

# Alton Community Panel Meeting Notes

## Welcome Session – 6 May 2025



### About the meeting

This was the first ever meeting of the Panel, a diverse group of 15 residents from across the Alton Estate. An opportunity for everyone to get to know each other, and to learn more about how the Panel will work.

12 Panel members attended, along with Kate Batchelor (Programme Manager), Jo Baxter (Community Engagement & Cultural Coordinator) and Anna Singleton (Head of Alton Regeneration) of the Alton Renewal Team, Lucy Smith from architects HTA, and Third Party Chair Daisy Froud.

### What's special about the Alton in the eyes of residents?

Panel members introduced themselves, sharing 1 or 2 things that they particularly like about the estate as a place to live.



### Understanding and communicating the renewal programmes

Kate and Lucy summarised both the **Alton Renewal Plan** (a budget of £5 million covering 30 to 40 projects) and the **wider long-term masterplan and housing regeneration** (a budget of about £100 million). *As the screen wasn't working, detailed slides were not shown; these will instead be shared and circulated at Meeting 2.*

Panel members asked the following questions, stressing that these are all things that both they, and wider residents, need to understand and to be easily able to access information about. **Currently, resident-facing 'comms' can be confusing.**

- **What are the differences between the two programmes and their budgets?** In terms of what they can be spent on, by whom, and when that spend will happen. Many people are not clear on the difference at the moment.
- **Is all this funding secure?** Could it be taken away again, if policies, priorities or Council leadership change? This is particularly worrying for people whose homes are in later stages of the programme.
- **How is the Alton Renewal Plan Budget allocated, and how is that spend tracked?** People want to feel confident that is extra investment, and not a way of paying for things that should be provided anyway.
- **Is there funding that community members can apply for?** Kate clarified that the Alton Renewal Budget is not a grant fund, but that decisions are made about how to spend it via engagement with residents, including now this Panel.
- **What does a Yes vote look like for the ballot on the housing regeneration?** In terms of turnout, voting area, eligibility to vote etc. Would the Panel have a role to play, such as encouraging residents to vote? **And what would be the implications of a No vote?**

It was noted that the £5 million Alton Renewal Plan investment is potentially quite an effective 'sweetener' for a Yes.

## ACTIONS

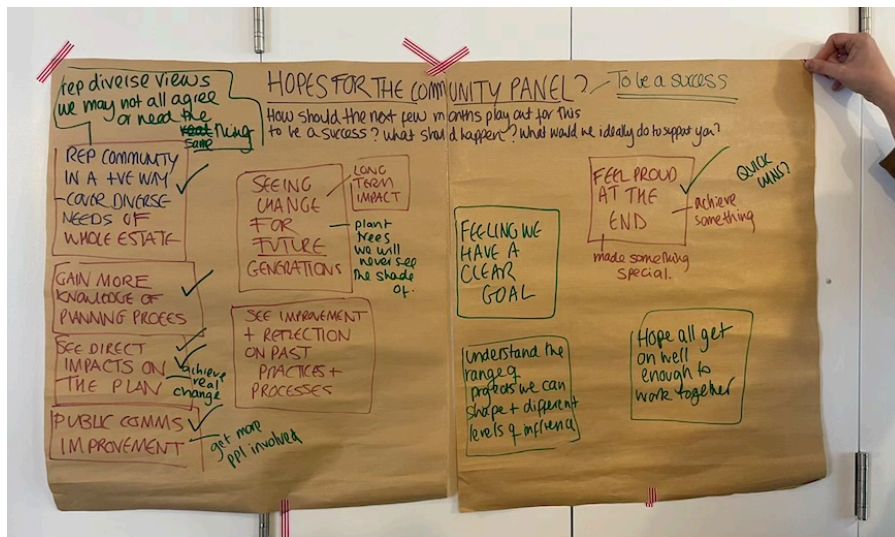
- Detailed answers to the above questions to be drafted and circulated.
- Kate and Lucy to make summary slides for both programmes to share at Meeting 2. To include info on key decisions to be taken: what these are and when. Kate stressed the intention is for the Panel to be included in as many decisions as possible.
- Panel members to read the FAQs about the Panel <https://www.altonrenewal.co.uk/participation-panels/alton-community-panel> and let Jo know if anything is missing or not clear.
- Panel members to let Jo know if they do not wish their photograph taken and/or shared publicly. That is easy for the Team to manage if they know.

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## Panel members' hopes for the Panel: what needs to happen for the Panel to feel like a success?

### The Panel...

1. Needs to represent the *whole* estate community in a positive way. This is a diverse community, with potentially different needs and views, including among Panel members, who may not always agree with each other.
2. Needs to feel that it has a clear goal, and that members understand the range of projects they can shape and different levels of influence that they can have. They need to be able to see a direct impact on the Plan.
3. Wants to achieve real change, in the immediate and the long-term, and to be able to feel proud at the end. This includes influencing 'quick wins' and positive impacts now, and then enabling a legacy for future generations – "planting trees we will never see the shade of."
4. Wants to see reflection on, and improvement of, past practices and processes, including public-facing communications, helping ensure that more people get involved.
5. Wants to gain more knowledge of planning processes.
6. Hopes that they will all get on well enough to work together. Including when they positively disagree! (see 1)



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**NEXT MEETING:** Tuesday 20 May, 4.00- 6.00pm. Focus will be the character/identity of the Alton as a 'design tool'.

**ADVANCE TASK:** Panel members to take a photo (or write a poem/ make a sketch etc.) of something that they feel shows something about the Alton's character/identity – what makes it a special or unique place, and share that with Jo **by Mon 19 May**, along with a short description of what their image shows and why they have shared it.