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Planning. Design. Economics.

Design and Access Statement

Alton Towers Resort: Heritage Fencing

Merlin Attractions Operations Ltd.

8 August 2013

03224/IR/HW/RB/5374264v1

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1.0

Introduction

1.1

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (NLP) on behalf of Merlin Entertainments Operations Ltd. It accompanies an application for listed building consent for Type 1-R fencing at location 4.12 in the Towers Area at Alton Towers Resort.

1.2

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 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.

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

As outlined in the accompanying covering letter, this application has been prepared following extensive consultation with officers at Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. It responds to concerns raised by Council officers with regards to the previously permitted Type 1-D fencing at 4.12 in the Towers Area. It was subsequently agreed, in principle, with officers that it would be acceptable to amend the proposals from Type 1-D to Type 1-R fencing in this location.

Evaluation

- 2.5 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).
- 2.6 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

Amount

- 3.1 The location of the proposed fence has been carefully considered in consultation with Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and English Heritage. Indeed, the principle of a fence in this location (4.12) as already been agreed – planning permission and listed building consent were granted on the 5 April 2013 (references 13/00136/FUL and 13/00137/LBC) for a Type 1-D fence at 4.12.

Layout

- 3.2 The layout and form of the proposed fence is clearly shown on the drawings submitted as part of these applications, in particular drawing 373/82-6 (4.12 LBC). The proposed fence will follow the form of the existing pathway and retaining wall to which it will be fixed. As such, the layout of the fence will ensure that the architectural and landscape qualities of Grade II* listed Towers Area are still easily read.

Scale

- 3.3 The proposed fence at 4.12 will be 1100mm in height to accord with Part K of the Building Regulations.

Landscaping

- 3.4 The proposed fence 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 fence has been designed with minimal vertical fixing posts. The design and finish of the fence will also ensure that it is viewed as an unobtrusive and subordinate element of views within the Towers Area.

- 3.5 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

- 3.6 The fence would be simple both in terms of its design and use of a pared back and high quality palette of materials – it will be made of steel and finished in ‘Little Greene’s ‘Invisible Green’ as used and recommended by English Heritage (RAL 6008 is the closest match to this, which has been agreed with officers). The design and appearance has 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.
- 3.7 In summary, the proposed Type 1-R fence 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.
- 3.8 The fence will be fixed to an existing retaining wall and the railings will be set into existing joints (where possible) to minimise damage to the stonework. For more detail with regards to the installation of the fence, please refer to the accompanying Method Statements.

Access

- 3.9 The primary objective of the proposed works is to ensure the safety of those visiting and working at the Alton Tower Resort. Indeed, the proposed fence, alongside the other fencing proposals, 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.
- 3.10 Importantly, the proposed fence will also ensure the safety of those working at the Alton Towers Resort and will not impede maintenance.

Conclusion

- 4.0
- 4.1 The proposed fence subject of this application (4.12 in the Towers Area) 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.