

**ALTON TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON
WEDNESDAY 4TH SEPTEMBER 2024 AT 7.00PM AT THE ALTON ASSEMBLY
ROOMS**

Present: **Councillor** **Annette Eyre (Town Mayor)**
 Matthew Bayliss
 John Chubb
 Don Hammond
 Graham Hill
 Matthew Kellermann
 Nick O'Brien
 Barbara Tansey
 Janice Treacher
 Peter Wadman

In attendance: **Pat Harris** - **Town Clerk**
 Hayley Carter - **Deputy Clerk**
 152 Members of the public

40 Suspension of Alcohol Licence

On the proposal of Councillor Eyre, seconded by Councillor Hill, it was

RESOLVED

**That the sale of alcohol is not appropriate to the event and authority
for its sale is suspended for the duration of the meeting, in accordance
with paragraph 10 of Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972.**

All in favour.

41 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Jonathan Waugh, Doug Richards and Mark Boyce-Churn

42 Town Mayor's Announcements

The Town Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked so many for coming along. She made it clear that while she would ensure everyone got to have their say she would have to limit public time to five minutes per person, and she assured the meeting that all councillors would be given every opportunity to respond and debate the matter fully.

43 **Minutes of the Full Council Meetings held on 10th July 2024**

1. On the proposal of Councillor Hammond, seconded by Councillor Wadman, it was

RESOLVED

to APPROVE the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 10th July 2024

In favour: Councillors Eyre, Bayliss, Chubb, Hammond, Hill, O'Brien, Tansey, Treacher and Wadman

Abstained: Councillor Kellermann

44 **Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations**

No Declarations of Interest were noted.

45 **Correspondence Received and Questions to the Council**

- 45.1 A letter had been received from Alton Trampoline Club expressing their thanks to the Council for the award of CIL funding in the sum of £7,720 to help replace their oldest trampoline and was circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting.
- 45.2 A letter of appreciation to Councillors was received from the Alton Concert Band for the Event Grant awarded by the Town Council and was circulated prior to the meeting.
- 45.3 Louise Parker spoke about the Brewery Heritage Trail and advised:
- 45.3.1 All councillors should have received an invitation to attend the launch and we hope to see you there, on 11th September at the Allen Gallery from 5.30pm.
- 45.3.2 Councillors should also have received a briefing document with changes that have been made in consultation with CALA and residents of the site. This was confirmed by the Town Clerk that it had been circulated.
- 45.4 Fourteen members of the public spoke and raised questions about item 7 – Alton Neighbourhood Plan Regulation 14. These can be found in Appendix A with questions to answers raised in Appendix B. The people who spoke were:
- 45.4.1 Jerry Janes, of Holybourne Village Association
- 45.4.2 District Councillor Ginny Boxall
- 45.4.3 Sara Whitwell, of Save Windmill Hill Fields
- 45.4.4 Paul Fitzgibbon, resident
- 45.4.5 James Willis, resident
- 45.4.6 Andy Vogel, resident
- 45.4.7 Jack Rowland Bucknell, resident
- 45.4.8 Tim Burns, resident
- 45.4.9 Dawn Ayres, resident
- 45.4.10 Joanne Ryan, resident
- 45.4.11 Jane Davies, resident
- 45.4.12 Rob Fowell, resident and member of ANP Steering Group

45.4.13 Jonathan Durante, resident

45.4.14 Andrew Joy, resident

45.5 Anthony Furnival, resident, wanted to make three points:

“Firstly I’d like to thank Pat, Hayley, Cllr Hammond and Martin from the grounds team for meeting with me today to discuss the Algae at Kings Pond. I am here tonight to implore you to consider the drafting of an algae management plan. The ecological damage this causes is considerable with a recent water reading showing dissolved oxygen levels at just 29% - just a few percent above the danger zone for wildlife. This isn’t about the online or offline option - whatever the future of the site holds we need to consider how nutrient ingress not only affects that space but also the remainder of the river which passes through Alton. I’ll spare you the details which I’ll summarise for town hall to distribute at a later date however the focus must be on prevention, mitigation and treatment. As you will have seen - in just over a week from the initial clearance the pond was swamped again - to avoid this in future we must have a clear algae management strategy.

Next I’d like to discuss representation - as a passionate supporter of Kings Pond, I along with many others I’ve spoken to feel that we’ve lacked representation - both by the last council and in the early stages of this new council. I am sure some of those here talking on the local plan may feel the same. As a council you need to reinvent yourselves, break down the “them and us” and simply become “us” - residents are not the enemy, nor are the council but the rhetoric on all sides sometimes makes it feel that way. However only you can inspire change by adapting a more collaborative way of listening to and engaging with the public. Whether it’s Kings Pond or the local plans - residents don’t want to only be included at the point of consultation where we are offered a plan A or plan B, we want to be heard, engaged with and represented throughout all processes we want to be part of the entire journey. The best councils are those that listen, engage and represent - Whilst Alton Town Council is not there yet, I’d encourage you to take the necessary steps to be a council we are proud of and not one which makes the same mistakes as your predecessors.

Finally, and maybe controversially I’d like to raise a point which troubles me. Earlier this year the council voted to retain the services of O’Neill Homer - a company which our former town clerk Mrs Leah Coney now works for. Not only does she work for this company, she is also now the appointed advisor to Alton Town Council. In essence she is the so called independent advisor on plans she influenced and potentially contributed to as a town clerk. This is a conflict of interest and should never have been allowed to happen. It leaves the plans vulnerable to being controlled by one individual, not to mention risks criticism for this lack of integrity. I therefore call on the council to dispense with the services of O’Neill Homer in order that a truly independent advisory service can be recruited to deliver for this town.”

45.6 Andrew Joy said he was absolutely staggered and hugely impressed by the number of people who have turned up this evening and the passion in the room. He wishes we could see this kind of representation at other council meetings. He said no one on this council has a vested interest, they are all here to do their best for the town and he hopes that no one goes away from this meeting thinking otherwise.

With the approval of Councillors, Agenda Item 7 was then moved ahead of Agenda Item 6.

46 **Alton Neighbourhood Plan**

Councillor Kellermann proposed a deferral of this item.

Councillor Hill said that he had worked on both previous plans. Formulating a Neighbourhood Plan is an extremely difficult task, and they are finding themselves between a rock and a hard place. The number of houses being allocated to East Hampshire is 88% higher than it was previously, and we don't yet know how that will look for Alton. That is being determined by the planning authority, which is East Hampshire District Council, not Alton Town Council. The current version of the Alton Neighbourhood Plan expires in 2026, but there is a strong possibility that the protection that it offers will be shortened by the new government. Neighbourhood Plans are extremely valuable. Time is short. We really do not want to get into a position where one expires, and we have nothing in place going forward. The plan before us this evening is in draft form, it is not finalised. The Regulation 14 consultation that comes next is the place for you all to voice your concerns.

Councillor O'Brien declared that he personally is opposed to any large-scale building. There are people opposed to Windmill Hill that believe that Neatham Down is the solution, but he does not agree. Neatham Down will not have shops, schools, etc so will be using all the facilities in Alton without providing any benefit to the town.

Councillor Tansey said that she thinks everyone is underestimating how strongly everyone in the Town Council feel about Alton and that we don't want to see building either. She said we are here today to decide whether to pass this to Regulation 14 consultation, and the public is underestimating their own power. They have the opportunity to put a line through this.

A member of the public asked for an explanation of what a Regulation 14 consultation is and Councillor Tansey passed it over to Councillor Hill to explain. Councillor Hill explained that all the documents are on the website for all to see. There must be good communication to make sure everyone knows what it is, when the drop-in days will be, how to comment online or by email or directly in those sessions, and that those comments can be submitted all through the six-week consultation period. He agreed that there are corrections which need to be made. He agreed that there will be a lot of discussion about sites. He pointed out that EHDC have been working really hard to get numbers reduced for the district. Apart from taking it direct to Angela Rayner MP they have also engaged Kings Counsel who have advised that in their opinion numbers would not be changed under challenge.

Councillor Hill went on to inform the meeting that there is a public consultation on gov.uk at the moment about changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and increasing numbers of housing, and YOU, the public, can respond to that consultation. You have the power, and it is important that you use it. The Deputy Clerk agreed to put the link to that consultation on the Town Council Facebook page and asked that people then share it to the various groups in the town.

Councillor Tansey then continued, to say that what we are hoping to do this evening is to pass the Neighbourhood Plan onto the next stage of the democratic process to give everyone in Alton the opportunity to comment.

John Chubb pointed out that if the sites are in the DRAFT plan, which goes to Regulation 14 consultation, then the Town Council and ANPSG can collect a body of evidence, rather than relying on anecdotal evidence, which enables them to take a much stronger position whichever direction the public decides they want to go with the next stage of the plan. The Council is committed to addressing any issues with good communication.

Councillor Bayliss offered a huge thank you to the ANPSG, who are mainly volunteers and have put in hours and hours to make a difference to our community. Thank you to all of you who have come to share your concerns this evening. He went on to say he does not want the housing either. He also does not like the process as he says it can be so divisive and we really should be working together.

Councillor Bayliss went on to say that we have the opportunity to conduct a very thorough consultation and get the best evidence we can across all the sites in Alton. He said he is fully expecting to take some sites out after the consultation.

One theme that has been shown to be important is the height of the land. The current contour line is set at 130m and has been since the first version of the Alton Neighbourhood Plan. The site at north Alton would breach that and so if it were included that policy would have to be changed, which would put the higher land in other areas of the town, including Windmill Hill, at risk.

He said that it is his understanding that the consultation can also get views on sites not included in the draft plan, and so he would like to see questions and opportunities for the public to comment on development in the north of Alton.

This is the opportunity to get quality feedback from the people of Alton on all of the sites, not just the ones that are in the Neighbourhood Plan.

There is of course the option to take out sites altogether and leave it to EHDC, but they don't need to have a referendum and Councillor Bayliss made it clear that he would prefer that the people of Alton get a say.

Councillor Hammond said he has lived in Alton for over forty years. He does not want the housing either. It would be nice just to have a few. However, he went on to tell members of the public that they overestimate the power of the Town Council. He said "We have none". However, you, the public, have some. You can help support us.

He went on to say that the Town Council has a choice of three things:

1. Delay, as per Councillor Kellermann's suggestion. The advantage is that EHDC might have more information on numbers, although probably not very soon. The disadvantage is that we could be left without a plan as the new one will not be completed by 2026, and we would be dangerously exposed to speculative development.
2. We could go ahead with the Regulation 14 consultation with a 'no allocation'. That would be great and would give me an easy life...for a while! Until the first application comes in for a development on Windmill Hill, then we will have no evidence to fight it.
3. Go to Regulation 14 consultation with the draft plan we have here. Then you can all have your say. That is also the first time the statutory consultees will also have their say.

So three options, and none of them are perfect, but everyone here has spent a lot of time thinking about it and no decision will be taken lightly.

Councillor Kellermann then raised a point of order, saying that he had already proposed a deferral and that should have been dealt with. We should not be having discussions about the issue. The Mayor said she had promised all councillors would get the opportunity to speak and it was their right to debate the matter, and for the public to hear the debate, before councillors made a decision on the agenda item.

A member of the public asked if it was correct that sites could not be added in later. Councillor Kellermann said that is not true. He said he had spent an hour and a half on the telephone to Adam Harvey today and the public are being misled. You can suggest anything you want. There is lots of scaremongering going on. The Neighbourhood Plan may have lots of good things in it, but it is all wishful thinking. You are not going to get any of the good stuff, you're only going to get the bad stuff – the housing. The power is yours. Push back, fight these developments and urge your councillors to stand against it. The plan is flawed and should not be pushed through.

Councillor Chubb said yes, pushing back on the plan is good, and making sure the plan is inclusive is important, but refusing all development is not constructive. He said he thinks we should go to Regulation 14, but we should do it with a plan that is correct and that we can all get behind.

Several members of the public commented that they wanted to see north Alton included in the draft plan.

A member of the public said she is a geography teacher and is about to buy a house in Holybourne. She wants to know what risk assessments are done and therefore who is liable if her house floods because of new developments. How do you get compensated. She said she understands there must be developments but there are new ways of doing it, and she mentioned a place called Bedzed in South London as an example.

Councillor Chubb pointed out that the draft plan has policies on all those things, including flooding.

Mr Janes of the Holybourne Village Association pointed out that the District Council has only asked the Neighbourhood Plan to allocate 700 houses, whereas it has included 1700.

Councillor Bayliss pointed out that sites could be taken out depending on the outcome of the consultation and that if the Town Council chooses to include all sites for consultation, including those in north Alton, there will be even more than 1700, but it will give residents the opportunity to comment formally on each site during the consultation and he was sorry Mr Janes was so angry about it.

Councillor Hill pointed out that before including any more sites they would need to be assessed, which takes significant time.

Mr Fitzgibbon, resident and former member of the ANPSG, commented that the public were never given the opportunity to comment on the Town Council's opinion of Neatham Down. Councillor Hill pointed out that it was a response to a public consultation on which any member of the public could also comment.

Mr Rowland Bucknell asked why the council said at the June meeting that people could submit additional sites to go in the plan but had not included any of them.

Councillor Kellermann said he wants it minuted that Standing Orders were not followed as other councillors were allowed to speak after he had proposed a deferral. He said he had two further amendments to propose, however Councillor Bayliss said that as he had now had time to consider, he would like to second Councillor Kellermann's original proposal to defer, in order that they could include all sites.

Councillor Hammond said that ‘all sites’ is a very broad term and Councillor Hill added that it is rather vague and has no timeline attached to it. He pointed out that Regulation 14 is just the first of many regulations we have to go through and to defer yet again puts us in serious danger of having no Neighbourhood Plan, as every site which goes into the draft must have a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) which takes many months to obtain. Councillor Hammond went on to say that he has a problem with the amendment as it is, as it would cause many problems, but he would like to suggest that the draft plan does go to the Regulation 14 consultation, while making sure that all sites that have been screened out are shown in the consultation so people can see why they were screened out and comment on absolutely everything.

1. On the proposal of Councillor Bayliss, seconded by Councillor Kellermann, it was

RESOLVED

To DEFER the Regulation 14 consultation to prepare a revised Draft Neighbourhood Plan, to include all sites in the Land Availability Assessment (LAA), to go out to consultation.

With 5 in favour, 4 against and 1 abstention the motion was carried.

Most of the public left at this point and there was a short recess. 3 members of the public remained in the room.

47 **To receive a report from and ask questions of County and District Councillors**

47.1 County Councillor Andrew Joy spoke briefly due to the lateness of the hours. He just wanted to emphasise the importance of using the ‘ourhants’ app to report issues around the town and reported that the £132 million shortfall in funding anticipated for the 2025-26 financial year has been revised to £175 million, which is clearly going to have an impact on service provision.

47.2 The following report was received in advance from District Councillor Barbara Tansey:

“East Hampshire District Council Report for Alton Town Council

Full Council meeting on Wednesday 4th September 2024. Report written by Councillor Barbara Tansey, Alton Eastbrooke.

27th August 2024.

Planning: The draft Local Plan has now gone through to Reg 19. The new government has introduced a new National Planning Policy Framework which is out for consultation until 24th September 2024. The new baseline for housing stock need will be set by the dwelling stock estimates and not by household projections as previously. No caps to be applied.

This suggests an increase for East Hampshire planning authority from 575 to 1,074 dwellings per annum. East Hants now requires a 5 year supply again to avoid the ‘tilted balance’. The 5% buffer is restored. This will mean an increase from 2,375 dwellings to 5,126 dwellings across East Hampshire. Although we are at reg 19 there is no exception for us, despite the SDNP, because we are more than 200 dwellings below the new requirement. The Local Plan must be ready for examination not later than December 2026. There is an emphasis on affordable housing and social rents, on new infrastructure for sustainable transport, sustainable development, education infrastructure particularly early years, and to

support modern economies including digital. Onshore wind and other renewable energy sources infrastructure is supported. East Hampshire's response to the consultation will be discussed in the Local Plan working group which I am on, in September, followed by an all member briefing to all district councillors.

Waste collection/fly tipping in Alton car parks. Following complaints received by Cllr Young and myself about unlocked overflowing commercial bins in parking bays, and waste bags fly tipped in EHDC car parks in the town centre, particularly Lady Place and Bank, we arranged for an on site meeting with the Community Response team and met them, along with Sam from ATC, on Tuesday 30th July. We inspected all 9 Alton Town centre car parks. The response team are taking the issues we discussed back to aim at a solution involving clearly marked bin store areas in the car parks, and licences for all businesses that need to use them, requiring the bins to be locked.

We also discussed the 2 shopping trolleys in the River Wey near Costa. The Community Response team were unsure who was now responsible for clearing the river of this kind of detritus. They resolved to find out and let us know, although we have not yet heard back from them. It is therefore good to know that the Alton Society have very recently dealt with the issue and removed the trolleys. However there needs to be better communication and response from EHDC in future. To further this end, district councillor Young and myself are attending a meeting at the Town Hall on 6th September with some local residents, HCC and EHDC emergency planning, ATC, and the Environment Agency, to discuss aspects of the River Wey in Alton and we will raise this matter of responsibility and communication at that time.

Relocating Alton CAB and Alton Food Bank in long term accommodation. I am working alongside Cllrs Young, Smart, and Shah, EHDC officers Chris Patterson, Danielle Friedman-Brown and Carolyn Shepherd, ATC officers, and managers of the respective facilities, to identify, and secure funding for, more suitable, permanent accommodation for Alton Citizens Advice Bureau and Alton Food Bank in Alton. Their current locations in the retail units below the Town Hall are inadequate in anything but the short to medium term. We are looking at various options in public buildings in Alton. Following an initial Teams meeting on 12th July we have two onsite meetings planned for 18th September and 11th October 2024.

Grants EHDC

1. **Councillor Grants.** The window for applying for these ends at the end of February 2025. However some Alton district councillors have already allocated all of their allowance to support local initiatives, and most have only a few hundred pounds left.

This follows removal of £1000 for each councillor, the section of the grant previously reserved for environmental causes. This environmental funding is now in a central 'climate fund' and residents/groups apply to that pot directly for climate change related funding.

2. **Grow up fund** launched on 16th August and closes on 16th September 2024. There is a pot of £130,000 for enriching biodiversity projects, community gardens, rural crafts etc of between £5,000 and £25,000 each.

Affordable Housing A new cross party affordable housing Task and Finish Group has been launched and will meet in September, and then 3 weekly. I am one of the 6 members of the group, headed by Cllr. John Smart. We hope to input on affordable housing into the Local Plan housing development plans emerging, and influence the building of more affordable homes, with social housing rents, run by the council as well as by housing associations.

Afghan families who served with the UK Armed Forces and as a direct result are now in danger if they remain in Afghanistan are being relocated to Whitehill & Bordon empty MOD properties where they will be given support by the Ministry of Defence to start their new lives in the UK. The first two families were expected to arrive on Friday 23rd August with three further families due a week later. District Councillors have been asked to support

their transition into their new lives here, by dealing with any questions from residents, especially in the light of the recent anti-migrant protests around the UK. The Afghan families will be supported to find work. They are classed neither as refugees, asylum seekers, or migrants, but as here 'because they helped the UK in time of need'. For further information about the government's Afghan relocation policy please see this link <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy/afghan-relocations-and-assistance-policy-information-and-guidance>

The next EHDC full council meeting will be held on Thursday 26th September at Monterey House.

EHDC councillors received a verbal briefing on the evening of 27th July from Gill Mellor, head of operations at EHDC that operations is beginning the process of contracting to a new style streamlined council. This is because of a £1.7m per annum gap in funding due to various increases in costs and decreases in income since Covid. No written report has yet been circulated. As a result there will be 26 redundancies at EHDC coming over the next few months. This will save around £270,000 per annum. There is as yet no information on which departments will be affected and we are reassured that front line services shouldn't be affected."

Councillor Tansey then spoke at the meeting to make a couple of corrections to her report and highlight the main points in it. The corrections were:

- The draft Local Plan is still at the regulation 18 stage, it has not yet progressed to Regulation 19. However, the government has made it clear that they do not want local plans stalling so it might yet go to Regulation 19. EHDC are taking advice from central government and the planning inspectorate.
- EHDC Councillors received a verbal briefing on 27th August rather than 27th July.

48 **Unit 16, Market Square – Community Use – Citizens Advice**

On the proposal of Councillor Hill, seconded by Councillor Treacher, it was

RESOLVED

To confirm approval of an agreement for the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) to book Unit 16 on the basis of 2 days a week (Monday and Tuesday) from 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. for a period of 12 months, or sooner after which time a further review will be undertaken as required.

All in favour.

49 **Statement of Accounts to 31st July 2024**

Detailed financial reports were tabled as per Councillor bundles.

On the proposal of Councillor Chubb, seconded by Councillor Hammond, it was

RESOLVED

to confirm approval of:

1. The balance sheet dated 31st July 2024

2. **The Income and Expenditure account to 31st July 2024**
3. **The bank reconciliations for the Unity Account and the CCLA Deposit & Property Fund Accounts**
4. **The Payments over £500 covering 1st-31st July 2024**
5. **The transfer of funds (£150,000) from the Current Account to the Deposit Account**

In favour: Councillors Eyre, Bayliss, Chubb, Hammond, Hill, O'Brien, Tansey, Treacher and Wadman
Abstained: Councillor Kellermann

50 **Grant Applications**

50.1 On the proposal of Councillor Hammond, seconded by Councillor Eyre, it was

RESOLVED

To APPROVE a grant under Section 137(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 in the sum of £225 (two hundred and twenty five pounds) for Alton Community Exchange (ACE), to cover setting up of the website and the first year maintenance, and offer use of the Community Hub at 16 Market Square free of charge for meetings and assistance with advertising, printing and copying at the discretion of the Clerk.

All in favour.

50.2 On the proposal of Councillor Hill, seconded by Councillor Kellermann, it was

RESOLVED

To REFUSE the requested £300 grant for the A31 Primary Care Network

All in favour

51 **Request for Landlord's Consent**

51.1 On the proposal of Councillor Bayliss, seconded by Councillor Hill, it was

RESOLVED

To APPROVE Landlord's Consent for The Kings Arms to make internal alterations and install a new dividing stud wall that runs front to back of the first floor of the building, subject to any necessary Planning Permission / Listed Building Consent

All in favour.

51.2 On the proposal of Councillor Bayliss, seconded by Councillor Hill, it was

RESOLVED

To APPROVE Landlord's Consent for Dementia Friendly Alton to install secondary glazing at the Assembly Rooms

All in favour.

51.3 On the proposal of Councillor Bayliss, seconded by Councillor Hill it was

RESOLVED

To APPROVE Landlord's Consent allow Alton Rugby Club to install solar panels on the roof of the clubhouse

All in favour.

52 **Review of Alton Town Council Policies & Regulations**

Taking each policy in turn:-

On the proposal of Councillor Bayliss, seconded by Councillor Eyre, it was

RESOLVED

to DEFER the approval of the updated Anti-bribery and Corruption Policy to the October meeting, to allow for further amendments to be proposed by the Staffing Committee.

All in favour.

On the proposal of Councillor Eyre, seconded by Councillor Bayliss, it was

RESOLVED

to APPROVE the updated Flexible Working Policy as tabled.

All in favour.

On the proposal of Councillor Eyre, seconded by Councillor Bayliss, it was

RESOLVED

to APPROVE the updated Paternity Leave Policy as tabled.

All in favour.

On the proposal of Councillor Eyre, seconded by Councillor Bayliss, it was

RESOLVED

to APPROVE the updated Carers in the Workplace Policy as tabled.

All in favour.

On the proposal of Councillor Eyre, seconded by Councillor Bayliss, it was

RESOLVED

to APPROVE the updated Recruitment of Ex-offenders Policy as tabled.

All in favour.

53 **Jubilee Bungalows Roof Repairs**

On the proposal of Councillor Eyre, seconded by Councillor O'Brien, it was

RESOLVED

To appoint contractor B to undertake roof repairs/maintenance at 1 and 2 Jubilee Playing Fields Bungalows.

In favour: Councillors Eyre, Bayliss, Hammond, Hill, Kellermann, O'Brien, Tansey, Treacher and Wadman

Abstained: Councillor Chubb

Councillors also requested that the Town Clerk ensures that loft insulation is installed, subsequent to completion of the roof works, and approved under delegated authority.

54 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

On the proposal of Councillor Eyre, seconded by Councillor O'Brien, it was

RESOLVED

That in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the public and press be temporarily excluded

All in favour.

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION

55 **Staffing Matters**

The confidential report circulated in advance was noted.

56 **Licence to Occupy - Capra Espresso Ltd**

The confidential report circulated in advance was noted, with the Town Clerk required to get written confirmation from the licensee as requested.

The meeting closed at 10.16pm

Appendix A

Public representations – item 7 – Alton Neighbourhood Plan Regulation 14 consultation

(Minute ref 45.4)

The following representations have been provided by the residents themselves:

1. Jerry Janes, Holybourne Village Association:

“Preparation of the Draft Neighbourhood Plan:

- The qualifying body must prepare a draft Neighbourhood Plan, including the policies and proposals that reflect the community's vision and objectives. It does not.
- The draft plan should be based on evidence and the outcomes of any previous community engagement activities. It is not.
- The draft plan should also be in line with national planning policy, local development plans, and strategic objectives. The Holybourne Village Association recognises and accepts this.
- Voluntary and community organizations representing specific groups, such as young people, the elderly, or disabled people, should be involved to ensure their needs are considered. They have not been.

In order to pass the inspection of the process of compiling the Neighbourhood Plan, the inspector must be assured that due process has been followed. We are perplexed by the omission of sites from North Alton in the draft plan. Can I ask if any members of the steering group have ever been involved in any way in opposing planning applications in north Alton? If so, where in the minutes of meetings of the ANPSG can I find this declaration of a Conflict of Interests? Similarly, where can I find recorded in the minutes of their meetings a declaration of conflict of interest by the planning advisor who used to be Clerk to Binsted Parish Council in whose patch Neatham Down lies? If these conflicts of interest have not been recorded, then clearly, due process has not been followed and once again, the integrity of the ANPSG and its leadership has been called into question.”

2. District Councillor Ginny Boxall:

“Neighbourhood plans were introduced by the 2011 Localism act, done well they can be a powerful tool for local residents to shape and influence where new development goes and what infrastructure is needed to support this. It can protect or propose the creation of open spaces (Green Gaps, Nature reserves / wildlife corridors, allotments, sports pitches, play areas, parks and gardens, and important historic assets).

However done badly they can create division and friction within the community they aim to serve and subsequently may fail at referendum.

Delivering a good neighbourhood plan for Alton is key to its success and to take the community with it.

No one wants the neighbourhood plan to fail but to succeed the steering group must make sure all sections of the community are listened to and engaged with and their concerns and preferences are considered within the body of the evidence which will be submitted to the planning inspectorate and form the basis of the neighbourhood plan.

A successful neighbourhood plan will deliver the best possible outcome for its community and future generations to come. It will do its best to protect and enhance the Landscape of the town setting whilst delivering the mix of housing that is needed including social and affordable housing and can be a powerful tool to regenerate town centre areas using a brownfield first approach.

My hope is that there is still time to get the plan right and that the wishes of our residents will be reflected in the plan that will be eventually produced.

Question to ATC cllrs

I would respectfully ask Alton Town Council why back in June did the Council put forward an invitation to residents to come forward with alternative sites when you must have known procedurally it was too late for any such sites to be considered?

At our residents group presentation last week when we asked if North Alton could be added to the list of sites to be considered the ATC planning consultant said “ No it is too late to consider it “ it would be too much work !

We feel we have been played and the invitation was a sop to placate those attending the June meeting,

We feel you owe us an explanation”

3. Sara Whitwell, Save Windmill Hill Fields:

“Hello councillors, I’m Sara Whitwell.

I’ve been an Alton resident and lived in this area since I was 2 years old, when my father moved into Salisbury close, and our house backed onto WH, until his passing 3 years ago.

I’ve mentioned my father to you all before and you will have seen his passionate poems on Alton. He grew up in London and moved to Alton in 1982. He appreciated it, especially as he grew up in London. If he was here today, he would be stood up here, so I felt I had to.

I have many fond memories of Windmill Hill and its surrounding fields. As a child my friends and I played in the fields. Back then there was only us in them. No one around.

I'm definitely not alone when I say I cannot bear to see more houses being built in Alton. I think we've had our fair share here and our amenities, services and infrastructure is on its limit and stretched far beyond what we should receive and expect.

However, we find ourselves in a situation where we once again have to find room to build more houses and now with Labour in nationally they have doubled the number in this conservative constituency (which of, I support neither)! So, I feel for you, as you once again have become the enemy, but...

You cannot and should not build on WH fields. As a town council you need to work and protect your residents.

Taking away this area that is precious to so many Alton residents will be criminal. It provides and promotes healthy well being and a few reasons why you should not be including WH into the local plan at the recommendation of your Alton Neighbourhood Plan steering group are...

This area and fields provide needed areas for physical and mental health.

As you know exercise if it be walking, running, if it be with or without the children or dog/s (when I was a child we actually used to take the cat for a walk there) is vitally important to people.

The 360 degree views. This will be ruined. When it's gone it's gone!

Our children... their mental and physical health. This open area is free for parents to take their children. There's not a lot else in the area is free!

Nature, a huge part of these fields, with sky lark in the skies, deer running wild, and not forgetting the dormouse, just to mention a few of the wildlife that have their homes and live there.

Our children growing up in this area need the memories that I had, in their lives.

Final comment If we wanted to live in a place like Basingstoke, we would have moved there!

People move and live in Alton because it's a wonderful place to live. I travel all over the world with my job regularly and I can tell you that we live in a beautiful place in this country and in this world. Don't ruin it and build on Windmill Hill Fields!

Finally, we are not some mafia group out to get you Alton Town Councillors, or make your voluntary jobs harder, however we love our town and that's why we are fighting for it!"

The following representations have been précised:

4. Paul Fitzgibbon, Alton resident:

I have lived in Alton and then Holybourne for over 30 years. I am not here to complain about Holybourne being in the plan, I do not have a problem with that. I am deeply respectful of all the councillors – they have a highly stressful job to do and there are no easy answers. I served on the ANPSG for some time and

attended every meeting in that time. In my opinion the draft plan misrepresents the feedback from the previous community engagement sessions, and there is apparent misrepresentation of EHDC feedback on sites in the north of Alton, which suggests that the ANPSG are not being even handed. While some comments are arguably false the plan is certainly not transparent. I feel the council must demonstrate that it is listening to the public and asked that the draft plan be corrected as he had already discussed with Councillors Hammond and Hill.

5. James Willis, Alton resident:

I have been a GP in Alton throughout my career and my wife was a teacher here for hers.

I understand the urgency to approve the plan and the difficulty that this poses for the ANPSG and councillors.

However, one of their reasons for including South Alton whilst opposing Neatham Down is that the latter will be a car-dependent development. Having once been the footpath warden on Windmill Hill and spent many years walking, cycling and even tobogganing there, I am certain that very few people would walk up and over the hill into Alton on a daily basis and that this would surely also be a car-dependent development.

I am also concerned that there appears to be no screening on the proposed development site against noise from the very busy Alton bypass (A31).

Windmill Hill is one of the loveliest sites in southern England with views to and from the South Downs National Park.

Question to the council: It seems that EHDC have been able to consider a wider area than the ANPSG. Should not the number of homes in Alton be reduced?

6. Andy Vogel, Alton resident:

Question to the council: I wish to ask how the consultation would work, and is it true that if Windmill Hill was rejected by the people of Alton in the consultation, would it prevent people from building there in the future?

7. Jak Rowland Bucknell, Alton resident:

I am a resident of Windmill Hill. I do not feel we were listened to at the meeting in June. Alton is a godsend and it is devastating to see it now potentially destroyed. All the sites in North Alton seem to have been forgotten.

Question to the council: If Windmill Hill is in the plan and it gets shot down at referendum will it be saved or will the question keep coming back time and time again?

8. Tim Burns, Alton resident:

I wish to add my voice of opposition to any development at Windmill Hill. I was opposed to the Ackender Wood development and am now sad to just see bulldozers and concrete crushers there all the time.

9. Dawn Ayres, Alton resident:

My husband taught at Amery Hill and we both feel enough is enough. Because it is not in the South Downs National Park and Petersfield is not taking their fair share Alton is just getting dumped on again. We have had enough. The skyline was breached at the Selborne Road development, which we had always been assured would be 'protected'. Windmill Hill is a valuable asset to the town and must be saved.

10. Joanne Ryan, Holybourne resident:

I live on London Road in Holybourne and am here representing other residents of London Road who were unable to attend this evening.

I feel one of the main themes tonight seems to be around integrity and representation. I have read that EHDC officers have advised in confidence that more building would be needed in Alton than had already been stated. I am very concerned about the 'in confidence' part as things like that should not be secret from the public.

Holybourne is built on a water table and there have been many documented incidents of flooding over the years. It will flood if there is more building there. There are many springs in the fields there which run down through London Road where there are many Grade II listed buildings with culverts and they have to pay to pump the water. If those fields are built on where will the water go? The fields at the moment can only cope with so much and this would reduce if they were covered in concrete.

I, along with other Holybourne residents, took part in a series of traffic surveys in the village. Residents came out in force to undertake these surveys around the whole village, and in the one hour I counted the cars, which was 7-8am on a school day, there were 860 cars that passed me.

English Heritage also had a sign up which has been removed and they have said they will only replace it if the landowner applies for it.

I feel that no one has consulted us properly and all our comments and objections have not been taken into account.

11. Jane Davies, Alton resident:

I am also from Holybourne and in the interests of time I endorse everything my neighbour has just said.

12. Rob Fowell, Alton resident:

I am 46 years old and have lived on Windmill Hill all my life. This evening the council must decide whether to take the proposed plan to a Regulation 14 consultation. What I have to say will not be popular in the light of everything else that has been said, but people must realise that the numbers are dictated by central government. We may not like it but those numbers are what we have been given, so where do we put them? 1700 could easily become 3400 because of the new proposals. That is fact. Doing nothing is not an option. The numbers will not go in the SDNP, they will go around the edges of it. The current Neighbourhood Plan draft has some really good policies, and we risk derailing all that because of the housing allocations. I do not want to lose Windmill Hill either. Everyone is here in this room because they care.

My view is that we need to look longer term and there are ways we can do this. Yes there will be fields and green spaces that go under. We don't want fields full of lego box houses, we want something that integrates with Alton. I would therefore like to ask councillors to look beyond the immediate horizon and work pro-actively with developers so we can take control.

Question 1: Will councillors consider moving forward with a 'no allocations' plan?

Question 2: Will councillors work to make sure any development really works for Alton?

13. Jonathan Durante, Alton resident:

As you can tell, I am American, but I have lived in Alton for a few years now. I can see that there is a desire in the draft plan to allocate areas for conservation. I am especially interested in the space between area 22 and area 13. **Question:** In what capacity has this been discussed?

I am very happy to see how this town comes together. Windmill Hill seems to be a key area of the town.

Appendix B

Questions to Alton Town Council – Full Council Meeting 4th September 2024

Jerry Janes:

1. Can I ask if any members of the steering group have ever been involved in any way in opposing planning applications in north Alton?

Mike Heelis and John Grace attended the appeal for a planning application in north Alton.

2. If so, where in the minutes of meetings of the ANPSG can I find this declaration of a Conflict of Interests?

There are no pecuniary interests to declare.

3. Similarly, where can I find recorded in the minutes of their meetings a declaration of conflict of interest by the planning advisor who used to be Clerk to Binsted Parish Council in whose patch Neatham Down lies?

For clarification, the former Town Clerk lived in that parish for a time but was never Clerk of Binsted Parish Council. She has no pecuniary interest.

Ginny Boxall:

4. I would respectfully ask Alton Town Council why back in June did the Council put forward an invitation to residents to come forward with alternative sites when you must have known procedurally it was too late for any such sites to be considered?

This is not the case – full detail of the responses received are contained in the published site assessment report: August 2024.

Paul Fitzgibbon:

5. Please confirm that the draft will be corrected prior to the Regulation 14 consultation.

Yes, all errors and omissions will be undertaken and please refer to the resolution passed at the meeting for further clarification and confirmation.

James Willis:

6. Question to the council: It seems that EHDC have been able to consider a wider area than the ANPSG. Should not the number of homes in Alton be reduced?

In reference to the Local Plan, the current housing number proposed for East Hampshire sees an increase of 86% to 1074 homes a year. 57% of East Hampshire is National Park. Alton is the only town designated as a tier 1 settlement in the district and awaits a further update about how many it will be allocated.

Andy Vogel:

7. How would the consultation work and is it true that if Windmill Hill were rejected by the people of Alton in the consultation it would prevent people from building there in the future?

The Regulation 14 consultation is a prescribed formal consultation whereby the residents who are on the electoral role are given the opportunity to comment on the “draft plan”, together with statutory consultees. Following the 6-week consultation period all responses are reviewed, and the draft plan updated, should the response indicate no support. When completed it goes back to Alton Town Council for formal sign off to go forward to Regulation 15 (with EHDC – the planning authority) for a further period of consultation. Any amendments and feedback can again be made before it goes to the inspector and then to a referendum. If it were rejected and removed from the draft Neighbourhood Plan it would not prevent a planning application from being submitted but it could be used as evidence should this happen.

Jak Rowland Bucknell:

8. If Windmill Hill is in the plan and it gets shot down at referendum will it be saved or will the question keep coming back time and time again?

There is no guarantee it can be saved. Land owner(s) can put in planning applications to EHDC.

Rob Fowell:

9. Question 1: Will councillors consider moving forward with a ‘no allocations’ plan?

All options will be considered at the appropriate time.

10. Question 2: Will councillors work to make sure any development really works for Alton?

The council always strives to ensure the best outcomes for the people of Alton, but it has to be noted that Alton Town Council are not the planning authority and act as consultees only.

Jonathan Durante:

11. I can see that there is a desire in the draft plan to allocate areas for conservation. I am especially interested in the space between area 22 and area 13. Question: In what capacity has this been discussed?

With regards the plan in Appendix A of the draft plan, 3.22 in the plan shows that the South Alton group of sites was reduced from 1080 to 900. This resulted from further capacity work by the site promoter in terms of responding to comments

made in respect of landscape impact and concerns raised by the ANPSG about the visual impact above the 130m contour line.

Jak Rowland Bucknell:

12. Why did the Council invite people to put forward additional sites by the end of July and then not include them?

Please see the site allocation report which is published on the ATC website and details the responses received and actions taken. It is all clearly in the public domain.