far too many styles, far too close together”. Loudon and Nesfield were two outstanding garden professionals of their time and it is reasonable to conclude that the criticisms were well founded. An alternative view, set out by Michael Hussey in Country Life (1960) and supported by Michael Fisher, is that Loudon did not see the gardens in their mature state and failed to appreciate the Earl’s intention to create views of the house from the garden rather than the other way round. However, even in 1840, Loudon noted that some trees were growing out of control suggesting that the landscape was, in part at least, well developed.

Notwithstanding this nineteenth century criticism, the inclusion of the gardens and park on the English Heritage Register with a Grade I listing (one of only three in Staffordshire) is indicative of their importance today as an example of a unique piece of landscape design in England at the beginning of the nineteenth century. While the gardens may not have contributed significantly to mainstream landscape design, they are an extraordinary example of what could happen when great wealth was combined with extravagant and eccentric eclecticism. Moreover, much of the original intentions of the patrons and designers remains evident and the detailed archival material provides much by way of guidance for conservation and restoration.

The specific areas affected by the proposals

4.2

The following table provides a summary of the heritage and landscape significance of each of the four areas within the Alton Towers Resort where new safety fencing is proposed, with reference to the relevant listing descriptions. For more detail reference should be made to the Alton Towers Conservation Plan (May 2010).

Table 4.1 Summary of significance

Area	Significance
The Splash Battle area	<p>This 19th century wall forms the north-eastern boundary of the boating lake and is Grade II listed. It acts as a retaining wall to the carriageway in front of the Grade II listed Stables. The listing description highlights its crenellated detailing and square turret-like projections. The retaining wall is listed for its group value.</p> <p>Please note that the proposed fencing subject of this application is located in close proximity to the listed element of the Splash Battle area, and is not attached to the listed structures.</p>
The Bridge/Dam area	<p>This retaining wall of the dam to the south-east of the boating lake dates from the 1820s and is Grade II listed. The wall is in the form of a bridge in a Tudor Gothic style. It comprises nine bays with an openwork parapet and octagonal piers. The retaining wall forms part of the important garden layout at Alton Towers which is listed Grade I on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.</p>
The White Bridge area	<p>The white bridge is Grade II listed, dating from the early 19th century. The white bridge and its attached wall and gate piers form a single architectural composition with the wall enclosing the Italian Garden to the north-west.</p> <p>The principal feature of the bridge is a single four-centred arch with moulded surround, balustrade with trefoil-headed arcading painted white, terminating in stepped buttresses. The bridge, attached wall and gate piers form part of the important garden layout at Alton Towers which is listed Grade I on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.</p> <p>Please note that the proposed fencing subject of this application is located in close proximity to the listed bridge within the White Bridge area, and is not attached to the listed structure. Fencing 3.12 as shown on drawing 373/82-8, however, is attached to the Grade II listed retaining wall of the Summerhouse (listing ref 99).</p>
The Lower Gardens area	<p>Similarly to the Upper Gardens, the Lower Gardens comprise a series of terraces with formal landscaping and follies. The pond and lake are of particular note, as well as the Grade II listed Chinese Pagoda which sits in the centre of the lake. Designed by Robert Abraham, the Pagoda dates from 1832. It has an octagonal base with five steps, leading to a pagoda of three stages, each with openwork sides and ogee-headed openings.</p>

5.0 **Proposed Development**

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 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 site. Further explanation is provided in the Design and Access Statement.
- 5.3 The principal objective of the proposed fencing 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. The health and safety of those working at the resort will also be secured, particularly those involved in the regular maintenance of the gardens often working at height.

6.0 Impact of the Proposed Development

Introduction

6.1 The following tables assess the impact of each stretch of fencing on the significance of designated heritage assets, including the historic gardens and listed buildings and structures. This impact is identified as negligible, minor, moderate or major. Where the impact is considered to be beneficial this is also noted.

6.2 Whilst the assessment of impact highlights that some stretches of fencing will have a minor 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 (2012).

Splash Battle Area

Works	Asset(s) affected	Assessment of impact	Summary
1.01	<i>Garden – Grade I Registered Park and Garden.</i>	The proposed type 1-R fencing will follow the north-western boundary of the boating lake, allowing the form of the lake to be easily read. The simplicity of the railings in both design and materials will ensure that the fencing does not detract from the character of the surrounding landscape. The fencing will therefore have a negligible impact on the significance of the gardens.	Negligible

Bridge/Dam Area

Works	Asset(s) affected	Assessment of impact	Summary
2.01	<i>Retaining wall of dam – Grade II listed, ref 99</i>	The proposed type 1-R fencing will follow the profile of the listed steps, allowing the form and nosings of the steps to be easily read. Fixings to the steps have been minimised to reduce the need for interventions to the historic fabric. The decorative handrail stop is in keeping with the open parapet work of the retaining wall. It is considered that the proposed fencing will have a minor impact on the significance of the listed retaining wall.	Minor

2.02	<i>Retaining wall of dam – Grade II listed, ref 99</i>	The proposed type 1-R fencing will be set 1100mm above the listed platform. When viewed from the pathway, therefore, the trefoil detail of the open parapet will still be easily read. The posts will be set into existing joints in the stonework to reduce the need for interventions to the historic fabric. It is considered that the proposed fencing will have a minor impact on the significance of the listed retaining wall.	Minor
2.03	<i>Retaining wall of dam – Grade II listed, ref 99</i>	The proposed type 1-R fencing will follow the profile of the listed steps, allowing the nosings to be easily read. Given the irregularity of the original steps, the railings will not be fixed to the historic fabric. The decorative handrail stop is in keeping with the open parapet work of the retaining wall. It is considered that the proposed fencing will have a minor impact on the significance of the listed retaining wall.	Minor

White Bridge Area

Works	Asset(s) affected	Assessment of impact	Summary
3.10	<i>Garden</i> – Grade I Registered Park and Garden	This new type 2 fencing will follow the form of the existing wall which demarcates the edge of the path. The simplicity of the fencing in terms of design and materials, with minimal posts and horizontal rails, will ensure that it is visually unobtrusive. Indeed, the fencing will be large screened by dense shrubbery. It is therefore considered that the new fencing will have a negligible impact on the significance of the wider gardens.	Negligible
3.11	<i>Garden</i> – Grade I Registered Park and Garden	This proposed type 1-D with diamond trellis will ensure that the new fence is read as a lightweight and unobtrusive element in the wider landscape. Given its visibility from the terrace above, however, it is considered that this stretch of fencing will have a minor impact on the special interest of the listed retaining wall and the wider garden – although this will not result in substantial harm. Please note that this stretch of fencing is an extension to proposed fencing 5.34 that was subject of a separate application (refs: 13/00138/FUL and 13/00139/LBC refused on 4 April 2013).	Minor
3.12	<i>Garden</i> – Grade I Registered Park and Garden; <i>Summerhouse and retaining wall</i> - Grade II listed (ref 112)	This new type 1-D fencing will be set behind the coping stones of the existing wall, minimising the need for interventions to the historic fabric. The diamond trellis will ensure that the new fence is read as a lightweight and unobtrusive element in the wider landscape. Given its visibility from the terrace above, however, it is considered that this stretch of fencing will have a minor impact on the special interest of the listed retaining wall and the wider garden – although this will not result in substantial harm. Please note that this stretch of fencing is an extension to proposed fencing 5.10 that was subject of a separate application (refs: 13/00138/FUL and 13/00139/LBC refused on 4 April 2013).	Minor

Lower Gardens Area

Works	Asset(s) affected	Assessment of impact	Summary
6.01	<i>Garden – Grade I Registered Park and Garden</i>	The new type 2 fencing will be simple and sensitive in both design and materials, and will follow the form of the existing wall. As such, it is considered that the new type 2 fencing will have a negligible impact on the significance of the garden.	Negligible
6.02	<i>Garden – Grade I Registered Park and Garden</i>	The new type 1-D fencing will be simple and sensitive in both design and materials, and will follow the semi-circular form of the existing wall. The diamond trellis pattern will ensure that the proposed fencing is viewed a lightweight and unobtrusive addition to the landscape. As such, it is considered that the new type 1-D fencing will have a negligible impact on the significance of the garden.	Negligible
6.03	<i>Garden – Grade I Registered Park and Garden</i>	The new type 1-D fencing will be simple and sensitive in both design and materials, and will follow the form of the existing wall. The diamond trellis pattern will ensure that the proposed fencing is viewed a lightweight and unobtrusive addition to the landscape. As such, it is considered that the new type 1-D fencing will have a negligible impact on the significance of the garden.	Negligible
6.04	<i>Garden – Grade I Registered Park and Garden</i>	The new type 2 fencing will be simple and sensitive in both design and materials, and will follow the form of the terrace/pathway. As such, it is considered that the new type 2 fencing will have a negligible impact on the significance of the garden.	Negligible
6.05	<i>Garden – Grade I Registered Park and Garden</i>	The new type 2 fencing will be simple and sensitive in both design and materials, and will follow the form of the terrace/pathway. As such, it is considered that the new type 2 fencing will have a negligible impact on the significance of the garden.	Negligible
6.06	<i>Garden – Grade I Registered Park and Garden</i>	The new type 2 fencing will be simple and sensitive in both design and materials, and will follow the form of the terrace/pathway. As such, it is considered that the new type 2 fencing will have a negligible impact on the significance of the garden.	Negligible

6.07	<i>Garden</i> – Grade I Registered Park and Garden	The new type 2 fencing will be simple and sensitive in both design and materials, and will follow the form of the pathway to the north of the pond. As such, it is considered that the new type 2 fencing will have a negligible impact on the significance of the garden.	Negligible
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7.0 **Response to Issues Raised by Officers**

- 7.1 As already highlighted, the fencing subject of these applications has been discussed extensively with Officers at Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC) and English Heritage. This has included the following meetings:
- 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.

- 7.2 Following the submission of applications 13/00136/FUL, 13/00137/LBC, 13/00138/FUL and 13/00139/LBC in February 2013, further written advice has been received from SMDC and English Heritage (included in Appendix 3). More specifically this included:
- a Written feedback from Gill Bayliss (SMDC) dated 21 March 2013; and
 - b Written feedback to SMDC from Alan Taylor (English Heritage) dated 14 March and 2 April.

- 7.3 The applicant's response to the concerns raised by SMDC and English Heritage are outlined below with reference to each of the four areas where outdoor safety fencing is proposed as part of these current applications.

Splash Battle area

- 7.4 Officers suggested that planting would provide a more aesthetically pleasing solution to the proposed Type 1 fencing on the north-western boundary of the lake (shown as 1.01 on drawing 373/82-3.1). The applicant considers, however, that planting would result in a greater degree of enclosure, interrupting views of the lake from the adjacent path. The proposed Type 1 fencing, by contrast, adequately addresses health and safety requirements, whilst providing visual transparency and ensuring that the boundary of the lake would still be easily read. This is an area of the gardens that has already been subject to significant interventions, including the Battle Galleons on the lake itself and fencing around most of the perimeter. There is already Type 1 fencing, for example, along the southern boundary of the lake, and new fencing has been approved along the crenellated wall to the north of the lake (refs 13/00136/FUL and 13/00137/LBC). The proposed Type 1 fencing at 1.01 would therefore ensure a coherent design solution. Given the simplicity of its design and materials, it would not detract from the character of the surrounding landscape.
- 7.5 It should be noted that English Heritage does not object to the proposals in this area, as stated in their correspondence to Jane Curley dated 14 March 2013.

Figure 7.1 Location of proposed fencing 1.01 - this is an area of high footfall with an unmarked drop to the lake

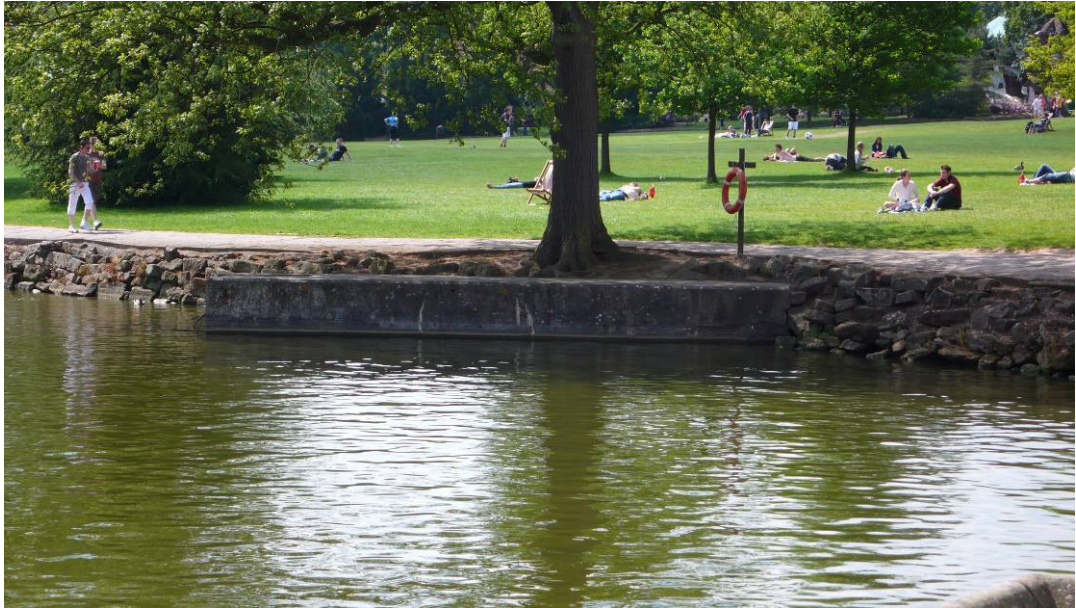


Figure 7.2 Existing fencing on the southern boundary of the lake (although please note that the attractions on the lake have subsequently been updated)



Figure 7.3 Existing fencing on the southern boundary of the lake looking towards the Battle Galleons attraction



Bridge/Dam area

- 7.6 Officers suggested the provision of signage or rope barriers as an alternative to fencing in this location. It is considered, however, that these solutions would be inadequate to secure the health and safety of visitors and workers, given the height of the drop onto a hard surface. The proposed fencing would have a minor impact on the significance of the listed wall, but importantly, it would allow the public access to the wall and continued views to the east across the lake.
- 7.7 It should be noted that English Heritage does not object to the proposals in this area, as stated in their correspondence to Jane Curley dated 14 March 2013.

White Bridge area

- 7.8 Officers raised concerns about 3.10 as shown on drawing 373/82-5.1. The applicant, however, considers this stretch of fencing necessary on health and safety grounds. It will follow the form of the existing wall, which has a sheer drop onto stone below. The proposed Type 2 fencing is reflective of the lower footfall in this area and will provide a greater degree of visual transparency, whilst ensuring the health and safety of both visitors and employees.
- 7.9 It should be noted that English Heritage does not object to the proposals in this area, as stated in their correspondence to Jane Curley dated 14 March 2013.

Lower Gardens

- 7.10 Following the comprehensive site audit undertaken by Alton Towers Resort, it is considered that fencing in the Lower Gardens is necessary to ensure the health and safety of visitors and workers. The proposed fencing will be simple in both design and materials and will follow the form of the existing walls. It will be viewed as a lightweight and unobtrusive addition to the landscape. Some fencing has already been erected in this part of the garden – the proposed fencing, as shown on drawing 373/82-8, will help to provide a more aesthetically coherent approach, whilst addressing health and safety requirements.
- 7.11 It should be noted that English Heritage did not object to the proposals in this area as stated in their correspondence to Jane Curley dated 14 March 2013. However, this support was subsequently withdrawn, following further discussion with the Conservation Officer at SMDC, as stated in correspondence dated 2 April 2013 (Appendix 3).

8.0 **Summary of Heritage Impact**

- 8.1 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. Indeed, the fences are 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.
- 8.2 Whilst the assessment of impact in the previous section has highlighted that some stretches of fencing will have a minor impact on the special interest of designated heritage assets, cumulatively it is considered to constitute 'less than substantial harm'.
- 8.3 Paragraph 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) states that:
'Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighted against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use'
- 8.4 The proposed fencing subject to these planning and listed building applications will ensure the safety of visitors to 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 will 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 buildings, the gardens and the woodlands.
- 8.5 The health and safety of those working at the resort will also be secured, particularly those involved in the regular maintenance of the gardens often working at height.
- 8.6 When considering the submitted applications it is necessary for Officers to balance the requirements of health and safety with those of heritage and consideration. This HIA demonstrates that careful thought has been given to the design of the safety fencing, responding sensitively to the historic context. In addition, if the approach to health and safety issues changes in the future, with a greater emphasis on personal responsibility, the extent of fencing could be reviewed. All proposals are reversible with minimal impact on the historic fabric.
- 8.7 It is therefore considered that the 'less than substantial harm' arising from the proposed safety fencing is significantly outweighed by the public benefits of maintaining safe access to the relevant parts of the Resort. As such, planning permission and listed building consent should be granted.

Appendix 1 Schedule of proposed works

Area 1: Splash Battle Area

Works	Planning permission	Listed building consent
1.01	Y	N

Area 2: Bridge / Dam Area

Works	Planning permission	Listed building consent
2.01	Y	Y (retaining wall of dam Grade II listed. Listing ref 99)
2.02	Y	Y (retaining wall of dam Grade II listed. Listing ref 99)
2.03	Y	Y (retaining wall of dam Grade II listed. Listing ref 99)

Area 3: White Bridge Area

Works	Planning permission	Listed building consent
3.10	Y	N
3.11	Y	N
3.12	Y	Y (Summerhouse and retaining wall Grade II listed. Listing ref 112)

Area 6: Lower Gardens Area

Works	Planning permission	Listed building consent
6.01	Y	N
6.02	Y	N
6.03	Y	N
6.04	Y	N
6.05	Y	N
6.06	Y	N
6.07	Y	N

Appendix 2 Schedule of works already determined by SMDC

Area 1: Splash Battle Area

Works	Planning permission required?	Listed building consent required?	Outcome
1.02	Y	Y (retaining wall Grade II listed. Listing ref 102)	Planning permission and listed building consent granted, subject to conditions, on 5 April 2013 (refs. 13/00136/FUL and 13/00137/LBC).
1.03	Y	Y (retaining wall Grade II listed. Listing ref 102)	Planning permission and listed building consent granted, subject to conditions, on 5 April 2013 (refs. 13/00136/FUL and 13/00137/LBC).
1.04	Y	Y (retaining wall Grade II listed. Listing ref 102)	Planning permission and listed building consent granted, subject to conditions, on 5 April 2013 (refs. 13/00136/FUL and 13/00137/LBC).

Area 3: White Bridge Area

Works	Planning permission required?	Listed building consent required?	Outcome
3.01	Y	Y (bridge and attached wall and gate piers Grade II listed. Listing ref 96)	Planning permission and listed building consent granted, subject to conditions, on 5 April 2013 (refs. 13/00136/FUL and 13/00137/LBC).
3.02	Y	Y (bridge and attached wall and gate piers Grade II listed. Listing ref 96)	Planning permission and listed building consent granted, subject to conditions, on 5 April 2013 (refs. 13/00136/FUL and 13/00137/LBC).
3.03	Y	Y (bridge and attached wall and gate piers Grade II listed. Listing ref 96)	Planning permission and listed building consent granted, subject to conditions, on 5 April 2013 (refs. 13/00136/FUL and 13/00137/LBC).
3.04	Y	Y (bridge and attached wall and gate piers Grade II listed. Listing ref 96)	Planning permission and listed building consent granted, subject to conditions, on 5 April 2013 (refs. 13/00136/FUL and 13/00137/LBC).

3.05	Y	Y (bridge and attached wall and gate piers Grade II listed. Listing ref 96)	Planning permission and listed building consent granted, subject to conditions, on 5 April 2013 (refs. 13/00136/FUL and 13/00137/LBC).
3.06	Y	Y (bridge and attached wall and gate piers Grade II listed. Listing ref 96)	Planning permission and listed building consent granted, subject to conditions, on 5 April 2013 (refs. 13/00136/FUL and 13/00137/LBC).
3.07	Y	Y (bridge and attached wall and gate piers Grade II listed. Listing ref 96)	Planning permission and listed building consent granted, subject to conditions, on 5 April 2013 (refs. 13/00136/FUL and 13/00137/LBC).
3.08	Y	Y (bridge and attached wall and gate piers Grade II listed. Listing ref 96)	Planning permission and listed building consent granted, subject to conditions, on 5 April 2013 (refs. 13/00136/FUL and 13/00137/LBC).
3.09	Y	Y (bridge and attached wall and gate piers Grade II listed. Listing ref 96)	Planning permission and listed building consent granted, subject to conditions, on 5 April 2013 (refs. 13/00136/FUL and 13/00137/LBC).

Area 4: Towers Area

Works	Planning permission required?	Listed building consent required?	Outcome
4.01	Y	Y (Towers Grade II* listed. Listing ref 89)	Planning permission and listed building consent granted, subject to conditions, on 5 April 2013 (refs. 13/00136/FUL and 13/00137/LBC).
4.02	Y	Y (Towers Grade II* listed. Listing ref 89)	Planning permission and listed building consent granted, subject to conditions, on 5 April 2013 (refs. 13/00136/FUL and 13/00137/LBC).
4.03	Y	Y (Towers Grade II* listed. Listing ref 89)	Planning permission and listed building consent granted, subject to conditions, on 5 April 2013 (refs. 13/00136/FUL and 13/00137/LBC).
4.04	Y	Y (Towers Grade II* listed. Listing ref 89)	Planning permission and listed building consent granted, subject to conditions, on 5 April 2013 (refs. 13/00136/FUL and 13/00137/LBC).
4.05	Y	Y (Towers Grade II* listed. Listing ref 89)	Planning permission and listed building consent granted, subject to conditions, on 5 April 2013 (refs. 13/00136/FUL and 13/00137/LBC).

4.06	Y	Y (Towers Grade II* listed. Listing ref 89)	Planning permission and listed building consent granted, subject to conditions, on 5 April 2013 (refs. 13/00136/FUL and 13/00137/LBC).
4.07	Y	Y (Towers Grade II* listed. Listing ref 89)	Planning permission and listed building consent granted, subject to conditions, on 5 April 2013 (refs. 13/00136/FUL and 13/00137/LBC).
4.08	Y	Y (Towers Grade II* listed. Listing ref 89)	Planning permission and listed building consent granted, subject to conditions, on 5 April 2013 (refs. 13/00136/FUL and 13/00137/LBC).
4.09	Y	Y (Towers Grade II* listed. Listing ref 89)	Planning permission and listed building consent granted, subject to conditions, on 5 April 2013 (refs. 13/00136/FUL and 13/00137/LBC).
4.10	Y	Y (Towers Grade II* listed. Listing ref 89)	Planning permission and listed building consent granted, subject to conditions, on 5 April 2013 (refs. 13/00136/FUL and 13/00137/LBC).
4.11	Y	Y (Towers Grade II* listed. Listing ref 89)	Planning permission and listed building consent granted, subject to conditions, on 5 April 2013 (refs. 13/00136/FUL and 13/00137/LBC).
4.12	Y	Y (Towers Grade II* listed. Listing ref 89)	Planning permission and listed building consent granted, subject to conditions, on 5 April 2013 (refs. 13/00136/FUL and 13/00137/LBC).
4.13	Y	Y (Towers Grade II* listed. Listing ref 89)	Planning permission and listed building consent granted, subject to conditions, on 5 April 2013 (refs. 13/00136/FUL and 13/00137/LBC).
4.14	Y	Y (Towers Grade II* listed. Listing ref 89)	Planning permission and listed building consent granted, subject to conditions, on 5 April 2013 (refs. 13/00136/FUL and 13/00137/LBC).

Area 5: Upper Gardens

Works	Planning permission required?	Listed building consent required?	Outcome
5.01	Y	Y (fountain, terrace walls, steps, lions urns and sundial Grade II listed. Listing ref 106)	Planning permission and listed building consent refused on 4 April 2013 (res: 13/00138/FUL and 13/00139/LBC).

5.02	Y	Y (fountain, terrace walls, steps, lions urns and sundial Grade II listed. Listing ref 106)	Planning permission and listed building consent refused on 4 April 2013 (res: 13/00138/FUL and 13/00139/LBC).
5.03	Y	Y (fountain, terrace walls, steps, lions urns and sundial Grade II listed. Listing ref 106)	Planning permission and listed building consent refused on 4 April 2013 (res: 13/00138/FUL and 13/00139/LBC).
5.04	Y	Y (wall and basin enclosing the Italian Garden Grade II listed. Listing ref 106)	Planning permission and listed building consent refused on 4 April 2013 (res: 13/00138/FUL and 13/00139/LBC).
5.05	Y	Y (wall and basin enclosing the Italian Garden Grade II listed. Listing ref 106)	Planning permission and listed building consent refused on 4 April 2013 (res: 13/00138/FUL and 13/00139/LBC).
5.06	Y	Y (wall and basin enclosing the Italian Garden Grade II listed. Listing ref 106)	Planning permission and listed building consent refused on 4 April 2013 (res: 13/00138/FUL and 13/00139/LBC).
5.07	Y	Y (Conservatory Grade II* listed. Listing ref 111)	Planning permission and listed building consent refused on 4 April 2013 (res: 13/00138/FUL and 13/00139/LBC).
5.08	Y	N	Planning permission and listed building consent refused on 4 April 2013 (res: 13/00138/FUL and 13/00139/LBC).
5.09	Y	Y (Conservatory Grade II* listed. Listing ref 111)	Planning permission and listed building consent refused on 4 April 2013 (res: 13/00138/FUL and 13/00139/LBC).
5.10	Y	Y (Summerhouse and retaining wall Grade II listed. Listing ref 112)	Planning permission and listed building consent refused on 4 April 2013 (res: 13/00138/FUL and 13/00139/LBC).
5.11	Y	Y (Summerhouse and retaining wall Grade II listed. Listing ref 112)	Planning permission and listed building consent refused on 4 April 2013 (res: 13/00138/FUL and 13/00139/LBC).
5.12	Y	Y (walls, gatepiers and steps Grade II listed. Listing ref 113)	Planning permission and listed building consent refused on 4 April 2013 (res: 13/00138/FUL and 13/00139/LBC).
5.13	Y	Y (walls, gatepiers and steps Grade II listed. Listing ref 113)	Planning permission and listed building consent refused on 4 April 2013 (res: 13/00138/FUL and 13/00139/LBC).
5.14	Y	Y (walls, gatepiers and steps Grade II listed. Listing ref 113)	Planning permission and listed building consent refused on 4 April 2013 (res: 13/00138/FUL and 13/00139/LBC).
5.15	Y	Y (Loggia and terrace wall Grade II listed. Listing ref 107)	Planning permission and listed building consent refused on 4 April 2013 (res: 13/00138/FUL and 13/00139/LBC).
5.16	N	N	N/A Existing fence

5.17	Y	Y (Loggia and terrace wall Grade II listed. Listing ref 107)	Planning permission and listed building consent refused on 4 April 2013 (res: 13/00138/FUL and 13/00139/LBC).
5.18	N	N	N/A Existing fence
5.19	N	N	N/A Existing fence
5.20	Y	Y (Le Refuge and retaining wall listed. Listing ref 109)	Planning permission and listed building consent refused on 4 April 2013 (res: 13/00138/FUL and 13/00139/LBC).
5.21	Y	Y (walls, gatepiers and steps Grade II listed. Listing ref 113)	Planning permission and listed building consent refused on 4 April 2013 (res: 13/00138/FUL and 13/00139/LBC).
5.22	Y	Y	Planning permission and listed building consent refused on 4 April 2013 (res: 13/00138/FUL and 13/00139/LBC).
5.23	Y	Y (walls, gatepiers and steps Grade II listed. Listing ref 113)	Planning permission and listed building consent refused on 4 April 2013 (res: 13/00138/FUL and 13/00139/LBC).
5.24	Y	Y (walls, gatepiers and steps Grade II listed. Listing ref 113)	Planning permission and listed building consent refused on 4 April 2013 (res: 13/00138/FUL and 13/00139/LBC).
5.25	Y	Y (walls, gatepiers and steps Grade II listed. Listing ref 113)	Planning permission and listed building consent refused on 4 April 2013 (res: 13/00138/FUL and 13/00139/LBC).
5.26	Y	Y (retaining wall Grade II listed. Listing ref 108)	Planning permission and listed building consent refused on 4 April 2013 (res: 13/00138/FUL and 13/00139/LBC).
5.27	Y	N	Planning permission and listed building consent refused on 4 April 2013 (res: 13/00138/FUL and 13/00139/LBC).
5.28	Y	Y (Bath and terrace wall Grade II listed. Listing ref 110)	Planning permission and listed building consent refused on 4 April 2013 (res: 13/00138/FUL and 13/00139/LBC).
5.29	Y	Y (Bath and terrace wall Grade II listed. Listing ref 110)	Planning permission and listed building consent refused on 4 April 2013 (res: 13/00138/FUL and 13/00139/LBC).
5.30	Y	Y (retaining wall Grade II listed. Listing ref 108)	Planning permission and listed building consent refused on 4 April 2013 (res: 13/00138/FUL and 13/00139/LBC).
5.31	Y	Y (retaining wall Grade II listed. Listing ref 108)	Planning permission and listed building consent refused on 4 April 2013 (res: 13/00138/FUL and 13/00139/LBC).
5.32	Y	Y (retaining wall Grade II listed. Listing ref 108)	Planning permission and listed building consent refused on 4 April 2013 (res: 13/00138/FUL and 13/00139/LBC).

5.33	Y	Y (retaining wall Grade II listed. Listing ref 108)	Planning permission and listed building consent refused on 4 April 2013 (res: 13/00138/FUL and 13/00139/LBC).
5.34	Y	N	Planning permission and listed building consent refused on 4 April 2013 (res: 13/00138/FUL and 13/00139/LBC).
5.35	N	N	N/A Existing fence

Area 7: Gothic Prospect Tower

Works	Planning permission required?	Listed building consent required?	Outcome
7.01	N	N	N/A Existing fence
7.02	Y	Y (Prospect Tower Grade II* listed. Listing ref 115)	Planning permission and listed building consent granted, subject to conditions, on 5 April 2013 (refs. 13/00136/FUL and 13/00137/LBC).
7.03	Y	Y (Prospect Tower Grade II* listed. Listing ref 115)	Planning permission and listed building consent granted, subject to conditions, on 5 April 2013 (refs. 13/00136/FUL and 13/00137/LBC).
7.04	Y	Y (Prospect Tower Grade II* listed. Listing ref 115)	Planning permission and listed building consent granted, subject to conditions, on 5 April 2013 (refs. 13/00136/FUL and 13/00137/LBC).
7.05	Y	Y (Prospect Tower Grade II* listed. Listing ref 115)	Planning permission and listed building consent granted, subject to conditions, on 5 April 2013 (refs. 13/00136/FUL and 13/00137/LBC).
7.06	Y	Y (Prospect Tower Grade II* listed. Listing ref 115)	Planning permission and listed building consent granted, subject to conditions, on 5 April 2013 (refs. 13/00136/FUL and 13/00137/LBC).
7.07	N	N	N/A Existing fence

Appendix 3 SMDC and English Heritage Comments on the February submission

**STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL
RESPONSE TO DEVELOPMENT CONTROL CONSULTATION
LISTED BUILDING, CONSERVATION AREAS, ARCHAEOLOGY, DESIGN**

Application Reference: 13/00136/FUL 13/00137/LBC	Reason for Consultation: Alton Towers: Grade I Registered Park & Garden, Grade II* & II Listed Buildings, Conservation Area
Site: Alton Towers	
Proposal: Safety fencing	
<p>Conservation Officer Observations: This application concerns 6 areas of the Alton Towers Estate (excluding the upper gardens which form a separate application). Two types of fencing are proposed Type 1 (close balustrade or mesh infill) & Type 2 (open estate-type – some with mesh infill). The actual final design needs to be determined later once samples have been made.</p> <p>This application affects two distinct areas within the estate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area 1: Areas that large numbers of visitors pass through with apparent dangers of low walling, large drops and visitors more likely to be wanting to pass quickly in order to get to ride areas (less aware or interested in the heritage). Area 2: The quieter Registered Gardens – much less visited as people will not visit to just view the gardens. Usually only visited as a cut through when the cable car is not operating. <p>It is in the first area where heritage structures pose the greatest issues to visitor safety in the short term:</p> <p>Area 1 Splash Battle Area The stable building and retaining wall 10 yards to the south are both separately Listed Buildings. The appearance of this area has already been impacted by the insertion of the Battle Galleons ride and some fencing has been necessary as a result (with permission). Given the low height of the crenellated wall and the volume of people passing through I can see the justification for the Type 1 fencing (whether it's the close balustrade or mesh infill needs to be decided later). The area is already very busy with fencing and structures to I have no objection to this. A new area of fencing is proposed to the north-west. I am less happy with this as the drop is clearly visible, less people follow this route – although the lake edge is very rough with sharp rocks. I wonder whether planting on the lake edge might provide a more aesthetically pleasing deterrent than a harsh fence – enclosing this last stretch of the lake edge would turn the boating lake into a wholly fenced-off area, like a compound) and all part of the ride attraction rather than a lake sitting within an open landscape.</p> <p>Bridge/Dam Dam retaining wall to SE side of the boating lake which is Listed in its own right. The List description mentions that the decorative Tudor Gothic Style bridge forms part of the</p>	

important garden layout to the Grade I Registered Gardens. The structure is a raised stone walkway with steps to each end. The surface is dressed in heavy stone slabs with projecting bullnosing. The application proposes the addition of a Type-1 fence running along the whole length of the walkway with railings to steps at each end. The railings will be drilled and fixed to the stone. It mentions that they will be secured into mortar joints but some damage will be incurred to the stone as the joints are quite tight.

I feel that this proposal will be visually intrusive to this structure which is relatively low and in a very public area. The railings will be viewed at close proximity and in distant views from the White Bridge area. Railings will make this area appear enclosed and sanitized and the close spacing of the balustrades will detract from the ornate Gothic detailing of the bridge. Site visits have demonstrated that parents allow children to walk along the walkway and even lift them up. No incidents have been reported in the application, the drop is readily apparent and people can choose not to walk on it. The installation will cause irreversible damage to the stone. Other more sensitive measures should be considered (rope or chain at steps, signage etc).

White Bridge

The bridge, wall and gate piers are all separately Listed and very visible decorative architectural features both close to and in distant views. This area is a pinch-point for visitors and is one of the main routes used to access ride areas. There are significant drops to either side of the bridge & numerous measures have been put in place to safeguard visitors – railings of different designs – some more successful than others. In principle I support the proposal for additional railings but consider that this area needs to be looked at as a whole & to have a **maximum of 2 railing styles** (high risk & lower risk). It should be an opportunity to improve the appearance of the area & the new railings should not risk overpowering the white bridge itself. The curved flanking walls to the west should be reconsidered as this is not a frequented public area. Visuals are needed of this area.

This area also includes a railing around the flank of the Choragic Monument. This is a rustic garden walk with low rock edging and sloping rockery garden below. The proposed Type 2 fence would be visually intrusive and detract from the open vista and indivisible layering of the garden. Other measures should be considered in this area – it is not an area of high footfall, is not a cut-through and the path is sufficiently wide and even. It should be considered in conjunction with the Upper Gardens area & a solution based on balancing risk and aesthetics.

Towers Area

Grade II* Listed structure. The building is largely surrounded by a dry moat with variable drops and a boundary wall which fluctuates significantly in height. Over the years different fencing measures have put in place at areas of perceived risk (mainly metal post and wire fences). This application proposes to install Type 1 fencing fixed to the top of the walling. Given that large numbers of visitors pass in front of this wall, its lowness and drops I can see that this is necessary. The building is solid, large and austere – I feel that it can accommodate the municipal style railing without detracting from its architectural

character.

I do not accept the railing running across the timber moat bridge (mentioned as a temporary measure). The railing needs to accommodate a gate, designed as a long-term solution.

No objections to the fencing proposed in the Her Laydships Gardens which is Type 2 (some with mesh) & relatively light-weight. Some planting is also proposed which is a preferred solution to additional fencing.

Area 2

Lower Gardens

This area includes approximately 5 lengths of Type 2 fencing and a short stretch of Type 2 (diamond trellis). No images are provided. Whilst this is a more visually discrete area of the Registered Gardens I feel that this fencing needs to be looked at in conjunction with the Upper Gardens to ensure a consistency of approach.

Gothic Prospect Tower

This is a separately Grade II* structure – including the wall and railings. No drawings have been submitted for the addition of the railings to the structure.

There is a section of old cast iron gothic railings in need of repair which are identified as 'Existing Type 1 Retained' These need to be repaired. A more modern copy of the railings is to be repositioned on a higher tier which is acceptable – but the new section to flank the steps should be the same design not the standard Type 1. New Type-1 railings are proposed at the circular base of the prospect tower. Given the number of railings around the structure and the height of the drop I feel that these railings are going to be visually harmful to the Grade II* Listed structure – a modified lower, more sensitive railing is suggested – Perhaps even a Type 2.

Conclusion

I feel that it is reasonable to support in principle railings around the Tower Moat (with addition of a gate), Her Ladyship's Garden, Battle Galleons crenellated wall (excluding the far side of the lake), the White Bridge (more work is needed) and the Gothic Prospect Tower (omitting the fence around the base of the tower – or more sympathetic solution).

I cannot support at this stage the lower gardens, walk around the Choragic Monument, far side of Battle Galleons Lake or fencing at the dam end. These need to be considered alongside the upper gardens application to enable a coordinated, thoughtful, balanced and sensitive solution.

Planning Policy

NPPF: The protection and enhancement of the historic environment is one of the core principles to achieve sustainable development. Guidance on substantial and less than substantial harm is given in paras 133 & 134.

Alton Towers SPG (1988): Para. 7.1 Within the historic gardens the protection of the

historic gardens and their quiet enjoyment should be paramount. There is also a legal commitment in the accompanying Sec 106 Agreement that measures will be undertaken to protect, maintain and improve the gardens; and protect the setting of Listed Buildings Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Guidance from the HSE provided to Visitor Safety in the Countryside Group (3/08/2012) (copy attached). The HSE advice indicates that measures taken to control risk may have to be balanced with other factors such as conservation and peoples freedom to explore etc...

This is explored further in the accompanying application relating to the Upper Gardens.

Conservation Liaison Panel Observations:

Reported 19/02/13: See minutes on file

Recommendation:

Revisions required – If acceptable issue a split decision.

Conditions:

Samples of fencing to be submitted and approved

Detailed method statement for the installation of each section of fencing

Signed:

G. Bayliss

Senior Conservation Officer

Date: 19/03/13

Jane Curley
Planning Department
Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
New Moorlands House
Stockwell Street
Leek
Staffs

Direct dial: 0121 625 6848

2 April 2013

Dear Jane,

**APPLICATION 13/00138
PROPOSED RAILINGS: AREA 6
ALTON TOWERS, ALTON**

In our letter to you of 18 March commenting on these proposals English Heritage did not specifically object to the installation of railings as proposed in Area 6 of the Gardens. Following our subsequent telephone conversation with Gillian Bayliss we agree that although Area 6 has a slightly different visual character to the principal terraced gardens in Area 5 (it has a higher density of shrub planting and hedging) it does nonetheless form part of the Valley Gardens and should most appropriately be treated as such in considering the current application to install railings.

We therefore withdraw our previous advice in relation to area 6 and now object to installation of railings in this area. We suggest that risk management in Area 6 should be managed in the same way as we have suggested for Area 5 – namely by considering more restrictive or controlled public access and by introducing different working and safety practices for maintenance staff. We would be pleased to join any future discussions about how this alternative approach might be implemented.

Yours sincerely,

Alan Taylor
Inspector of Historic Buildings

**ALTON TOWERS, ALTON
PROPOSED SAFETY FENCING TO AREAS 1,2,3,4,6,7 (Excluding the upper
gardens)**

SUMMARY

English Heritage does not object to the proposals to erect safety fencing to the specifications shown in areas 1,2,3,4,6 and 7 on the masterplans accompanying this application.

ADVICE

The parkland at Alton Towers is included on the English Heritage register of historic parks and gardens at grade I. The Towers buildings themselves and many of the garden buildings and structures are listed at either grade I or II*; the remaining buildings and structures are listed grade II. The whole site is included in the designated Alton-Farley Conservation Area. It is therefore a site of major historic significance both for the quality and interest of individual buildings but also for its landscape design and group value.

A key component of the designed landscape is its many changes of level, elevated walkways, viewpoints and vistas and lakeside paths as well as the features such as the dramatic effect of the defensive moat in front of the house. This especially so in the valley gardens (area 5 excluded from this application). English Heritage is keenly aware of the tension and management challenge in safely presenting these features as intended historically at a site which attracts many thousands of energetic visitors each year. This has led in the past to the need to erect some safety fences around certain features.

In recent months we have learned of the applicants' heightened appreciation of potential risks at Alton Towers. This follows a court judgement against them at their associated site at Warwick Castle. We have held several meetings with them and with your Council's conservation officers to explore the levels of risk and how these might be either addressed or mitigated. These discussions have identified that in the most heavily trafficked parts of the park (closest to the principal rides and the house) there is no practical alternative to managing risks to both staff and visitors than through erection of fencing. While our clear preference would be for there to be very few handrails across the site (and these primarily to assist access) English Heritage accepts these arguments.

The discussions have also highlighted a hierarchy of heritage sensitivity to the introduction of railings influenced either by their relationship to existing buildings and features, the presence of railings already, or the perspective in which they will be viewed. We are pleased that the applicants have been able to present a "menu" of designs that can be varied according to the intensity of use, risk or heritage sensitivity and will be taking the opportunity to improve existing railings where these are of insensitive appearance. Clearly the introduction of additional railings will have a harmful impact on the received historic character of the park and its listed buildings but we agree with the Heritage Statement that for the most part this will be of

moderate to low level and not cause substantial harm. Very different considerations apply in Area 5 which forms the subject of a separate submission.

For these reasons and with reluctance English Heritage accepts the proposals for new, enhanced or revised safety fencing as detailed for areas 1,2,3,4,6,7 on the submitted plans and accompanying documentation and does not object to this application.

RECOMMENDATION

English Heritage does not object to this application for safety railings in areas 1,2,3,4,,6 and 7 as shown on the submitted plans. We suggest that further information be obtained about the composition and proportions of the mesh infill for the type 1D and type 2 (uprated) fencing.

AGT

14 MARCH 2013