

Alton Community Panel Meeting Notes (draft)

Meeting 12 – 14 April 2026



Main aims of meeting: (i) Discuss and decide on priority topics for the Panel’s 2026-27 meeting programme.
(ii) Revisit and reflect on priorities for the Masterplan’s main public spaces as post-ballot design gets underway.

This was the first meeting to trial our new structure: an optional first 30 minutes, used to share updates on renewal projects, and to discuss any advance reading, saving the core two hours for focused activity and discussion.

Panel Members: Albert Balogun, Asma Choudhry, Sandra Claringbould, Tatiana Dobрева, Charles Einloth, Simone Johns, Orleen McIntosh, Jane Pavitt, George Mills, Angus Robertson.

Others at meeting: Alton Renewal Team: Kate Batchelor (Head of Place Programme), Charlotte Rowlands (Project Assistant) & Anna Singleton (Head of Alton Regeneration). **Architects HTA:** Tanatswa Borerwe and Iain Sherman.

Third-Party Chair: Daisy Froud.

A. General updates, follow-up on Actions, and Panel questions and business.

- 1. New venue:** from now on Panel meetings will be at Focus Hall: a larger and more accessible space.
- 2. Pre-Election Period (PEP):** in the lead up to the 7 May elections, official restrictions are in place on Council communications, with public announcements limited. This can make it seem as though less is going on, and some activity (such as a new Block A naming shortlist) *is* postponed until after the elections. However Anna reassured the Panel that work on the Masterplan is progressing behind the scenes.
- 3. Panel attendance at engagement events:** although the Panel had asked to be kept informed about these and were then asked to attend the most recent drop-in as ‘homework’, no-one had turned up. Members explained that they were either away or already busy. More notice (at least three to four weeks) was requested.
- 4. Sharing information with others** (members asked for guidance on this). While members are free to discuss the project with fellow residents, and actively encouraged to encourage them in turn to get involved, material on handouts that is not already public, either on the website or in the Library, should not be passed on. Ideas shared at meetings are often at early, exploratory stages - not yet confirmed proposals - and in that context are accompanied by nuanced discussion. **Note:** Panel Meeting Notes will now also be publicly available online.
- 5. Possible shared learning with the Winstanley and York Road Community Panel.** This will be discussed further but could include a visit to the completed Braund Mansions and a show flat.

B. Alton Renewal Plan Updates

This was a new proposed regular item by Kate, with a handout, in response to the Evaluation. **Action:** All agreed it was useful, and to be continued.

- 1. Murals** are now complete, with capacity for further future ones along the Portswood Place car park wall, involving more Trainee Producers. **Action:** Kate to find out whether the local artists are from the Alton itself.
- 2. Lighting improvements** are underway; a further workshop is possible, alongside work on wayfinding.
- 3. Focus Hall** has reopened, plus funding for a clubroom manager and a 3-year arts and culture programme.
- Funding has been secured for a **Play Ranger**, and for a **Voluntary and Community Sector officer** working across the ARP and Winstanley & York Road.
- Three **Community Researchers** are now working with consultants Social Life to support the ARP evaluation. Social Life are the same consultants who are developing the **Brief for the Social Impact Assessment (SIA)**. The SIA is a piece of research that allows the broad, *long-term* impacts of regeneration on people and communities to be measured over a timeframe of 5-10 years, beyond the direct impacts of Masterplan delivery, The first step is creating a meaningful Brief, determining what should be measured and how. A tender process will follow this to appoint consultants to do the work.

C. Setting Priorities for 2026-27 meetings

The ARP Team and Chair had prepared a list of possible topics or themes, shared with the Panel in advance. First, we discussed this as a group at the pre-meeting. Then, individual Members had the chance to make the case for a particular topic. Finally, Members voted individually at, or after, the meeting on their Top 10.

Note: the exercise aimed to establish priorities for discussion, and a flexible ‘pool’ of themes to draw on, rather than to define a fixed programme in advance. Members had many interesting and valid ideas for cross-cutting themes.

Results

Nine Panel Members completed a form. Summary results, with reasons given on forms or discussed at the meeting, are listed below to keep Notes concise. However the full breakdown can be shared with those who would like it.

Priority themes

- Design of homes (8 votes)** A gap in discussion so far.
- Refurbishment of former library /Albrook House (7)** An important site for both community and heritage, in a location right at the heart of the Alton. Has also not been discussed so far.
- Managing and minimising impacts of development on residents (5.5)** Key to the regeneration’s success. Likely impacts of construction and demolition, including vehicle movement, pollution, noise, dust and vibration, on mental and physical health, and on the Alton’s character, were flagged. Members want to understand what mitigations can or will be put in place. A good communications plan will be needed too, so that all are aware in advance of potential disruption and impacts.

Looking at the Health Impact Assessment and helping shape the Social Impact Assessment also received several votes, and the Panel stressed in discussion that looking at all this in the round may be the way to go.

- Design of Danebury Parade and 166 Roehampton Lane (5)** The retail parade is at the heart of the Alton and important for all residents.
- Identifying community benefits and investment that might be secured through planning & procurement processes (5).** It’s important that every opportunity is taken to maximise additional benefits that regeneration can bring AND ensure that they align with community needs. Panel Members are keen to learn about opportunities around e.g. Social Value, ‘planning gain’, or creating jobs and employment opportunities through development, and to influence these were possible.

In the first instance, the ARP Team agreed to look at setting up training sessions on this themes, including how the Planning Team interacts with the Masterplan, and what mechanisms they use to secure benefits.

Also popular

- Design of the community facility at Portswood Place (4).**
- Design of Danebury Neighbourhood (4).** Again, being able to discuss the inside of buildings is important.
- Movement and Parking Strategy (4).** Parking is already challenging, further complicated by construction that is already underway, including by contractor vehicles. Speeding and safety are issues too. The Panel wants to understand how the strategy, and any new restrictions, will work in practice and will address current issues, and how parking and road layout will change over time: during development, and once the renewal is complete.

Alton Community Panel
Setting Meeting Priorities – April 2026

What would be YOUR ideal themes for the next 10 or so panel sessions?

Please select **UP TO 10 topics (no more)** that you would like us to explore at meetings over 2026 and early 2027.

This will allow us to create a pool of meeting topics from which we can flexibly draw as different projects and opportunities come forward.

Note: This flexibility might also include combining or tweaking topics as info becomes available, or circumstances change. But we will confirm that with you over the months as we go. The idea is not to create another fixed and defined list, but to have an accurate indication, where everyone’s voice had equal weight, about the projects, questions and issues where you feel it is most valuable for the Panel to have input and influence.

#	Possible meeting topic	What we would focus on	Early influence?*	Select (✓ or X) 1 to 10 topics	(Optional) Your reason?
Specific Masterplan projects					
1	Former library refurbishment (Albrook House)	Input into plans to adapt the library to offer space for shops or community orgs – help shape brief and priorities.	Yes	✓	
2	Portswood Place	Input into the design of this new community facility – opportunity to help shape brief and priorities.	Yes	✓	
3	Danebury Neighbourhood	Opportunity to continue to inform design of spaces and buildings (following this April 2026 workshop)	Yes	✓	
4	Danebury Parade and 166 Roehampton Lane	Input into design of this replacement parade of shops with flats above, inc. a larger supermarket and improved link to the Sports and Fitness Centre.	Yes	✓	
5	Block A: Operational Plans and Management	Helping ensure the building operates well for all its different users. A Panel Priority for future engagement in Dec 2025.			
6	Block A: Design of Community Hall and Communal Spaces (including toilets)	Informing the design of key publicly used spaces where Panel oversight and influence will be valuable. A Panel Priority for future engagement in Dec 2025.			
7	A major assessment (Block A session)	Covering both 5 and 6 above, but each in its own right.			
Masterplan Themes that cut across specific projects					
8	Public realm and open spaces across Masterplan	Input into design of public and open spaces, streets and routes across Masterplan offering community oversight.			

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9. **Workshop on details of Lighting Strategy (4)/ Pedestrian Improvements (4).** It was suggested that these could be combined within a wider **Public Realm (3)** conversation.
10. **Community Grants (4).** These are vital to community projects so need to be scoped appropriately. It was suggested that Our Roehampton and the Parish Trust should also be involved, and that this could be combined with discussion of the Focus Hall Cultural Programme and of Community Benefits (*see 5 above*).
11. **Shaping the Brief for the Social Impact Assessment (4).** (*See also B5 earlier in these Notes.*) Vital so that we truly understand impacts on residents' lives and put these concerns to the centre for the regeneration.
12. **Community Engagement (4)** The Panel, by helping shape the Strategy and build on existing good work, can play a role in ensuring that everyone knows what's happening and the different projects and opportunities underway.
13. **Block A (4).** *Votes were spread across the 3 different Block A themes.* There is ongoing interest in how the community spaces here are designed, used and managed, with real potential for building community.

Sustainability and environmental impact were noted as missing topics. While these might be discussed under Health or Social Impacts, they are important issues in their own right. There are questions about the extent to which the masterplan is delivering a genuinely greener estate, including how carbon is being reduced.

D. Thoughts on Masterplan Community Open Spaces

Iain re-shared outline design ideas for the two spaces at the heart of the Masterplan currently known as the **Community Square** and **Village Green**, as well as further sketches and a model, and some prompting questions.

The Panel had developed Briefs for both spaces in 2025. Now, before focused design gets underway, the team wanted to **check: (i) whether the Panel's 2025 priorities had changed, and (ii) whether any new ones had emerged.** Panel Members themselves noted that since the Green had been discussed in June 2025, new insights had been gained e.g. through visiting HTA's Library and nearby open spaces in Southwark in January.

Iain clarified that **although the Green and Square are seen as connected spaces**, with a relationship to each other, **they are not directly side-by-side, and will have distinct characters and uses.**

See [Page 4](#) for summarised feedback



NEXT MEETING: Tues 12 May, 3.30 to 6.00pm. The theme will be design of Homes – the most popular topic from the Panel voting.

Latest thoughts on Masterplan Community Open Spaces

Views on the Community Square

1. **There is real value in having a space where residents can meet up.** To have a coffee, for example.
2. **The relationship between inside and outside space is important.** The design should think about how the commercial space spills onto the Square, and what the space feels like when everything closes. It shouldn't feel too open and empty when people are not there.
3. **The Square needs to actively support a range of formal and informal uses.** For example, there should be electricity points, and features such as a stage that doubles as seating.
4. **Thinking about how the space will change over time, over a day or over the seasons.** Can the landscape architect be asked to imagine and communicate this.
5. **Safety is a priority, so close to a main road.** Especially for families with young children. Having different zones could help with this e.g. the cafe should not be too close to Danebury Road.
6. **As a south-facing space,** it will feel lovely and sunny to use, but **will need shading** e.g. trees and/or sails.
7. **A stage/theatre space is a priority, with power access.** It could host anything from formal plays to school choir performances.
8. **Other possible events that could be hosted in the Square:** Christmas events, markets, open air cinema, screening of major sports events.



Views on the 'Village Green'

1. **While this should have a different character to the Square, views vary about what this is. Some feel it should be a quiet environment,** in contrast to the Square's event space. Like the garden at Roehampton Gate, and without major emphasis on play. **Others that it should have a play focus,** alongside other community activity: an adaptable 'living space', safe for children and with something to all ages.
2. **People continue to feel that Village Green is not the right name,** with its evocation of cricket. The name should suggest community use.
3. **There is still support for a sensory garden** and for the proposed **community-managed gardens.** It was stressed that for these to work they cannot be imposed but need to be led by the community. Cross-generational activity around **kitchen gardens** could be very positive.
4. Those who want to see play said that the **play should focus on younger children, with some elements for older ones;** older children can travel to other facilities such as Alton Activity Centre and Downshire Field.
5. Possible issues that the design needs to consider are **noise,** given the houses around the space, and the risk of attracting people from outside the area.
6. **Dog exercise areas** would also be good to offer, said one group, and **lighting** will be important.

