

Item B. 4 07/00187/FUL Permit Full Planning Permission

Case Officer Mark Moore

Ward Chisnall

Proposal Erection of replacement roller coaster.

Location Camelot Theme Park Park Hall Road Charnock Richard
Lancashire PR7 5LP

Applicant Prime Resorts Ltd

Proposal: The proposal is to erect a replacement roller coaster on the site of the Camelot Theme Park at Charnock Richard. The new ride is constructed however was not completed or operational during a site visit undertaken on 10th April, 2007. The replacement roller coaster 'Knightmare' is sited in the same location as the ride that it has now replaced: the 'Gauntlet' looping roller coaster. This is towards the western end of the developed part of the park and approximately 130m from the nearest site boundary to the south.

The roller coaster comprises a single looped track raised on pillars that would reach 26.1m at its highest point. The track would cover a footprint roughly 82m x 55m and the bulk of the structure would be less than 20m in height. In addition to the track it is proposed to erect an ancillary building measuring 17m x 9m with a roof canopy 4.5m in height.

Planning Policy DC1 Development in the Green Belt
DC6 Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt
EP2 County Heritage Local Nature Reserve Site
EP20 Noise

PPG2 Green Belts
PPG17 Planning for Open Space and Recreation

Planning History: **Ref:** 00/00677/FUL **Decision:** Refuse
Decision Date: 28 November 2000
Description: Erection of 40m high roller coaster ride,

Ref: 01/00052/FUL **Decision:** Permit
Decision Date: 6 March 2001
Description: Erection of fixed ferris wheel (temporary permission sought until 30 November 2001)

Ref: 01/00542/MAS **Decision:** Prior approval not reqd
Decision Date: 31 July 2001
Description: Prior notification of siting of telecommunications equipment consisting of 15m pole with antenna and cabinet,

Ref: 01/00916/TPO **Decision:** Permit
Decision Date: 20 December 2001
Description: Felling of one tree and pruning of two trees covered by TPO2 (Park Hall Charnock Richard) 1974,

Ref: 01/01073/FUL **Decision:** Permit
Decision Date: 12 February 2002
Description: Erection of fixed ferris wheel (temporary permission required until 30th November 2002),

Ref: 02/00640/FULMAJ **Decision:** Permit
Decision Date: 29 October 2002
Description: Erection of an indoor theme park,

Ref: 94/00702/FUL **Decision:** Permit
Decision Date: 11 November 1994
Description: Change of use of land and erection of buildings to form Rare Breeds and Falconry Visitor Centre, in association with existing Theme Park.

Ref: 96/00838/TPO **Decision:** Permit
Decision Date: 20 January 1997
Description: Felling of two beech trees covered by TPO No 2 (Charnock Richard), 1974,

Ref: 98/00039/TEL **Decision:** Prior approval reqd
Decision Date: 13 February 1998
Description: Prior notification of erection of three dual polar antennas, two dish antennas, one radio equipment housing and ancillary development on existing radio tower,

Ref: 98/00593/FUL **Decision:** Permit
Decision Date: 13 October 1998
Description: Erection of steel frame building to accommodate indoor leisure attractions,

Ref: 98/00597/TPO **Decision:** Permit
Decision Date: 11 November 1998
Description: Pruning and felling of trees covered by TPO No 2 (Charnock Richard)1974,

Ref: 99/00002/FUL **Decision:** Permit
Decision Date: 4 March 1999
Description: Alterations to entrance and feature walling,

Ref: 99/00133/ADV **Decision:** Permit
Decision Date: 8 April 1999
Description: Display of externally illuminated entrance sign,

Ref: 99/00298/ADV **Decision:** Permit
Decision Date: 7 June 1999
Description: Display of illuminated advert on proposed bus shelter within Theme Park car park,

Ref: 99/00299/FUL **Decision:**Permit
Decision Date: 7 June 1999
Description: Siting of bus shelter within Theme Park Car park,

Ref: 99/00313/TEL **Decision:** Prior approval reqd
Decision Date: 1 June 1999
Description: Installation of 3 x dual polar antenna and 1 x 0.6m dish on existing 26m tower and 1 equipment cabin,

Ref: 99/00899/COU **Decision:** Permit
Decision Date: 18 January 1999
Description: Change of use to Go Kart track of section of Car Park immediately in front of Camelot Theme Park entrance,

Ref: 03/01032/FUL **Decision:** Permit
Decision Date: 19 November 2003
Description: Single storey extension to hotel lounge area,

Ref: 03/01033/FUL **Decision:** Permit
Decision Date: 19 November 2003
Description: Extension to restaurant to provide conservatory and toilets,

Ref: 05/00726/TPO **Decision:** Permit
Decision Date: 7 September 2005
Description: Felling of 3 trees and canopy reduction of 2 trees covered by TPO (Park Hall, Charnock Richard) 1974,

Ref: 06/00421/COU **Decision:** Permit
Decision Date: 23 August 2006
Description: Change of use of existing storage area to hot tub, swimming pool, steam room and sauna showroom (retrospective),

Applicant's Case: The applicants have made the following comments in support of their proposal:

- The theme park is currently struggling to compete with other tourist attractions in the region and the business has seen a decline in visitor numbers of 390,000 in 1999 to 230,000 in 2006.
- The new ride would bring added appeal to the park and attract more visitors which should help to slow the current reduction in visitor numbers as well as serving to boost the wider local economy.

Consultations: **Highways Agency:** The application constitutes a replacement roller coaster to be sited in the same location as the existing ride. The roller coaster shall be approx. 26.1m above the ground with a lower ancillary building. Initially HA concerned about proximity to M6 motorway and distraction to traffic. However, with proposal being at the north west of the park and a distance considered to be safe with regards to the operation of the motorway, the HA have no objections to the proposal.

Lancashire C.C: The site has only limited public transport provision and no local bus serves the site. Only service 7 Croston – Chorley services the site which operates every hour Mon –Sat but there are no shelters at the stops and the northbound stop has no hardstanding.

Recommends that if the Council minded to approve the developer fund improvements comprising:

- Diversion of services to Camelot/Park Hall
- Upgrading of bus stop on Park Hall Road to mobility standard with shelters.

Director of Streetscene, Neighbourhoods and Environment: There is potential for noise disturbance to be caused to nearby residential properties. However no information was provided to assess whether disturbance would be sufficient to cause a statutory nuisance.

Requests that applicant undertakes and submits an acoustic report which details the impact of noise upon nearby residential dwellings.

Following submission of noise report the following comments were made;

Accepted and appropriate noise assessment standards, methods and modelling techniques have been used throughout the report including a BS 4142 assessment, which gives an indication of whether noise complaints are likely to be received. Overall the report is comprehensive, having covered all of the elements which were requested by the Council at the planning stage of the noise assessment.

I accept all of the conclusions and recommendations made in the report which indicates that complaints are not likely to be received, based on the results of the BS4142 assessment and that noise levels at the nearest residential properties are predicted to be acceptable and within the levels set by appropriate guidance based on the noise modelling exercise which has been carried out.

No objections to the application.

Charnock Richard Parish Council: Object to the proposals on the grounds of loss of visual amenity to local residents caused by the excessive height of the ride. The possible distraction to motorists using the motorway must also be considered. The height and the name of the ride 'Nightmare' will lead to a change in the customer base as an attraction to older people and an increase in visitor numbers leading to an increase in vehicular traffic entering and exiting the site. The thrill of the ride will also lead to an increase in noise from those using the ride thereby increasing the noise nuisance from the site. Objections have also been made to the fact that this is a retrospective planning application for something which has been under construction for some months.

LCC Ecological Advisor: Ecological concerns including impacts on nesting birds and fragmentation/isolation of habitats need to be assessed. Recommends that developer be required to provide details of how compensatory habitat would be provided to replace losses arising from development.

Natural England: Satisfied that the proposals will not have any significant impact and therefore have no comments to make.

Representations: Five letters have been received objecting to the proposals on the following grounds:

- Roller coaster already under construction and clearly visible from nearby houses
- Concerned that no point complaining as work already started
- Excess noise will be generated
- Ride is old and rusty as it has been lying around for months unprotected from the weather
- Ride sited less than 200 yards from nearby house
- Theme park has created excess of traffic on Park Hall Road at 4pm when near to closing time which is problem to locals who cannot use the road.
- Visitors eject litter from their cars when stuck in traffic queues
- Jobs that will be created are only seasonal and low paid and are only offered between Easter and September
- Roller coaster will result in loss of privacy

- Only justification for replacement roller coaster is profit
- Owners of neighbouring properties will be unable to use their gardens or open doors and windows due to noise which will be constant throughout the day when ride is in operation

Two responses in support of the proposal have also been received.

Assessment:

The site is located within the Green Belt where there is a strong presumption against new development unless it is for very specific purposes that are outlined in Policy DC1 of the Local Plan. Included within Policy DC1 is development comprising essential facilities for outdoor recreation or other uses of land which preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with its purposes. It is considered the proposal accords with Policy DC1 and national guidance in relation to development within the Green Belt.

The site is also a major developed site under policy DC6. Re-use, infilling or redevelopment of major developed sites is acceptable under Policies DC1 and DC6 provided that; the proposals do not have a materially greater impact than the existing use on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land in it and; the development is in scale and keeping with the main features of the landscape.

Camelot is a well established and major leisure attraction within the Green Belt and as such has permitted development rights under the GDPO which would allow them to erect rides up to 25m in height without the need for planning permission. In this case the ride exceeds that height limit by a marginal amount (1.1m), hence the need for planning permission.

The main issues in consideration of this proposal are:

- Visual Impact
- Neighbour Amenity
- Ecological Issues

Visual Impact:

The proposed roller coaster is taller than the ride it is replacing and also other rides present at the park however is set well within the site and is relatively well screened from its periphery with only the topmost part visible above the tree line. No objections are raised from the Highways Agency regarding the ride in relation to the nearby M6 motorway and the structure is for the most part screened off by the existing landscaping which surrounds the site. To the north and west the site is bounded by open land and wooded areas that are within the ownership of Park Hall and do not readily afford views of the theme park from the public domain. The nearest residential properties to the roller coaster are situated at Highgrove Park to the south west and are situated with their rear garden boundaries located approximately 190m from the ride.

The structure is only 1.1m above the height of 25m that could be erected without planning permission under Part 28 of the General Development Order. Whilst this is only a means of determining the need for planning permission and not a factor in assessing

whether the proposal is acceptable or not it is nevertheless necessary to consider that a marginally smaller ride would be deemed to be outside the scope of planning control. Notwithstanding, the ride does not impact visually upon the surrounding landscape to any significant degree and is not overly prominent from outside the site. It is not therefore considered that there would be sufficient basis to justify a refusal of planning permission on the grounds of visual amenity.

Neighbour Amenity:

The main issue for consideration in relation to amenity is that of noise. The detailed noise assessment submitted by the applicants has been considered by the Councils' Environmental Health section who have confirmed that the noise levels at the nearest residential properties will be within levels set by national guidance and are therefore acceptable. The theme park is also only open throughout the summer months and is closed during weekdays with the exception of the Easter holiday, which would limit the potential noise problem to weekends only and for a limited period over the course of the year. It is therefore considered that the proposal is acceptable in terms of impact from noise.

Objections have been raised from local residents over existing problems of congestion and littering on the road network surrounding the site and there is concern that these problems will be exacerbated from the proposed opening of the new ride. However, there is no evidence to suggest that the ride, which is a replacement roller coaster, would result in a significant increase in visitors to the site sufficient to justify grounds for refusal of planning permission. The ride will supplement existing attractions and is unlikely to lead to substantial problems over and above those currently being created from the operation of the theme park which are limited to the weekend and Easter opening times.

On the basis of the above it is not considered that the proposal can be refused on the basis of loss of amenity.

Ecological Issues:

The roller coaster intrudes marginally upon a pond area that is sited within very close proximity to the existing theme park area given over to rides and amusements. No objections have been raised from Natural England or LCC's Ecological Advisor to the siting of the new ride. It is proposed to attach a condition to require submission of a habitat creation and management plan showing where a compensatory habitat will be provided in line with the recommendations of LCC.

Conclusion:

It is considered that the proposal will have no significant visual impact or impact upon neighbourhood amenity and will not raise any ecological issues. Accordingly it is recommended that planning permission should be approved.

Recommendation: Permit Full Planning Permission Conditions

1. The operation of the replacement roller coaster hereby permitted shall not commence until full details of the colour, form and texture of all external facing materials to the roller coaster and its associated building (notwithstanding any details shown on the previously

submitted plan(s) and specification) have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall only be carried out using the approved external facing materials.

Reason: To ensure that the materials used are visually appropriate to the locality and in accordance with Policy Nos. GN5 and DC1 of the Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review.

2. Prior to the operation of the roller coaster hereby approved a habitat creation and management plan detailing where a compensatory habitat shall be provided and a schedule of proposed works, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In order to protect habitat for nesting birds, their nests and eggs as in accordance with Policy EP3 of the Chorley Borough Local Plan Review.
