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Planning Design Economics

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**ALTON TOWERS: PROPOSED
REPLACEMENT
ROLLERCOASTER**

**DESIGN AND ACCESS
STATEMENT**

10 December 2008

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CONTENTS

1.0	INTRODUCTION	1
	Purpose of the Statement	1
	Description of the proposals	2
2.0	ASSESSMENT	3
	National Planning Guidance	3
	Response to Context	4
	Proposed Replacement Ride	5
	Use	5
	Amount	5
	Layout	5
	Scale	6
	Landscaping	7
	Appearance	7
	Access	7
3.0	SUMMARY/CONCLUSIONS	8

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Plan 373/68-1 'Key Plan'

Appendix 2: Drawing ref. AT_JO08104_PL_001 rev B 'Illustrative Coloured Elevations'

Drawing ref. AT_JO08104_PL_002 Entrance Feature'

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Statement

- 1.1 This Design and Access Statement has been prepared on behalf of Alton Towers Resort Operations Limited (Alton Towers). It accompanies the full planning application for the installation of a replacement coaster at Alton Towers.
- 1.2 This report responds to the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure)(Amendment)(England) Order 2006 (the "GDPO") for planning applications - apart from some exceptions - to be accompanied by a Design and Access Statement that explains:
- a) the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the development; and,
 - b) how issues relating to access to the development have been dealt with.
- 1.3 The structure and content of the statement has been informed by DCLG Circular 01/2006 "*Guidance on Changes to the Development Control System*" (12 June 2006) and "*Design and Access Statements: How to Write, Read and Use Them*" (CABE 2006). Together these provide advice on what a Design and Access Statement should include. In essence, there is a need to:
- i) provide a review of the site's immediate and wider context in terms of its physical, social and economic characteristics and relevant planning policy and guidance;
 - ii) provide a rationale for the scheme's design based on (i);
 - iii) explain and illustrate the design principles in terms of the development's layout, density, scale, landscape and visual appearance;
 - iv) explain how future users of the site will be able to access the development from the existing transport network and why the main access points to the site and the layout of access routes have been chosen; and,
 - v) explain how the development will meet the local authority's planning and urban design objectives.

Description of the proposals

- 1.4 The application site is located towards the southwest of the site and occupies an area of approximately 0.75ha. The site is currently occupied in part by hardstanding and the Corkscrew rollercoaster (erected in 1980) and to the south is a fringe of woodland (covering approximately 6000 sqm). There are 79 trees within the application site. The corkscrew rollercoaster has a maximum height of 22.8 metres to the track level and has a painted steel track with column supports. There is also a photo building and station on site. Elements of the coaster track can be glimpsed from beyond the site boundary at a number of locations.
- 1.5 It is proposed to remove the existing Corkscrew rollercoaster and construct a replacement rollercoaster that occupies the site of the Corkscrew and also extends southwards into the fringe of the woodland (see drawings 373/68-3 and 373/68-4 for the existing and proposed site layout). The new coaster will be constructed from steel supported by columns and will operate using hydraulics. It will have a maximum track height of 20 metres from ground level.
- 1.6 The existing corkscrew photo building will be retained on site (measuring approximately 26 sqm), but the station structure will be removed (measuring approximately 87 sqm) and a new station building is proposed as part of the application (measuring approximately 670 sqm). The new building will have a maximum height of 12.5m and will be themed to blend into the surrounding theme park. Access to the site will remain as existing and no additional parking is proposed as part of the proposals. A new queue line is proposed, this is shown on drawing 373/68-18. The proposals will result in the loss of approximately 43 trees, 36 of which are in Categories 5 & 6 (which must either be removed on grounds of safety or are not valuable trees).
- 1.7 At its highest point the proposed coaster track is 2.17 metres lower than the existing Corkscrew rollercoaster the proposed track loops around the existing Corkscrew site and also runs south west into a small section of the existing woodland. Some sections of the proposed track, within the GDO, will be positioned below the existing ground level and therefore some excavation will be required.

2.0 ASSESSMENT

National Planning Guidance

- 2.1 Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and Historic Environment (1994) provides a Statement of central Government policy for the protection of the historic environment. It stresses the requirement placed on local planning authorities, via the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special regard to the preservation of the settings of listed buildings and conservation areas.
- 2.2 Section 3 of PPG15 addresses the protection of listed buildings. Para. 3.2 notes that listed building controls apply to all works, both external and internal, that would affect a building's special interest, whether or not the feature concerned is specifically mentioned in the listing description. Fixtures and curtilage buildings - structures connected to the main building or within its curtilage - are also subject to listed building control.
- 2.3 Paragraphs 4.14 to 4.20 set out guidance on planning powers within conservation areas. Paragraph 4.19 states that "*preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area*" must be a high priority and there would be a "*strong presumption against the grant of planning permission*" if proposals conflict with that objective. Paragraph 4.20 clarifies that preservation can be achieved by positive development or by "*development which leaves character and appearance unharmed*".
- 2.4 The Courts have held that consent for the demolition of a building may involve consideration of what is to take its place (see paragraph 4.27).
- 2.5 Conservation Area designation introduces a general control over the demolition of unlisted buildings and provides the basis for policies designed to preserve or enhance all the aspects of character or appearance that define an area's special interest (paragraph 4.1). PPG 15 identifies that consent for demolition should not be given unless there are acceptable and detailed plans for any redevelopment (paragraph 4.27).
- 2.6 National Planning Policy Statement 9 (Biodiversity and Geological Conservation) recognises that sites of local biodiversity interest have a role to play in helping to meet overall biodiversity targets (paragraph 9). PPS9 also identifies that ancient woodland is a valuable biodiversity resource both for its diversity of species and for its

longevity as woodland. It is further identified that planning authorities should not grant planning permission for any development that would result in its loss or deterioration unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location outweigh the loss of the woodland habitat (paragraph 10).

2.7 National Government has produced a “*Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism*”, which is a material consideration to the determination of this application. Paragraph 2.2 recognises the importance of tourism to the national economy. Specifically, paragraphs 2.4 – 2.6 recognise the benefits that tourism brings to the economic and social well being of local communities. Paragraph 2.5 identifies that the revenue generated by tourism can be particularly valuable in rural areas and can, inter alia, help to support and enhance local services, aid diversification and secure retention or upgrading of public services. It is recognised that these benefits can be particularly important in rural areas as they may provide amenities that people would otherwise not have access to.

Response to Context

2.8 Alton Towers is located in the Churnet Valley to the north of Alton Village. For administrative purposes the site is located in Staffordshire County Council and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. In terms of levels, 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.

2.9 The park site is broadly rectangular in shape with an east west dimension in excess of 2km and a north south dimension of approximately 1km, albeit varying across the site.

2.10 The nearest major urban areas are Stoke on Trent, approximately 19km (12 miles) east of the park, and the City of Derby, 29km (18 miles) to the east. The smaller towns of Leek, Ashbourne and Uttoxeter are located to the north-west, north-east and south respectively. The nearest major urban conurbations are at Manchester to the north and Birmingham to the south, both approximately 64km (40 miles) from the site.

2.11 The Alton Towers site 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 Parks and Gardens. Development which has a harmful effect on the character, setting or appearance of a Registered Historic Parks or Garden will not be permitted (Policy B20)

2.12 In addition the site is located within the Alton and Farley Conservation Area. Within Conservation Areas the Council's policies allow development which can be shown to preserve or enhance the appearance and character of the area. Policies encourage the retention of trees and buildings which make a positive contribution to conservation areas (Policies B10-12).

2.13 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. Local plan policies require more careful consideration of landscape impact than would normally be the case. Development should promote a high standard of design (policy N9) and should not detract from the high quality landscape (Policy N8).

Proposed Replacement Ride

2.14 In summary, the proposed replacement rollercoaster is partly located within the General Permitted Development Area and partly located within the Registered Park/Garden Boundary. The site is in a Special Landscape Area and is also located within the Alton and Farley conservation area. Part of the application site is a County Site of Biological Importance.

Use

2.15 The site is a resort theme park. The replacement rollercoaster will not result in a change of use.

Amount

2.16 The existing photo building will be retained on site and a total of approximately 667sq m of additional floorspace is proposed.

Layout

2.17 The positioning of the replacement rollercoaster and associated buildings and structures are shown on the drawing 373/68-4 that has been submitted as part of the planning application submission. Alton Towers has discussed the proposed

development with planning and conservation officers at Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. The key objective has been to provide a replacement rollercoaster that will have a minimum impact on its surroundings.

- 2.18 The scheme proposes a themed entrance area (refer to Appendix 2). A new queue line is proposed to serve the replacement ride, but the siting of the replacement ride and station building will not adversely affect or obstruct pedestrian routes through the site and the new porous paving will ensure there is enhanced access to the replacement ride.

Scale

- 2.19 The planning application is accompanied by an illustrative photographic assessment showing views as existing and views as proposed (see drawings 373/68-11 through to 373/68-16).
- 2.20 The assessment identifies that the existing high point of the corkscrew track can be glimpsed from a number of viewpoints. These glimpses are minor and in some cases are barely visible to the naked eye, but the local views will be enhanced when the Corkscrew rollercoaster is removed
- 2.21 At its highest point, the track level of the proposed replacement coaster is 2.17 metres lower than the existing Corkscrew. The proposed ride has been carefully designed to ensure that the coaster track remains below the existing tree canopy and only momentary glimpses of the cars moving along the proposed track will be visible. The placement of the proposed track below the tree canopy will therefore result in a localised improvement in views towards the site, in comparison to the existing situation. There will therefore be no adverse impact on views as a result of the proposed development.
- 2.22 The height of the proposed building sits below the existing tree line. The application site is some distance from any listed structures; there will therefore be no impact on the historic character or special architecture features of the listed buildings/structures.
- 2.23 In connection with the Registered Park and Garden, the site occupies only a small section of the existing woodland and the proposed additional landscaping and mitigation measures will result in an overall benefit to the surrounding woodland and will not have any harmful effects on its setting

Landscaping

- 2.24 The coaster track layout has been carefully designed so that it follows the natural line of existing clearings within the woodland. This methodology means that only 41 of the 474 trees surveyed will be felled as part of the proposed development. There are approximately 12,000 trees within the overall area of biological importance under the control and ownership of Alton Towers. The majority of the trees to be felled (32 out of 41) are Sycamores (less than 20m in height) or other trees in poor condition – the majority of these will be removed as part of the established woodland management at the site. The contribution of these trees to the woodland in biodiversity terms is therefore limited. It is considered that the proposals will have a localised effect on the woodland in this location. New woodland planting will be proposed as part of the proposed application and Alton Towers also proposes to commit to further Woodland Management to mitigate the localised impacts.

Appearance

- 2.25 The design approach for the replacement ride will seek to meet the expectations of resort guests. The theming is designed to complement existing attractions within the Resort. Illustrative images of the proposed themed entrance and station building are attached at Appendix 3. A schedule of finishes is submitted as part of the application and the materials have been chosen to complement the existing surroundings.

Access

- 2.26 As identified above, the replacement rollercoaster will not obstruct existing pedestrian flows in the vicinity of the site. Ramps will be installed where there are changes in levels and a separate access to the ride will be available for disabled guests. Due to the nature of the proposed ride there will be restrictions on use (this is the case for a number of rides at Alton Towers). The proposed ride will not be suitable for guests with heart, neck, or back conditions, or expectant mothers and guests will need to brace themselves in an upright position in order to use the ride.

3.0 SUMMARY/CONCLUSIONS

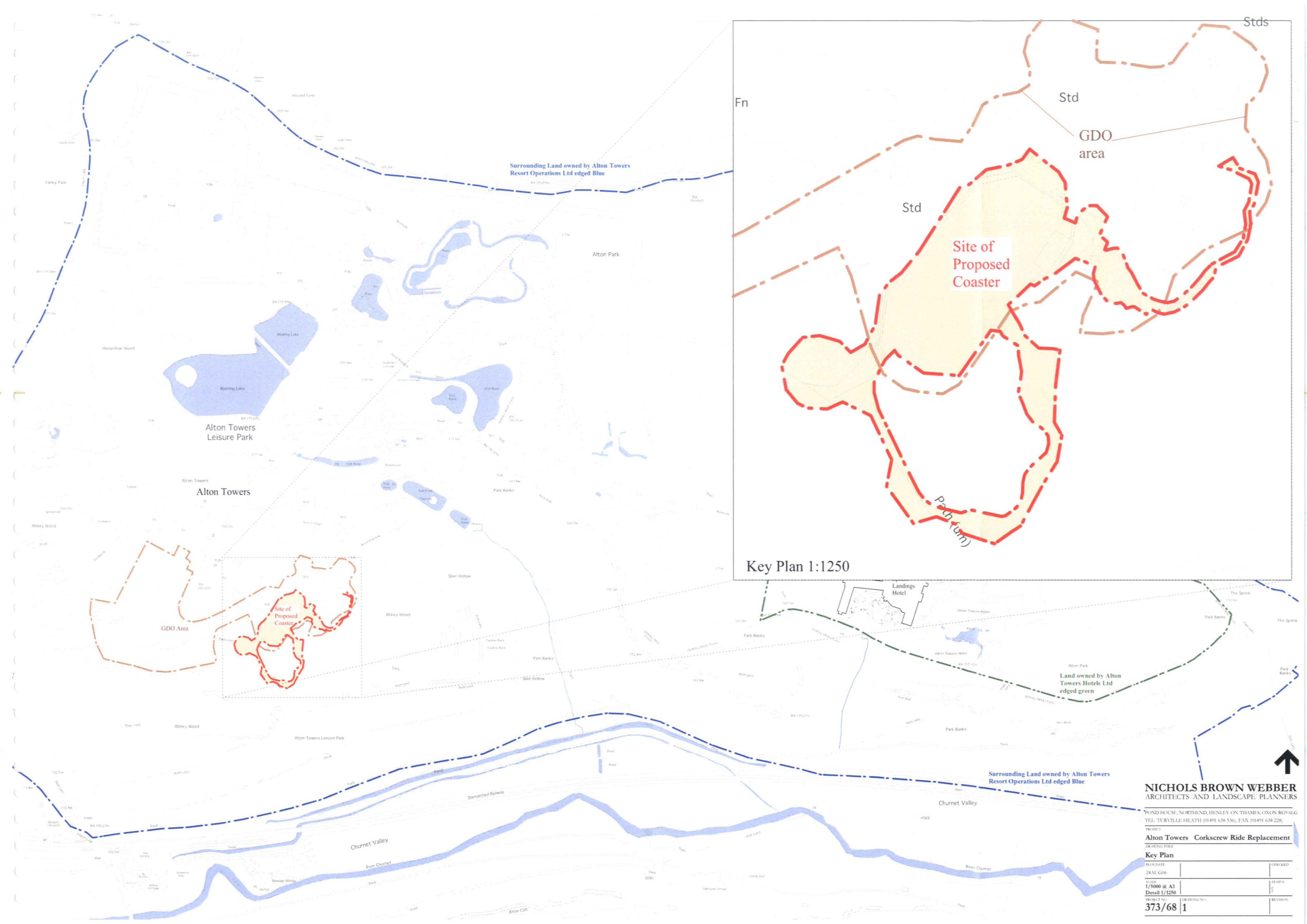
3.1 This statement has addressed the following issues in connection with the design approach for the proposed replacement rollercoaster:

- Use.
- Amount:
- Layout:
- Scale;
- Landscaping;
- Appearance: and
- Access.

3.2 The proposals meet the relevant national, regional and local policy criteria set out within Section 2.0. In particular the proposals represent an overall improvement to a number of local views. The proposals will not have an adverse effect on the character of the Alton and Farley Conservation Area. In this respect the proposal is in accordance with the statutory requirements laid down by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990, and relevant policies within the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan.

3.3 The design of the replacement rollercoaster will respect its surroundings and in townscape and landscape terms and the design approach will seek to meet the expectations of resort guests whilst respecting the site and its surroundings.

Appendix 1: Plan 373/68-1 'Key Plan'



Surrounding Land owned by Alton Towers Resort Operations Ltd edged Blue

Alton Park

Alton Towers Leisure Park

Alton Towers

GDO Area

Site of Proposed Coaster

Key Plan 1:1250

Std

Site of Proposed Coaster

Std

GDO area

Path (turn)

Land owned by Alton Towers Hotels Ltd edged green

Surrounding Land owned by Alton Towers Resort Operations Ltd edged Blue

Churnet Valley

Churnet Valley

River Churnet

River Churnet

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PROJECT
Alton Towers Corkscrew Ride Replacement

DRAWING TITLE
Key Plan

PLOT DATE 24 JUL 2006	CHECKED
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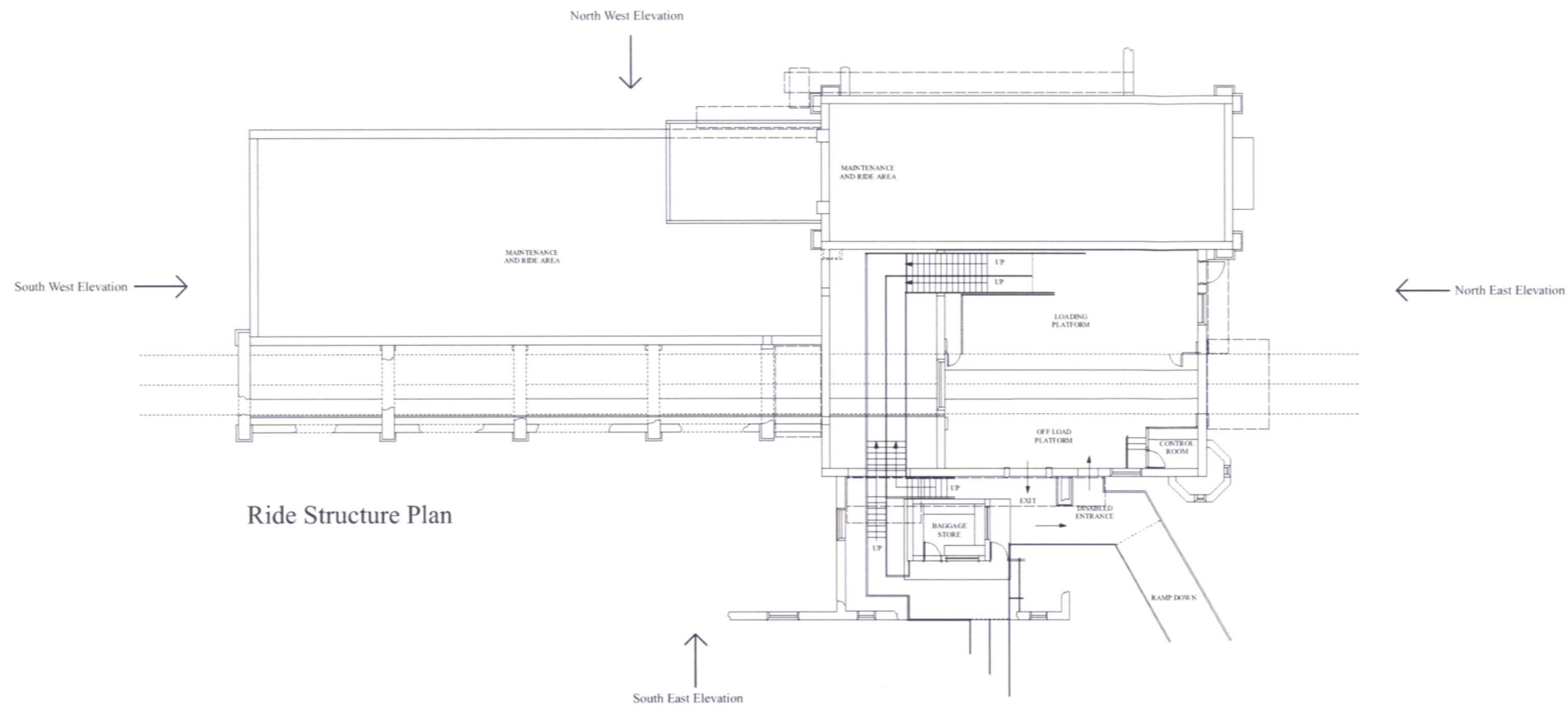
SCALE 1/5000 @ A3 Detail 1/1250	SHEETS 5
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PROJECT NO 373/68	DRAWING NO 1	REVISION
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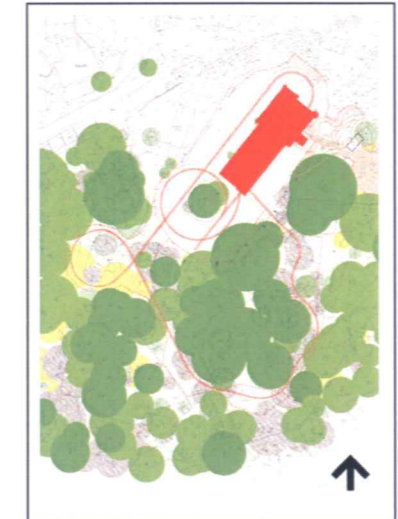


Appendix 2: Drawing ref. AT_JO08104_PL_001 rev B 'Illustrative Coloured Elevations'

Drawing ref. AT_JO08104_PL_002 Entrance Feature



Ride Structure Plan



Location Plan



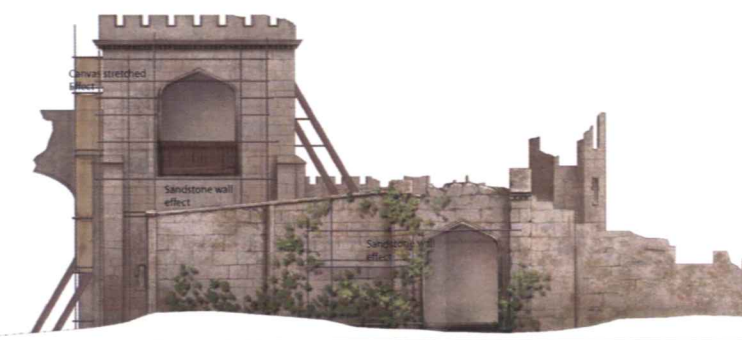
South East Elevation



North East Elevation



North West Elevation



South West Elevation

Attraction

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Notes / Evisions:
ILLUSTRATIVE

Risk Statement

Detail Design / Artwork

Design Risk Assessment Ref No.

Drawing issued for: Planning
(i.e. Consent, Approval, Listing, Resubmission etc.)

Project: AT - Corkscrew replacement ride

Area: Alton Towers UG land

Title: Planning Coloured Elevations

File Name/Draw No: AT_J008104_FL_001

Revision No: C

Scale: 1:100

Creation Date: 13-11-08

Last Revised Date: 09-12-08

Job No: J008104

Client: AT - Mark Kerrigan

Project Manager: Candy Holland

Creative Director: Candy Holland

Project Designer: Nigel Woods

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Notes / Revisions:
ILLUSTRATIVE

Risk Statement

... Detail Design / Artwork

... Design Risk Assessment Ref No.

Drawing Issued for: Planning
 (e.g. Comment, Approval, Costing, Manufacture, Information)

Project:
 AT - Corkscrew replacement ride

Area:
 Alton Towers UG land

Title:
 Entrance Feature

File Name/Dwg/No: AT_JO08104_PL_002

Revision No: ...

Scale: N/A

Creation Date: 24-11-08

Last Revised Date: ...

Job No: JO08104

Client: AT- Mark Kerrigan

Project Manager:

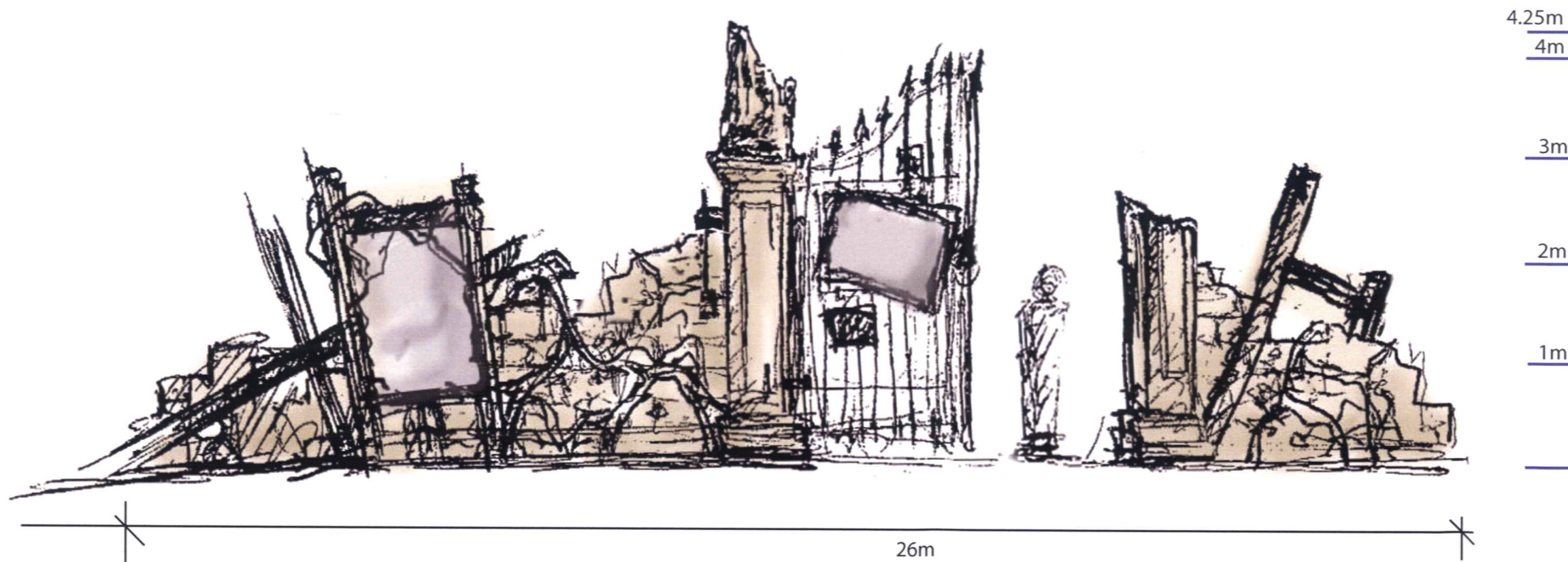
Creative Director: Candy Holland

Project Designer: Nigel Woods

Drawn By:



Location Plan



Entrance feature



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