



ALTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP MEETING NOTES

MONDAY, 9TH SEPTEMBER 2024

In attendance:

Mike Heelis – Chair (MH)
David Allan – Vice Chair (DA)
Rob Fowell – Community Representative (RF)
Richard Parratt – Community Representative (RP)
John Bound – Community Representative (JB)
Councillor Suzie Burns – EHDC Representative (SB)
Pat Harris – Town Clerk (PMH)

Councillor Annette Eyre (ATC)
Leah Coney – ONH Consultant – on zoom

1. Apologies:

Apologies were received from John Grace (JG), Peter Holden (PH), Councillor Graham Hill (GH)
Not required: Adam Harvey – EHDC Planning Policy Manager

Ex-officio – Councillor John Chubb

2. Updates since Last Meeting & Actions Arising:

2.1 MH opened the meeting by giving a debrief on:

Town Councillors Neighbourhood Plan Workshop held on Wednesday 28th Aug:

- Present: Alton Town Councillors (TC), Mike Heelis (MH) & Leah Coney (LC) (Neighbourhood Steering Group representatives) Vanessa Gist (VG) and Councillor Ginny Boxhall (GB) (representing various resident groups).
- Presentation was given by VG asking for delays and changes to the current draft of the NP.
- Town Council position was that a Reg 14 full allocation response would provide evidence to reduce or resist any allocation on sites which the public asked to be removed or commented upon.
- There was criticism against MH and the ANPSG for “working behind closed doors and not on an open basis”.
- There was a challenge from GB to MH for secretly engaging with Developers. MH robustly denied this and insisted GB retract the accusation which she did. However, LC stated that engagement had taken place. Various Councillors questioned this, but engagement is facilitated in the ANPSG Charter.
- VG and GB sought to change the draft plan to include North Alton. (Not included in their written proposal). Discussion over why these sites excluded. If to be included, then SEA would need to be undertaken again resulting in more delay.

- TC left VG and GB under the impression that the ANPSG recommendation was for a full allocation at Reg 14. MH made it clear that the ANPSG position is for a non-allocation.
- MH, LC, VG and GB left the meeting, and the general feeling was that the TC would vote for a full allocation and proceed with Reg 14 at the full council meeting next week. Confirmed the next day by PMH.

2.2 Debrief following Wednesday 04th September Full Council Meeting

- Meeting held in Assembly Rooms with the main hall completely filled with people standing around the sides.
- Minutes are available on the Town Council website. Yet to be added is an Annex with public questions and responses to those questions.
- Very vociferous with JJ shouting out that he is not a pressure group, but chair of Holybourne Village Association naming “Mike Heelis” as clearly the responsible person.
- Much made over accuracy of public engagement findings from Sep 23 public engagement session.
- Councillor Kellerman very critical of ANPSG and especially the Sep 23 engagement process. Thought post it notes and written cards were inappropriate. Insists that for Reg 14 modern and fully functional online system is used.
- The bottom line throughout from both Councillors and public that nobody wants the additional development.

2.3 Response to TC Prevarication and Lack of Support

- I (MH) am standing down from ANPSG Chair and member of the Group effective at the end of this meeting.
- Cllr Graham Hill (GH) has informed me he is standing down forthwith.
- Peter Holden (PH) is standing down and has sent me the following mail:
Cllr Suzie Burns (SB) also confirm she is standing down.

Subsequent to the end of the meeting, the following resignations have since been received:

- John Grace
- Richard Parratt

2.4 Chair’s Recommendation to the ANPSG (as at 09 Sep 23) as to action required now

1. Update Scenario Planning doc to version 3 to reflect TC motion. Insert all LAA sites.
2. Update draft Site Assessment Report to include demands of new TC motion for NP.
3. Make an application for an updated/new SEA for amended housing allocations per LAA.
4. Once a target date appears for output of serial 3 add time to review and amend then select a preferred Regulation 14 ANP TC sign off and actual consultation date.
5. From 4 above develop updates to the programme schedule.
6. Consider changes to the draft NP as follows:

- a. Incorporate JB suggested amendments if all agree them.
 - b. Begin to draft new allocation policies for inclusion in plan.
 - c. Consider any consequential changes to other areas within plan as a result of policy changes.
7. Engage with EHDC to inform them of ANP intent and timeline.
 8. Engage with EHDC planners to seek their intent with Local Plan and how this will mesh with updated intent of NP. There will be more housing requirements I am sure.
 9. Publicise all activities to public by TC website and ANP Facebook page.
 10. I (MH) will be happy to assist any new Chair of the ANPSG with plan orientation issues outside of formal meetings.
- 2.5 DA advised that he was aware of MH decision and wished to formally record his thanks for the tremendous work done not only on this NP but on previous iterations – MH always had the town at his heart which had been ripped out by the personal attacks on him. On behalf of the group – thank you.

DA then advised that his own position was that, forget the pressures on the Steering Group – his concern rested entirely on the fact that Alton Town Council consistently refused to accept the advice of the Steering Group and its Consultants and “kicked the can down the road” and felt that the latest decision taken was short-sighted and that there was zero chance of anything being acceptable to the public – no allocation was doomed and all sites being included will continue to pitch one against the other. His personal position was untenable and he would be standing down.

LC advised that Alton Town Council needs to work through the implications of including “all sites” and what that meant.

It was agreed that the group do not want to lose the good work that has already been undertaken and that the Design Code and Town Centre Masterplan would be submitted into the Local Plan as that work was sound.

2.5 Matters Arising from Previous Meeting –

John Bound advised that he felt that the previous meeting notes had not included his request for an action point to be formally recorded. The following e-mail communication is included in full in order to correct the omission and to provide context to the agreed required amendment to the Meeting Notes of the previous meeting which is corrected as below for the record:

Hi John,

Thanks for your comment concerning the Steering Group minutes from last week. I have two comments:

- *I agree with the Town Clerk that any inaccuracies can be corrected following comments from any attendee at the the minuted meeting at the next meeting. The draft minutes were checked, put out to all in good faith and hence yours or any other ANPSG member has an opportunity to comment.*

- *I did indeed make a statement which was premeditated by comments you had made in an e-mail as to what is set out in the draft NP. What I said as I recall was that changes "could" be made to the draft plan as long as these were not to or have any effect on the draft policies. If we are to make the changes then I would expect all ANPSG members to understand what changes are being made, be able to submit their own comments and sign off on the amended plan before it goes to the next stage (Regulation 14). To make any rushed through changes ahead of the important meeting tomorrow evening would be insufficient time to complete this process.*

I trust this clears up the point and apologise that the statement I made was not minuted as a meeting record.

Regards - Mike Heelis

On 3 Sep 2024, at 12:02, John Bound wrote:

Hi Pat,

Thanks for the meeting notes of the ANP SG on 28th August.

I believe there is an omission from the meeting notes. You may recall that I sent you all a detailed email highlighting factual inaccuracies in the way that the public consultation results, and EHDC's response to the scenarios, had been communicated in the draft ANP.

At the end of last week's meeting, Mike specifically responded to my concerns by saying that the current draft ANP would be amended in line with the specific points in that email and that, as the current draft ANP is still a draft, amendments are to be expected and can be included before it goes to Reg 14.

This is my recollection of the situation and I believe it needs to be noted in the official record as an action point. As a result, the draft ANP requires these amendments to be made prior to tomorrow's ATC meeting.

Kind Regards - John Bound

3. Review of Housing Allocation Approach and Draft Neighbourhood Plan/Site Allocations/Confirmation of Policies

- 3.1 To be determined by Alton Town Council at their Full Council meeting on 4th September. All documentation and supporting material has been published. The version of the Draft Plan contains Full Allocation to go forward to Reg 14 Consultation.
- 3.2 Whilst the work contained in the Draft NP had been completed; following the Resolution of the Town Council on 4th September the following actions are required:
 - LC would need to unpick the Draft NP in order to satisfy the Town Council's requirement to put all sites forward – whether intended or not this is an exercise purely to put in and then take out.
 - Pause Reg 14 until such time as the above has been undertaken.
 - Comms Plan to be drafted by JB and a Press Release prepared (jointly agreed with the Town Council to inform the public.
 - PH to arrange a meeting with EHDC to understand District's position in respect of the Local Plan.

7. Any Other Business

- 7.1 The group discussed the next steps and confirmed their willingness to meet and assist any new ANPSG members during any transition period.

8. Next Meeting of the Steering Group

There is no planned meeting at this stage. The next meeting will be confirmed to those remaining members following a decision by Alton Town Council as to next steps which will be discussed at their upcoming Councillor workshop on 23rd September.

The meeting concluded at 3.45 p.m.