



**Nathaniel Lichfield
& Partners**

Planning. Design. Economics.

**Alton Towers Resort – Proposed
Lodge and Tree House Development**

Design and Access Statement

Merlin Attractions Operations Limited

14 February 2014

03224/IR/HW/TB

Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners
14 Regent's Wharf
All Saints Street
London N1 9RL

nlpplanning.com

This document is formatted for double sided printing.

© Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners Ltd 2014. Trading as Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners.

All Rights Reserved.

Registered Office:

14 Regent's Wharf

All Saints Street

London N1 9RL

All plans within this document produced by NLP are based upon Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown Copyright reserved. Licence number AL50684A

Contents

1.0	Introduction	1
	Purpose of Statement	1
	Background.....	1
	Description of Proposal	1
2.0	Assessment	2
	Use	2
	Amount	2
	Layout.....	3
	Scale.....	3
	Appearance	3
	Landscaping	4
3.0	Accessibility Statement	5

1.0 Introduction

Purpose of Statement

- 1.1 This Design and Access Statement has been prepared on behalf of Merlin Attractions Operations Limited. It accompanies an application for planning permission for the development of 61 double lodges and 10 tree houses with associated works restaurant and service buildings, play areas, hard and soft landscaping, parking and drainage works at Alton Towers Resort.
- 1.2 The statement was drafted in response to the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010 for planning applications to be accompanied by a Design and Access Statement. It has also been prepared in accordance with Communities and Local Government 'Guidance on information requirement and validation' published in March 2010 (as amended).
- 1.3 The statement covers the key design principles and concepts applied to the proposed development. It should be read in conjunction with the application submission.

Background

- 1.4 Alton Towers Resort is the UK's most popular and largest theme park, making it an important generator of tourism not only through the theme park but also the provision of hotel accommodation, with conference facilities, and a spa.
- 1.5 The Resort is located in the Churnet Valley to the north of Alton Village and covers an area of 195 hectares. It is situated within the Alton-Farley Conservation Area and contains several listed buildings and a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Bunbury Hillfort). The gardens at Alton Towers are listed Grade I on the Register of Parks and Gardens. Alton Towers Resort is also located within a designated Special Landscape Area, whilst the woodland to the south is a registered Site of Biological Importance.

Description of Proposal

- 1.6 The proposed development will cover an area of 3.95ha which is currently open grassland used for an overflow car park during peak times. The development site is located on the eastern edge of the Resort, to the east of the existing hotel and spa and north of Quixhill Drive. The site is currently bounded by trees along its southern, eastern and north eastern boundary which shields the site from view.
- 1.7 The proposal consists of the development of 61 double lodges and 10 tree houses with associated restaurant and service buildings, play areas, hard and soft landscaping, parking and drainage works. The total floorspace created as a result of the development is 6074.4sqm (GEA).

2.0

Assessment

Use

2.1

The proposed lodge development will be a self-contained area of accommodation and thus the development is within Use Class C1. The application site is located in the wider theme park Resort which is characterised as Use Class D2.

Amount

2.2

As mentioned, a total floorspace of 6074.4sqm is proposed. The table below provides a breakdown of the proposed areas:

Building	GIA (sqm)	GEA (sqm)
Total Lodge Development	2,947.2	4,477
- 110 standard	2640	4,015
- 12 accessible	307.2	462
Total Tree house Development	644.1	742 (741.8)
- Concept 1 (4 units)		378.8
- Concept 2 (4 units)		372.4
- Concept 3 (2 units)		201.4
Restaurant Building	565	600
Restaurant Covered Terrace		94
Sub Station	16.5	20
Kitchen/Bin Stores	21	25.5
CHP	30	35.5
Service Huts (3)	66 (22 individually)	80.4 (26.8 individually)
Total	4,289.8	6074.4

2.3

The proposal includes 61 double lodges which will be subdivided to provide 110 standard accommodation units and 12 accessible accommodation units. An additional 10 tree houses are also proposed, along with a restaurant building in the centre of the development which will include a CHP, kitchen/bin stores and substation. Three service huts are also proposed along with 10 play areas to serve the lodge development.

Layout

- 2.4 The positioning of the lodge development and associated buildings are shown on drawing 373/85-6 submitted with the planning application.
- 2.5 Notably, the lodges have been designed to form clusters with the proposed play areas at the centre. The restaurant is located in the centre of the development to act as the central hub where check-in and arrivals will occur.
- 2.6 The tree houses will be located to the south of the lodges along a new access road. The view of these tree houses from the lodges will be screened by a series of new mounds proposed between the lodges and the new access road.
- 2.7 Car parking provision will be focused in two main locations. To the west of the tree houses, 14 car parking spaces will be provided whilst to the west of the restaurant building seven spaces and one disabled parking space are proposed to create a 'drop-off' area for check in. Within the development a further nine disabled parking spaces will be provided.

Scale

- 2.8 As illustrated by the proposed site sections (application drawings 373/85-10 and 373/85-12), the scale of the proposed buildings are acceptable within the surrounding context given that in general the existing hotel to the west and canopy range to the east both have a greater height.
- 2.9 The standard and accessible lodges will both have a maximum height of 4m. The tree houses will be raised on stilts, which will vary in height depending on the slope of the land. The tree houses will have a maximum height of approximately 10m from the base of the tree house (at terrace level) to the maximum height of the eaves. At its highest point the restaurant building will measure 7.3m and the service buildings will have a lower height of 3.6m.

Appearance

- 2.10 The overall design of the proposed development has been carefully considered to provide a unique experience to visitors. It will complement existing themed structures within the theme park, whilst also having minimal impact on surrounding trees and views beyond the Park's boundaries.
- 2.11 The lodges and development have been themed to reflect a traditional lodge of children's fairy tales. Therefore the materials proposed will include a blend of natural materials and an element of rustic influences. Specifically, the materials will include a timber shingle roof, timber doors and windows, stonework walls and uneven timber barge boards. The lodges will also benefit from a feature chimney and timber fencing around the covered terraces that will create the entrance area for each lodge. The restaurant and service buildings will consist of similar materials to be in-keeping with the 'fairy tale' theme.

- 2.12 The tree houses have been designed to reflect the characteristics of a traditional tree house and as such the materials proposed include timber cladding and shingles. Each tree house will have a private decking area to the front and rear allowing visitors to enjoy the views of the surrounding woodland.

Landscaping

- 2.13 The development site is screened to the south, east and north-east by existing woodland. Existing trees will be retained with the exception of 3 relatively small category C trees and a series of landscaped mounds are proposed between the lodges and tree houses which will act to shield the view of the tree houses from wider lodge development.
- 2.14 Within the development site two fenced hollows are proposed on the southern and eastern boundary as part of the SUDS provision.

3.0

Accessibility Statement



Introduction

- 3.1 This Access Statement has been prepared following an access audit and review of the plans for the development of tree houses, lodges and parking facilities at Alton Towers Resort. The audit and subsequent review were carried out to ensure that the access problems within the existing site were all identified and thus the Design Team could adopt a methodical and strategic approach to ensuring that the problems were remedied.
- 3.2 This Statement is to support the application for Planning Permission to develop tree houses, lodges and parking facilities and it seeks to explain the philosophy of design, explain the provision made and provide a basis upon which management access and inclusivity policies can be drafted.
- 3.3 As a major tourist attraction in Staffordshire, indeed nationally, Alton Towers has a long history of promoting access to all its resort facilities and consequently, throughout the design process the need to ensure good access for all and inclusivity of design has been a very important consideration.
- 3.4 This document will also act as the foundation upon which a Building Regulations Access Statement can be based, so that it is a 'living document' which accurately reflects the construction processes, the provision and details how inclusive design has been achieved.
- 3.5 Sources of Advice and Guidance Used:
- Approved Document Part M
 - Equality Act Legislation 2010
 - BS 8300:2009 + A1:2010
- 3.6 Guidance documents:
- Code of Practice on Access and Mobility
 - Department of Transport. Inclusive Mobility, a Guide to Best Practice on Access to Pedestrian and Transport Infrastructure

- The Principles of Inclusive Design 2006. CAGE

Philosophy of Design

- 3.7 Access provision and inclusivity have particular relevance with regard to a major tourist destination. Although there is often a misconception that resorts such as Alton Towers will attract younger 'thrill seeking' guests, this is not always the case and often parents, grandparents etc can all enjoy a stay at the resort or a day out at the theme park. In addition we need to cater for people with different disabilities.
- 3.8 As a result the Design Team has adopted a very proactive approach to accessibility, inclusivity and the needs of all have been considered, rather than the needs of a select few.
- 3.9 Thus consideration has been given to the needs of:
- People with a mobility impairment including wheelchair users and ambulant disabled people
 - Hearing Impaired people
 - People with a visual impairment
 - People who may have a hidden disability e.g. heart failure, heart condition, significant back problems, incontinence etc
 - Anyone who has a temporary disability e.g. a broken limb or be recovering from an operation
 - People who are frail due to a medical condition or who may be recovering from an operation/ procedure
 - People with a learning difficulty/learning disability
 - Those experiencing poor mental health
 - People who may have more than one disability or impairment
- 3.10 It is important to note that placing access issues at the heart of the design process is not simply about words or slogans: instead the emphasis on the design of this proposal is focussed on recognising that access issues form the framework around which the design has been created. Thus access and inclusivity are effectively part of the core foundation upon which the design is based.

The Provision

- 3.11 The proposal to develop 122 Lodges as well as 10 Tree houses and parking facilities within a site which is far from level has presented a number of accessibility challenges to the Design Team. The site offers gradients that can be as steep as 1 in 8, with the optimum gradients still in the region of 1 in 13.
- 3.12 Any gradient that is steeper than 1 in 12 is considered hazardous for disabled people. Indeed a slope steeper than 1 in 10 is considered to be completely

inaccessible for disabled people, many of whom may be ambulant but walk with sticks or crutches, have an artificial prosthesis fitted and, for these groups, as well as for wheelchair users, the gradient is of particular relevance.

- 3.13 Thus care has been taken to ensure that accessible Lodges and an accessible Tree house have been created.
- 3.14 In total there are 122 lodges, of which 8 are accessible lodges and 4 are larger lodges. As a percentage only 5 % are required to be accessible in terms of Building Regulations (1 in 20 hotel bedrooms need to be accessible). Within this development a total of 8 accessible lodges is in excess of 5%, with some 6.5% being accessible for wheelchair users.
- 3.15 In addition there are four other lodges that are 'extra large' which can be adapted in the future, if the need for wheelchair accessible facilities increases.
- 3.16 Thus the provision is in excess of current accessibility and inclusivity standards.
- 3.17 However, it is important to recognise that the other lodges can still accommodate many disabled people. For example, people with a hearing impairment, people with visual impairment etc will often prefer to be accommodated in standard provision. People with a visual impairment often find it hard to orientate themselves in a larger accessible toilet: instead they prefer to use standard and smaller toilets which offer facilities within a compact area and it is easier to find their way round this smaller area. Visual contrast will be used in the lodges and tree houses to ensure that they are as accessible as possible for people with a visual impairment.
- 3.18 Lodges will also comply with the Building Regulations requirement to have visual indicators for fire in all toilets and in addition there will be visual indicators for fire in all the bedrooms, so that people with a hearing impairment will be awoken if the fire alarm sounds.
- 3.19 With regard to the tree houses, there are 10 tree houses being created. Of these 1 will be accessible for wheelchair users. Effectively this constitutes 10% of provision and so again is in excess of inclusivity and accessibility standards.
- 3.20 Again all tree houses will have visual indicators for fire to assist people with a hearing impairment as well as visual contrast to assist people who are visually impaired.
- 3.21 Car parking provision is being created to accommodate the lodges and car parking for disabled people (Blue Badge holders) will be well within a 50 metre distance of the lodges but may be in excess of this for the accessible tree house.
- 3.22 From the car parking provision which is provided for the accessible tree houses, pathways are provided to be in keeping with the ambience of the facilities, which will accommodate the changes in level that the site presents,

but will offer firm and durable routes for wheelchair users and people who have a mobility impairment and may use a mobility aid.

- 3.23 The majority of other lodges and tree houses have steps but this is simply to accommodate the difference in level. Although ideally all lodges would afford level access, where the gradient is steeper than 1 in 12, there is little option but to incorporate steps. Ostensibly this may seem at odds with accessibility and inclusivity requirements, but it affords access that is safe, rather than offering a ramp that is at a gradient of 1 in 8, which is potentially very unsafe for wheelchair users and moreover, could not be permissible under Building Regulations.
- 3.24 It is also pertinent to point out that many disabled people, including people who have a progressive condition such as Parkinson's Disease or Multiple Sclerosis, people with an artificial lower limb or people who wear callipers can often find it easier to negotiate steps rather than a ramp: thus we should not assume that there is no access to lodges where there are steps: there is no wheelchair access but there is access for disabled people who may prefer steps or who can negotiate steps easily.
- 3.25 Although not currently being designed to accessibility and inclusivity standards, the four 'extra large' lodges will also mean that adaptations can happen in the future. This offers flexibility in terms of the stock and should accessibility criteria change in the future or the demand for accessible lodges become greater than the supply, then these can be adapted within a short timeframe and with minimal cost.
- 3.26 The accessible lodges will have a ramped access to the external balcony, to ensure that there is full access for everyone, to all the facilities proposed. This ramp will have a suitable gradient (1 in 12 or shallower) and will be fitted with an appropriate slip resistant finishing.
- 3.27 Externally lighting will be used to ensure that guests not only feel comfortable circulating in the evening but this will also ensure that people with low vision can have their vision maximised. People who are older also need additional light.

Conclusion

Great care and consideration has been given to ensuring access and an inclusive environment for all: not just wheelchair users but people who have various disabilities and as such have different needs from wheelchair users. The result is an exciting development which will offer disabled guests a real chance to experience the lodges and tree houses in the same way as is afforded to non-disabled guests.