



**ALTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP
MEETING NOTES
WEDNESDAY 13th MARCH 2024**

In attendance:

Mike Heelis – Chair (MH)
David Allan – Vice Chair (DA)
Rob Fowell – Community Representative (RF)
John Grace – Community Representative (JG)
Richard Parratt – Community Representative (RP)
Councillor Suzie Burns – EHDC Representative (SB)
Councillor Graham Hill - ATC Representative (GH)
Pat Harris – Interim Town Clerk (PMH)
Councillor Annette Eyre - ATC
Jenny Wood – EHDC Officer (JW)
Leah Coney – Consultant O'Neill Homer

1. **Apologies** – Apologies were received from John Bound (JB), Peter Holden (PH) & Adam Harvey (AH)

Ex-officio - Councillor John Chubb

2. **Updates since Last Meeting**

- 2.1 Photographs for Local List: received from RP, RF, Sb & DA. GH confirmed his are still work in progress but will be submitted shortly.
- 2.2 MH read out the Alton Town Council Resolution passed at the Extra-ordinary meeting of the Full Council on 28th February in respect of its response to the Local Plan and congratulated LC on the excellent work that she had done in preparing the Council's response to EHDC
- 2.3 MH confirmed that Alton Town Council had deferred a decision on whether to endorse the Steering Group's recommendation to remove site allocations from the Neighbourhood Plan seeking a briefing from the Executive to provide more information.
- 2.4 The draft Plan V2 had been received from LC and is with the SG Exec team - MH had returned his comments. DA will be submitting his comments imminently. Once edited by LC, will be circulated to the wider group. **Action: MH to circulate V3 to the wider group once received from LC**
- 2.5 Local List – **Action: MH to send to AH & JW to forward to the Conservation Officer at EHDC**
- 2.6 Further to 2.3 MH advised that a briefing & presentation to councillors took place on Monday 11th March. MH & DA confirmed that Scenario Planning Document 2.2 was used to provide additional background information to explain the approach taken (and this had been circulated to all councillors prior to the briefing).

MH & DA agreed very productive, interactive, congenial and engaging meeting which had been well received. PMH confirmed that the deferred item will be on the Agenda of Full

Council meeting on 3rd April. **Action: PMH to circulate Scenario Planning Document 2.2 to all members of the group with the meeting notes**

- 2.7 ANPSG Exec advised no press release until the Town Council had made its decision on whether to endorse the recommendation of the ANPSG. Alton Town Council had requested that PMH approach EHDC to ascertain what their response would be should ATC decide to only allocate 130 dwellings under brownfield site allocation. JW advised that EHDC had already included in their calculations the 3 or 4 brownfield sites in Alton that qualified under the .25 hectares and 5 dwelling requirement and that these sites were suitable and available (i.e. landowner approval) and were achievable within the next few years.
- 2.8 RF & LC had gone through the local green spaces list and LC had provided the template letter that is to be sent to the respective landowners which include EHDC, Persimmon, Redrow and SE Water. **Action: RF to prepare the letters for MH to top and tail it and then sign.**
- 2.9 The group were advised of the Meridian News item (sponsored by the Alton Society and broadcast on Tuesday evening) in which a number of local representatives from Save Neatham Down, Holybourne Village Association and Save Windmill Hill fields were interviewed.

3. Review of Housing Allocation Approach

- 3.1 LC made a statement in respect of SEA and advised the technical support package commissioned with AECOM back in July 2023 expires shortly and they will need to know whether site allocations are in or out. Any further delays to a decision could impact and require a new SEA to be undertaken and ANPSG will need to write to EHDC to determine whether this would be a requirement, noting that this is a 6-week process in terms of a response.

4. Site Allocations

- 4.1 JW gave an update on the response to the Local Plan advising:
- 5 exhibitions/engagement sessions had been held within the District
 - 702 people had passed through the door (Alton had 257 attendees)
 - 1900+ on-line visitors to the Local Plan response site resulting in 2,000+ respondents and 8,000+ contributions
 - An additional 5/600 emails had also been received
- 4.2 JW confirmed that there would likely be a delay in proceeding to Reg 19 given the level of responses to Reg 18 Part II and that they were now looking at towards the end of the year in order to progress to Reg 19 stage
- 4.3 JW advised the for the Local Plan to proceed under existing planning system rules, the Local Plan must be submitted by 30th June 2025 for examination with a view to it being adopted December 2026

5. Confirmation of Policies

- 5.1 The outcome of the Alton Town Council decision was awaited in order to progress

6. Update on Public Engagement/Communications

- 6.1 Public Engagement (Reg 14) – further delay from April to 7th/8th June **Action: PMH to cancel the Assembly Rooms booking in April and rebook (same times) for 7th/8th June. Post Meeting note: new date confirmed by Assembly Rooms**
- 6.2 Press Release – not until after 3rd April. **Action: MH & DA to prepare and then pass to JB to wordsmith**

- 6.3 Altonian – dependent on outcome of the Full Council meeting on 3rd April. **Action: PH to take forward**

7. Next steps in the Project Plan

- 7.1 LC advised that a decision is required on BNG (Biodiversity Net Gain) recognition. PH confirmed RPS only commission to produce a report on Kings Pond. LC enquires whether further reports should be commissioned for Windmill Hill and Greenfields Amenity land.
Action: PMH to obtain quotes to take forward

8. Any Other Business

- 8.1 Councillor Annette Eyre wished to thank all members of the group (on behalf of Alton Town Councillors) for the great work that the Steering Group was doing which was widely acknowledged to be of the utmost importance for the Town. The Council also acknowledged the added pressure that the group had found themselves working under given the depth of feeling and resistance by residents since the publication of the Local Plan and housing numbers given to Alton by EHDC. The group expressed their gratitude for the recognition.

9. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on **Wednesday, 10th April at 2.00 p.m.** (NB the meeting scheduled for **27th March has been cancelled**)

Meeting concluded at 15.25 p.m.