

ALTON TOWN COUNCIL
NEIGHBOURHOOD
PLAN MONITORING
REPORT
MARCH 2018



Contents

| | |
|--|----------|
| An overview of Neighbourhood Planning | 3 |
| How and why is monitoring undertaken? | 4 |
| Terms of Reference | 5 |
| Effectiveness of the Plan | 6 |
| Action Plan overview | 8 |

APPENDIX 1: DETAILED ACTION PLAN



On behalf of Alton Town Council we would like to express our thanks to Mike Heelis, David Allan, Councillor Peter Hicks and Councillor Graham Hill for their contribution to the monitoring of this plan.

Introduction

An overview of Neighbourhood Planning

East Hampshire District Council as the Local Planning Authority (LPA) is responsible for the delivery of the Development Plan which contains the standards by which applications are judged. However, in April 2012, local communities were given legal powers under the Localism Act 2011 to develop Neighbourhood Plans which hold as much weight as a material consideration in planning terms as the LPA's own development plan. To date there are over 1750 Neighbourhood Plan Areas across the UK at various stages of development.

During 2014 and 2015 Alton Town Council worked together with the Alton Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to produce the first ever statutory planning document for the town of Alton. The Alton Neighbourhood Plan means that the community are now able to directly influence planning decisions as East Hampshire District Council and Hampshire County Council are required to take the policies contained within the plan as material considerations when determining whether to grant or refuse planning permission for new development.

The Alton Neighbourhood Plan was passed by the Inspector in September 2015 and was subsequently approved by the residents of Alton in a referendum held on the 24th February 2016 with 93% of voters in favour of the plan.

Neighbourhood Plans can:-

- Shape and influence where development will go in the local area
- Decide what development should look like
- Include detailed planning policies for the local area

Neighbourhood Plans cannot:-

- Conflict with the policies within the Local Plan or Core Strategy
- Block development
- Provide less development than the adopted Local Plan

Neighbourhood Plans must be:-

- In general conformity with the strategic policies of adopted Local Plans
- In general conformity with national planning policy e.g. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- In line with the other laws and EU Directives/legislation and Human Rights obligations

Once approved (or "made"), the Alton Neighbourhood Plan (ANP) became part of the development plan for the area; this means the policies and proposals contained within the ANP are now used to determine planning applications, including appeals. The Alton Neighbourhood Plan was formally adopted as a part of the Local Development Plan by East Hampshire District Council in May 2016.

How and why is monitoring undertaken?

Following the “making” of the Alton Neighbourhood Plan by the people of Alton in the referendum of the 24th February 2016, the decision was made to create a Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring Group and construct its initial Terms of Reference.

The focus of the group is to keep watch over the progress of the Neighbourhood Plan action points as they are delivered by the Town Council and other bodies and to monitor compliance with the policies contained within the plan by the Local Planning Authority when they determine planning applications.

East Hampshire District Council also undertakes their own monitoring of plan but this only relates to their statutory obligation to record the number of developments commenced and completed within the calendar year.

The Monitoring Group formally met for the first time on the 24th May 2016 with its Terms of Reference agreed on 9th August 2016 and detailed on the next page. The regular group currently consists of Mr. Mike Heelis (resident), Mr. David Allan (resident), Councillor Peter Hicks (Alton Town Council), Councillor Graham Hill (East Hampshire District Council / Alton Town Council) and Mrs Leah Coney (Town Clerk, Alton Town Council).

Assistance has also been received from Planning Policy Officers at East Hampshire District Council including Ian Mawer and Heather Stevens and Julie McLatch (ATC/EHDC Business Development Manager as well as Councillor Pam Jones on Education and Health and Wellbeing and Alton CTC on cycling related matters.

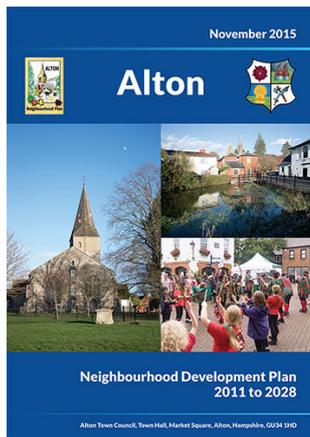
The group looks at any issues of compliance with the plan arising in its application of the policies contained within it and is provided with regular updates on the considerable work undertaken by officers and Councillors either directly or through a facilitation role in progressing the actions within the plan.

Members of the group have also lent their expertise in a variety of fields to assist with progression of a number of action plan points.

The group also looks at areas where the plan may become vulnerable in the future to more recently adopted documents, become outdated or consider any omissions in the plan which should be addressed in any review of the documentation. Over the last year this has included the creation of the position statement in respect of Policy TR5 which was adopted by the Town Council as an interim measure pending the mechanisms being put in place to potentially modify this policy in the future; the aim of this was to provide clarity to Planning Officers when considering applications particularly in “sustainable” locations.

In view of the announcement that the Local Plan will be reviewed and replaced during 2019/2020 as part of a legal requirement to undertake a review every five years, looking forward the Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring Group will also advise the Town Council on any necessary changes or updates required to the Neighbourhood Plan to maintain its status as a current planning document. An initial meeting has already been held with the Planning Policy Team at EHDC to understand the process and timescales and a follow up meeting will be scheduled for later in the year once the Land Availability Assessment has been carried out and the results known.

The Local Plan review is seeking to achieve a very aggressive timetable for delivery and it will be vital to ensure that there is close collaboration with the planning authority to ensure that the Town Council is ready to act at the right time and ensure the best outcome for the people of Alton through this review process.



In order to remain a high value document for both the Council and the people of Alton, regular monitoring of the Alton Neighbourhood Plan ensures the plan is not “placed on a shelf” but provides a continuing source of robust scrutiny and dialogue in order to drive forward and progress the policies and action points created, promoted and endorsed by Altonians.

Alton Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring Group – Terms of Reference

The Alton Neighbourhood Plan was made following a public referendum on Wednesday 24th February 2016. It contains both Planning Policies for the town, and Action Points which will be delivered and implemented by the respective Planning Authority or the Town Council in partnership with a variety of different stakeholders and public and commercial bodies.

In order to scrutinise the implementation of the Neighbourhood Plan a Monitoring Group has been formed with the following terms of reference.

1. Purpose

The purpose of the Monitoring Group is two-fold:

- to ensure that the Action Point items contained within the Neighbourhood Plan are being delivered by the Town Council, working alongside a variety of partners, in a coordinated, cohesive manner and in a timely fashion; and
- To review the application of the policies by the Planning Authority in their determination of planning applications.

2. Role and activities

- a) To monitor progress on the delivery of the Neighbourhood Plan Action Points by each of the Council’s committees, making recommendations to the Council in respect of the timely delivery of the Action Plan as appropriate.
- b) To monitor the application of the Neighbourhood Plan Policies by Alton Town Council and the Planning Authority in relation to planning applications.
- c) To review the production of materials, both printed and electronic, used to communicate the annual review of the delivery of the Plan to residents, businesses and the wider community
- d) To assist in the production of a detailed annual report for each Annual Electors Meeting.
- e) To identify any required information for submission to the Local Planning Authority (EHDC) for inclusion in their Annual Monitoring Report.
- f) To recommend any additions, amendments or updates to Policies or Action Points for consideration in any future review of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- g) To monitor the overall effectiveness of the Plan in the previous 12 months and the likely implications and impact of the Plan for the forthcoming year.

3. Membership

The Delivery and Monitoring Group will consist of the Leader of the Council, the Town Council's lead Member for delivery of the Action Points within the Neighbourhood Plan, The Head of Planning at East Hampshire District Council (EHDC), the Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring Officer (EHDC), the Town Clerk and two members of the public with an understanding of the content of the Neighbourhood Plan.

4. Meetings

The Monitoring Group will meet on a suitably frequent basis to progress matters in a timely manner. This is expected to be quarterly.

Effectiveness of the Plan

The Monitoring group initially identified that the plan was only going to be effective if it was kept in the forefront of Alton Town Council's overall agenda and had a clear Action Plan which effectively works as a delivery strategy for the Action points contained within the plan.

To that end, they group recommended that Councillors undertake in-house training on the Alton Neighbourhood Plan policies to ensure they are able to apply them consistently when considering applications before the Planning and Transportation Committee as well as when the relevant Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring agenda item is tabled at the other appropriate Alton Town Council Committee Meetings. The training session for Councillors was carried out in August 2016. Refresher training will be offered in due course as appropriate.

Residential Development.

The Alton Neighbourhood Plan stated that the Town Council would wish to track whether the Plan has had a positive impact on planning decisions and whether its objectives are being realized.

Initially members of the monitoring group identified that it was clear that a number of statutory consultees in the planning process were responding to the LPA without reference to the Alton Neighbourhood Plan and remained unaware of its existence as a statutory planning document; this was particularly notifiable in comments received from Highways in relation to parking provision.

This has largely been overcome as awareness has increased but still requires monitoring by both officers and the Planning and Transportation Committee who are informed when the case officers decision is contrary to the recommendation of the committee and whether this is wholly or in part due to non-application or reduced weight being given to the Neighbourhood Plan.

The Planning and Transportation Committee has consistently applied the policies within the Alton Neighbourhood Plan when considering their responses to planning applications. As a result Members are very familiar with the weight given to applications in respect of the Neighbourhood Plan and how this sits alongside the overall planning balance.

The Town Council took the decision after the approval of the reserved matters application at the Alton Sports and Social Club site in Anstey Lane, to refer this to legal counsel to understand the position in respect of the remaining reserved matter applications at Will Hall Farm and South Alton, wishing to see clarification on how the Town Council should proceed going forward as to whether the Neighbourhood Plan polices would be likely

to continue to be set aside. The subsequent report from Landmark Chambers gave a measure of comfort to Members that the position in respect of these two applications is that the plan should be given full weight at reserved matters as indeed it should on all new development applications. This has been borne out in the approval of reserved matters for the Will Hall Farm site which was in conformity with the Neighbourhood Plan. Engagement is due to start with the developers of the hybrid South Alton Plan in respect of their reserved matters application later this month.

Housing Numbers.

The group had previously raised concern with East Hampshire District Council regarding the actual housing numbers as they stand for Alton in comparison with the Neighbourhood Policy HO3 requirement.

The EHDC Joint Core Strategy (JCS) (Appendix 2 page 113) required Alton to be allocated 1731 dwellings 2011 - 2028 (made up of pre allocated [including 236 windfall] 1031 and 700 Greenfield).

The Alton Neighbourhood Plan requires 1027 Greenfield plus the pre allocated 1031 making a total of 2058. This constitutes an additional 19% over original JCS figures.

As of November 2017 EHDC confirmed that the housing Alton Windfall figures delivered so far, were as follows:

- 2014/15 - 68
- 2015/16 - 31
- 2016/17 - 25

This is an average of just over 41 per annum which is significantly in excess of the JCS numbers. In addition there is likely to be circa 170 for the Brewery Site, although this may become a site allocation under the new Local Plan and 57 for the magistrates' court and former Police Station site (full application now submitted)

Given the review of the Local Plan over the next 12 months and a new call for sites, the required numbers are likely to be revised upward but the Monitoring Group will continue to advocate for Alton given its significant contribution to windfall housing over the last 3 years and how this affects future housing numbers.

Economy

The appointment of Julie McLatch as Business Development Manager (BDM) for Alton, jointly funded by East Hampshire District Council and Alton Town Council, on a three year project, has enabled dedicated officer focus on delivery of the Economic (ESAP) Action Plan points as well as consolidating collaborative working between the Town Council and other stakeholders. For 2017 this has also included the creation of a Town Team to consider strategic economic programmes for the Town, the Retail Improvement Grant Scheme, the Digital Awareness Programme and further Open Council Business Forums. Plans for 2018 include a Tourism Fair and further promotion of the links between Alton and Chawton for Jane Austen, consolidating tourist information.

There is a real drive to ensure there is informed and detailed dialogue facilitating a greater understanding of the needs of the business community in Alton.

The BDM also provided floating support services through outreach work with small businesses and community groups signposting locally available opportunities for business promotion and directing queries to relevant officers in planning and economic development at EHDC and HCC. For 2018 the role take a wider, strategic

look at the positioning of Alton in the marketplace.

Community

The Alton 2020 document identified a desire of residents to replace the Community Centre and the Sports Centre to modern purpose built facilities.

Reserved Matters planning permission has now been given for the Sports Centre which is due to be completed in the latter part of 2019. The new facility at Alton will be built on the current site, next to the existing centre which will continue to be used while the new facility is under construction. It will include a six lane 25m pool, a six court sports hall, two fitness studios, two squash courts and a gym.

In respect of a new Community Centre, a site has now been identified within the curtilage of the former Molson Coors Brewery Site in the Town Centre and has been included within the Development Brief for the site. A public consultation undertaken jointly by EHDC and ATC in respect of a new community facility within this site will be launched on the 21st March at the Annual Meeting, where residents will also get the opportunity to meet CALA Homes, the developer for the site, for the first time when they outline their timetable for submitting a planning application to redevelop the former brewery.

Action Plan Overview

It is clear that the initial momentum given by the Town Council in progressing a number of the Action points contained within the plan has consistently continued over the last 12 months and that many of the residential developments identified within HO3 are now being built out.

Enclosed in Appendix 1 is a table contains details on progress with the Action Plan points contained within the plan as well as the current position in respect of the Policies themselves. The plan is broken down according to the Committee remit that the item falls under. Unlike the Alton Town Council Corporate Strategy, the majority of the policies are incumbent upon other tiers of local government to enact in accordance with their statutory functions. A number of Action Points are also delivered by other stakeholders such as the Clinical Commissioning Group, Stagecoach and Network Rail; Alton Town Council is predominately a facilitator but the progress to date reflects the pressure the Council can apply and the contribution it can give ensuring these objectives are delivered for the people of Alton.